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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

INQUIRY INTO REPARATIONS FOR THE STOLEN GENERATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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At Bomaderry on Wednesday 2 March 2016

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The Committee met at 11.00 a.m.

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PRESENT

Ms J. Barham (Chair)

The Hon. C. Houssos
The Hon. S. Mitchell
The Hon. N. Maclaren-Jones (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. S. Moselmane
Reverend the Hon. F. Nile

CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. I will hand over to Uncle Sonny Simms to do welcome to country.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: Good morning, everybody. My name is Sonny Sims. I am an elder here in the Shoalhaven. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where we meet today: the Wadi Wadi people. That is part of my family. My grandmother, Margaret Dixon, come from the foothills of Cullengutty—that is what we call Cambewarra. Hopefully something positive will come out of this meeting today. I wish you well, all you fellow representatives. Hopefully you can get some really first-class feedback today. Thank you.

CHAIR: Welcome to the ninth hearing of General Standing Committee No. 3 Inquiry into Reparation for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales. I would like to acknowledge the Wadi Wadi people and the traditional custodians of the land. I would also like to pay respect to the elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people. The inquiry is examining a number of important issues for members of the stolen generations, including implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the Bringing Them Home report and potential policies and legislation to help make reparations to members of the stolen generation and their descendants. I note from some of the submissions that some people are not aware that New South Wales was the first State to offer an apology after the Bringing Them Home report, and that was done in 1997. New South Wales led the way by making that apology and being the first State to acknowledge the past wrongdoings.

Given the importance of this inquiry, we encourage people to come forward to share their story. The closing date for submissions has been extended until 31 March. If anyone is interested in making a submission, please speak to the secretariat staff who are here today. We very much want to hear people's stories. If people are not sure how to make a submission, they can contact the secretariat staff to find out how to do that. To date, the committee has had eight hearings: three in Sydney and one each in Wagga Wagga, Kempsey, Grafton, Broken Hill and Walgett. Today is our final hearing. I would like to thank all those who have participated, particularly those who have come forward to share difficult and painful stories. We have visited the Cootamundra Girls Home and the Kinchela Boys Home. Throughout this process we have had the fantastic support of Link-Up. They have been here with us to offer support to people while the hearings have taken place.

Today we will be hearing from a number of witnesses, including former residents of the Bomaderry Children's Home, Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre, the South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation and the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service. We also have with us today four counsellors from Link-Up: Donna, Mary-Anne, Noel and John, who can provide support today to witnesses or those watching proceedings if required. We thank Donna, Mary-Anne, Noel and John for their assistance.

In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence, as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In these circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Witnesses are advised that any messages to Committee members should be delivered through the Committee staff. Finally, could everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing. I now welcome our first witnesses. Thank you for attending this hearing.

UNCLE SONNY SIMMS, Community member, sworn and examined:

UNCLE WILLY DIXON, Community member, and

AUNTY CHRISTINE BLAKENEY, Community member, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Do you have an opening statement you would like to make, either as individuals or from a representative?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: I am the chair of the Children of the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home Incorporated. We are a group that had our first meeting last year in January. We have been meeting regularly since then. The first time we talked about getting a group together was about eight years ago, but it took us quite a while to get this up and running. We have been going pretty well. We have regular meetings; we have regular get-togethers; we have a lot of things that we would like to do, and we can talk about that.

CHAIR: Would you like to make any other statements or are you happy to go on to questions?

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: I am right with that.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you very much for coming this morning and giving evidence about your experiences. Uncle Willy, you told us a little bit about your own experiences when we toured the home just a few moments ago. Can you tell us a bit more about your own experiences when you were taken into the home? What were your experiences in communicating with your parents and family?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Well, first, I only met my parents two or three times. I was in the mission from when I was a baby, a long time ago. It was rough. It was hard. It is something you do not want to talk about. For me there are a lot of memories.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What age were you when you were taken there?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: I was probably three or four months old.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You were there for about 15 years.

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Yes. I left when I was 15.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And you saw your parents only twice.

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Yes, and the last time I saw them we buried them, in 1978, at Wreck Bay.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: As you know, we are here to hear about recommendations we can make to the Government on compensation or reparation for the stolen generations. What do you think are appropriate recommendations that we could make to the Government on reparations to assist members of the stolen generation and their family members who are suffering from intergenerational trauma?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: First, I would say that that property belongs to us. It is ours and always will be. It has been there for a long time. Because I am the caretaker I go there every day. Each time I walk through the gate I think about that. If it wasn't for that memorial garden and Uncle Sonny, there would be nothing there. I look after everything. I am the protector. That is what I would say at the moment.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Aunty Blakeney, do you have anything to add or suggest, following my question to Uncle Dixon? What would you like to see us recommend to the Government in terms of reparations to the stolen generation?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: There are so many services that the kids who were in the home need now. Nobody is getting any younger. We want aged care packages. We want health care. We want housing. We need counselling services. We need a Bringing Them Home counsellor, somebody who

understands what we have all been through, somebody we can talk to, somebody who will listen. We need somebody who understands where the stolen generation are coming from.

At Bomaderry we need a keeping place. A lot of us are very proud of our upbringing, not at the hands of our carers but who we were together. We need a keeping place to put all of that information in. We need it for education purposes. We needed to teach our kids and our grandkids, and the rest, in the future. They need to learn about the history. They need to learn about the policies of the time, why things happened, why we were there. They need to know what happened to us afterwards. They need to know their history.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You said that you need counselling services and the opportunity to talk to somebody about what you went through. Is there anything like that around here at the moment?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: No. Sorry, there is one.

CHAIR: We have heard that the Healing Foundation, with funds from the Federal Government, was able to support Bringing Them Home stolen generation workers—that is, someone who understands and knows. It seems that some of that funding has stopped or has not been made available.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: As soon as the funding stops the service stops.

CHAIR: That is right.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: We need ongoing funding. It is no good bringing you so far and then dumping you because you run out of money.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Aunty Christine, do you have a healing place here in Bomaderry?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: No, we do not.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That is what you want.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Would you call it a healing place? Is that the name you would give it?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: It probably would be a healing place. Where we are situated, where the home was, the land belongs to Nowra Land Council. We are in negotiation with the land council about a couple of ventures or things that we want to do.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: If they could allocate the space for you, you could all meet there regularly.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: We already meet there regularly, but we need a healing place.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You could set it up with your records and your photographs.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: That is the keeping place, which would act as a healing centre too. Past residents could come in and see their stories, which they have not looked at. A lot of them have never seen photographs of themselves when they were kids because they have not been back. Their families have never seen them when they were children.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: A lot of the people we have talked to from the stolen generation, a bit like Uncle Sonny Sims, are not keen to talk about it. They do not have good memories. What memories do you have of how you were treated at the Bomaderry children's home?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: I do not remember much from when I was a kid. I know that from the time I was 10 or 11 I had the responsibility of looking after younger children. I know that by the time I was in high school, when I was 13, I was looking after four little ones, four toddlers, getting them ready for the day, before I went to school.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: So the sister in charge would put you in charge of those four children?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes. When I was 14 I was looking after four kids again, including a two-week-old baby. This was all before I went to school. You had all that responsibility then you went to school. You came home and you did the reverse: fed them, bathed them and put them to bed. You had to do your homework as well. Then you got up in the morning and did it all over again. On weekends there was all the washing and ironing to do. You did not have much time to yourself.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Was it a caring atmosphere? Did you feel you were being cared for?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: I think I was the carer most of the time.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Were there times of punishment?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes, there were times of punishment. It depends. In the old days, when we were living in dormitories, the punishment was a lot more strict or severe. In 1964 people started moving into cottages as a family unit. There was one sister, as we called them, to about eight or nine kids in the one house. The older kids had more responsibility. The punishment was not so bad or you were not in trouble so much because you were not with the other kids.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: So the punishment happened more when the dormitories existed, up to 1964? When did the dormitory arrangement start? When were you in a dormitory?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: From 1951 to 1964.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Uncle Willy, you said that there was a fair bit of punishment.

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Would you elaborate? Would you explain what sort of punishment was exercised on the children?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: If you were told to do something and you didn't do it then you got belted with a stick.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: With a stick?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Yes, it was not a stick; it was a stick. We copped it a fair bit out there. If you were told to do something and you did not do it, you would get punished. They would not give you a feed—you starved, and that is as true as God. They would send you to bed early with no food.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Was that common amongst the other kids?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: It was not just me; it was everybody else there in my time—with Aunty Christine and all the rest. It was like Stalag 13.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Let me begin by thanking you for taking us all on the visit of the Bomaderry site this morning, and particularly for showing us the memorial garden and the vision that you have. I congratulate Uncle Willy on all the maintenance and the upkeep he is doing on that site. I am interested in learning a bit more about the ideas and the plans you have for the site. You took us through a couple of the old homes there and talked about healing and keeping places. Could you explain a bit more about what it is that you would like to do at that site?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: It would be like a museum, and it would be an educational place. At the moment there are busloads of kids that come through from schools to visit the home.

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Yes.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Uncle Willy takes them through, and there are some photos on the walls. But we need a more comprehensive display of the history—the photographs and lots of things that we have. We have kept a lot of the stuff that we grew up with. I know that I still have original photos that were given to me when I left the home, but a lot of people do not have those. The thing is that we need that keeping place, or an educational place and a healing place, for those who were in the home to come back to and to bring their families down to show them where they grew up.

If you go there now you can talk and talk and talk but if you do not have evidence—all those photographs—it is hard for people to understand or comprehend what you are talking about. Since we got all these photographs we have passed them around amongst ourselves. It brings back a lot of memories just by talking about those times. People say, "I remember when that photograph was taken," or something like that. It evokes a lot of memories. We sit around and talk about those times. It is a kind of healing for a lot of us too. So we can sit down and talk about what is happening in that photograph or who is doing this or that. So the keeping place would be really beneficial to all of us.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How many of those children that we saw in those photos do come back?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: None.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: None?

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Some do and some do not?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Which children are you talking about?

CHAIR: Those in the photos that we saw.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: The photos on the walls?

CHAIR: Yes.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: There are quite a few. A lot of them have passed. Not many of those who are in the photographs there come back because a lot of them have passed on.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do any of their families come looking for photos? Do you have contact with them?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes, we have contact with families looking for photos. We have one lad who lived up at Karuah. He passed away and his family wanted photographs so we were able to give the family some photographs.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: How many people are now involved in your group that you have formed who were part of the stolen generations? Is it 10 or is it 50?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: At the moment we have about 10 to 15 people at our meetings. We have not put it out there because we are trying to get settled and established. We will advertise or put a notice in the *Koori Mail* or the *National Indigenous Times*, and that will happen within the month. We were just trying to set things up. It is not like we can say we have a group here but then offer nothing.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And of course they may not be in this area. They were sent away when they were 12—the boys to Kinchela and the girls to Cootamundra.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes, a lot of them do not live in this area. Some went to Kinchela and some to Cootamundra.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: So they may be still living in those areas.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes, and I know a lot of those children who were from Bomaderry and then went to those other homes. I am in contact with them as well. There are still other children out there who do not know about what we plan to do. They vaguely know about the group setting up but we are waiting until we have something that we can offer.

CHAIR: I think Uncle Sonny wanted to make a comment.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: The stolen generation has had a devastating effect on my family. My father was removed from the La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve in the early years of the Bomaderry children's home. Dad was there not long after the homes had opened and were taking children in. In later years my dad's two younger brothers, Uncle Herb and Uncle Bill, came into Bomaderry children's home. My dad never spoke about his time in Bomaderry. I was 39 before my father told me that was in the home. I am now 73. We walked past there one day. My dad just put his head to the side. He never looked up at the homes—he had head to one side looking at the bush; he was like a trotter—and he said, "I hate that place."

The home somehow turned him against everybody. He hated mission managers, he hated the coppers and he hated the Aborigines Welfare Board. Such was the extent of his hatred for mission managers that he was jailed on two occasions for bashing the mission managers. He was expelled from the La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve but he did not take any notice of that. He still stayed there when he came out of jail. In Uncle Herb and Uncle Bill's time, when they were set to go to Kinsella Boys' Home in Kempsey they were not given their Christian names of Herb Sims and Bill Sims; they were just called "Sims 1" and "Sims 2". They were just a number.

My dad was sent out to a little place called Gurley, this side of Moree, to work for a grazier. When dad was getting close to his time to leave there, upon reaching the age of 18 years, the grazier said to him, "Pat, where are you going when you leave here?" He said, "I am going home." The grazier said, "Where is home?" My dad said, "La Perouse." The grazier said, "How do you know you come from La Perouse?" My dad said, "During my time in Bomaderry all the Kooris lived in the bush opposite the homes, and they told me that I come from La Perouse and who my father was."

It was very sad, during dad's time in Bomaderry, because he blamed my grandfather for putting him in there. It was the whim of the Aborigines Welfare Board. They decided at a meeting in Bridge Street, Sydney who they were going to take from each family throughout New South Wales. They had two welfare board officers in later years called Miss Southwell and Miss English and they roamed the South Coast from La Perouse down on the lookout for kids. The common cause for the kids to be removed was neglect. In every case you look at on that list from my father's time in the homes the child was neglected. That was a catch cry for the Aborigines Welfare Board. Living on a mission or a reserve you were controlled by the mission manager. He went to the meetings of the hierarchy in Bridge Street, and if you did not toe the line then you were sent here to Bomaderry.

Dad said he hated the place. In later years he was just so defiant. But he did not tell me until I was 39 years of age that he was a child of the stolen generations. He also said that the kids he grew up with in there were his brothers and sisters. They had a close-knit family, and that is how it is today. They had a special bond between all those kids who were in the homes. The only good part about being in the homes he spoke about was when he was in charge of the chook pen. He had to make sure that the chooks were given fresh water of a morning and the remnants of the bread, and in the afternoon the same thing again. There was Dudley Timbery, Frank Green and Reggie Russell who worked in the chook pen with dad.

Every so often they showed the matron of the homes a cracked egg, where the chook had trodden on it, until they stockpiled 10 eggs. There was a gentleman down the road here called Mr George Cochrane. His mum and dad had the general store opposite the railway station. A lot of times they would call into the store and help them stack the potatoes and onions away. So Mrs Cochrane would give them a big tank loaf of bread. She would slice it up for them. They would go back to the homes, and dad had knocked off of a pan out of one of the cottages, and they would cook these eggs. The aroma smelt so good this particular day that all the other kids came over. They said, "Pat, can we have egg and a slice of bread?" He said, "No. There's just enough for us here—me, Frank, Dudley and Jessie." So when the other kids missed out, they went and put him in. He was punished for that. He spent time in the punishment shed down there and he was taken off the chook pen. The only bright thing he ever said about the homes was he was in charge of the chook pen.

I recall the mission manager come round to the mission at La Perouse once—the former mission sister at the homes—and she wanted to meet with Dad, Frankie Green, Reggie Russell and Dudley Timbery up home there. So the manager was coming out to see Dad first. He said, "Pat, Matron is coming up here to the mission house to see me at the weekend. She would like to meet with you, Dudley, Jessie, Frank and Reggie." He said, "You can tell the matron from me I won't be meeting with her. I have had a number of years with her and I do not want to see her again." So he went down to the other people and he said, "What do youse want?" They said, "Well, what did Pat say?" And he said, "He don't want to see her at all." They said, "Well, we will be guided by Pat." They had that special bond. They stuck together even at home. I can recall up home on the mission all of them having a drink together. They were happy while they were together, hence Dad's recognition of all those elders as his brothers and sisters.

Uncle Herb was taken away to Kitchener from Bomaderry homes. What did he do? He has done the full circle. He went back and worked for the welfare board. And that brought the hostility from our family on him. We barred him from our houses. Mission people up at La Perouse would not let him in their houses. My own dad even knocked him down in the yard one day when he come around with Saxby and Green from the welfare board and told him to never come in our yard again. The welfare board removed him; he went back and he worked for them.

The site of the babies' cottage is where the memorial garden is. On 16 October 1993 the Bomaderry homes went up for auction at the Nowra School of Arts. The Japanese were very interested in acquiring the Bomaderry homes site because they were going to build villas there and buy land around the adjacent area and build golf courses. So I asked a lot of people to attend—Koori people from La Perouse to the Victorian border. I contacted three old elders from Yuendemu. They come down and before the auction started we took them over into the school of arts annexe and they got dressed and painted up. They come across to the big hall with their clapsticks and their boomerangs. So when the bidding opened for the sale of the Bomaderry homes the Japanese never offered one bid. I think the fear of them old full bloods there put the wind up the Japanese and they did not offer one bid. It was passed in to us for $365,000. We own it; we maintain it.

One of my ambitions was to build something there in remembrance of the kids of the stolen generation. Hence we built the garden there. We have had a ceremony on that when it was dedicated and also when the 100-year celebration was on. We had a lot of people come back for that. When we first made contact with former residents of the homes, one was in Missouri in America. She was adopted by American parents. Apparently her sisters told her about this big day coming up at Bomaderry and she rang me from Missouri. She was ringing me sometimes three times a week. She said, "Brother, I am coming home for that. I would not miss that for the world." She come home. I believe that was the first time she saw her sisters in 40-odd years. And a man came back from the Macleay. He brought his family down there when we unveiled that memorial garden and plaque.

When that cottage was burnt to the ground about three weeks after we purchased it I got a call from the coroner about three o'clock in the morning. He said, "Come over to the home. Your last cottage has been burnt to the ground." I went over and water was still spurting up. The only thing standing was the chimney. The brick chimney was the only thing standing. One of the girls that was in the homes there, Alice Adams, said to me, "Sonny, did you save my piano?" I said, "Alice, the only thing out of your piano is the piano hinge. Everything was burnt to the ground." And there was a lot of information in that cottage there. That was used for the church—there was all church documents in there.

When the time come to unveil that memorial garden I got all former residents to have a ribbon to pull apart the Aboriginal flag. My Uncle Herb wanted to do it as the sole beneficiary and I said, "No, all the children of the stolen generation are going to unveil that memorial garden." And they each had a strand of it and they pulled it apart. He was a bit cranky because he was not there to pull the rope apart, but they all took part in that. In the earlier years Shoalhaven City Council used to do a lot of work with the Bomaderry home. Whilst it was in operation, the United Aborigines Mission [UAM] homes were never charged any rates. I know Jack Isen from down here at the mill. They used to cart wood up there. Michael Flores told me that their Saturday of relaxation was going down to the mill with this big cart and pulling it back up past the Kooris who lived there. They called them the draft horses. So one good thing Jack did was turn around and take his truckload of wood up there for the kids.

Dad said he had hard times there and he would never want to see it again. I myself do not want to see that ever brought to fruition. When Alan Jones said last week that they should start that again—he has got rocks in his head. When our mum had a heart attack on La Perouse at the mission, within an hour Mum was taken to Prince Henry Hospital. Saxby and Green were there. So were Miss Southwell and Miss English; our local

mission manager, Jeffries; and our local copper, Joe Beecroft. We were led up the hill to two big, black cars waiting for us. We went to Albion Street courthouse first and we were taken then to Glebe Point Road. Me and my two brothers went to Royleston Boys' Home at Glebe. Two of my sisters went to Bidura girls' home at Glebe. We were there for seven weeks and if Mum did not recover from that heart attack we were coming here to Bomaderry. Thank God Mum recovered and we was allowed to go back home to the mission. And, as I say, mission kids had a special bond with everybody because we went through all that with mission managers. We was there at the whim of the welfare board at any time.

CHAIR: We have heard that across the State—that that special bond that exists is why the healing places and the community based healing are so important. I am sorry to interrupt you, but—

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: That is why the cottage there would be vital for that.

CHAIR: And that is a consistent story. I think we have another question from the Hon. Courtney Houssos.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your stories with us. Thank you for the tour this morning as well. I think Uncle Willy talked about this as well, but the Bomaderry site is known as the birthplace of the stolen generations. Can you explain that for the Committee?

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: That was the first place the welfare board took you to. They did not believe in the extended family like we have amongst our people—aunties, uncles, even relatives that come along there to help you. That was the first place they would bring you. When they would pick you up, they told you, "You are going for a train ride." That train ride finishes down near Bomaderry and the walk to the homes. One was a really good boxer—he turned out to be a champion boxer. I have got photos of that boxer—one where he is driving at the station at Bomaderry with the welfare people bringing him to the homes. That was his trip—coming to the homes to be under the guidance of their matrons or whatever at the homes there. But this was the first place of it here, so that is the birthplace of the stolen generation.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I want to ask a little more about the keeping place and where things are up to. I think you mentioned that you are in negotiations with the land council. I want to know a little more about that process and whether there are any barriers to establishing that keeping place.

CHAIR: This might be one of those questions where you take it on notice and provide us with information as a follow-up.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes, we will take it on notice.

CHAIR: When we were out at the place with all the photos you mentioned that you had paid a lot of money to get access to those photos—I think you said $4,000.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: Four grand that I paid out of my own pocket for my photos.

CHAIR: Would you explain to us where you got them from? Who did you pay the money to for those photos?

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: I obtained a roll from the United Aborigines Mission [UAM] homes in East Doncaster, Victoria. They sent me the roll and I had the photos produced at the local camera shop in town. It cost me four grand to produce them. One good thing was that I got the names of the kids who were there, what year they came into the home, what year they left and where they went.

A lot of the stolen generation kids need confirmation of their Aboriginality. When I was the chief executive officer of the Bomaderry home a lot of kids would come there seeking that confirmation of Aboriginality. They would say, "I know my mum came from here because she brought me here one day." I only had to ring the UAM homes in East Doncaster and they would send me that person's birth certificate and information showing what year they came to the Bomaderry home, what year they left and where they went.

A lot of the girls went to work for rich people in Woollahra and Rose Bay. There were four Wenberg sisters at the home. I talked at Sorry Day at the Sydney Opera House a few years back. We had two sessions there. I was on the second session with Malcolm Fraser, Professor Marie Bashir and Aden Ridgeway. Former

residents of Kinchela, Bimbadeen and Bomaderry were there. This lady, Valerie Wenberg, got up on the stage and said, "I was allocated a massive amount of money recently." She worked for people at Woollahra. She said, "That amount of money will not heal the hurt that I suffered." The man of the house repeatedly raped her each night. She said, "That money will not heal that problem." That is what happened to the girls who went on those jobs.

CHAIR: Around here, were children sent to work as domestics on farms?

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: Yes, some of them went to work on the farms.

CHAIR: Is all that information recorded in the UAM files, about children leaving and being put into homes?

Uncle SONNY SIMS: They have all that. They were sent to different places and went to work for different people in Sydney. The girls went to work for rich people and the boys were sent out to farms as apprentices. I do know what type of apprenticeship there was in milking a cow.

CHAIR: Would you clarify that. Apprenticeship has a certain connotation—that is, you get some sort of training and certificate of skills base. That was not the case, was it?

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: No, that was not the case. I will tell you about another incident. My Uncle Herb and Uncle Bill were released from Kinchela to live with a family at Hornsby that had a big poultry farm. Their job was to work on the poultry farm. They slept in the same house but out on a partitioned veranda. They ate the same meals as those people but not at their table. They had a table set out on the veranda where they had their meals. They never ate with that family.

CHAIR: Christine, you talked about how important healing is and coming together, and about the support that is available. Are you aware that a recommendation of the Bringing Them Home report was for reunions to take place? There was to be a collection of documentation so that people would have knowledge of who they were and where they came from.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Have those things happened for you? Are those services available?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: No, and that is why we started this group. We need to access those services.

CHAIR: It is probably even more important now that those opportunities be made available.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes. When I approached the UAM in Doncaster, Melbourne, they said that our files were destroyed, that there had been a fire and there was nothing left. I have been told that the fire happened in 1979. I asked for my file, and I was told what year I went to the home and what year I left.

CHAIR: So they knew that.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes.

CHAIR: What about the welfare board? Is your information traceable through any records it holds?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: I have documentation from the welfare board to say that I was in the home, but it does not say when I went there and when I left. Other people who have been to the UAM at Doncaster, prior to my asking, have got records of people who were in the home.

CHAIR: Do you mean prior to 1979?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes, so I do not know what is going on.

CHAIR: There is conflicting information.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: Yes. We have nowhere else to send our people, for people to find out.

CHAIR: Have you sought support to do this through Link-Up?

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: At our last meeting a representative from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs [DAA], or Aboriginal Affairs [AA] as it is called now, came to talk to us about the process of doing certain things, and Link-Up as well. We need to follow that up.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: When we heard the word "welfare", mums would gather their kids and go bush. Us older kids, we were in the bush all day. Mum and them would not return until it was dark. The word "welfare" put the fear of god into our people.

CHAIR: Do you think that has carried forward, that people still have a fear of government?

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: Yes. That fear of the welfare board is still with us.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: There is the Department of Community Services [DOCS] now. If you say "DOCS" everybody scatters. We all know that it means the same thing.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: On the mission you had to live under a mission manager. I have lived on two missions in my life.

CHAIR: You mentioned that you might do something with the photos through the *Koori Mail*.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: No, I said we had to advertise the fact that we have a group, that we are up and running, but we need something to offer them.

CHAIR: That is what I wanted to clarify. You want to let people know that the opportunity is there to gather or have a reunion, to try to get their information.

Aunty CHRISTINE BLAKENEY: We need membership. We have members but we need more members. There are a lot of people out there who do not know about us. We do not know where they live. If they buy the *Koori Mail* they will find out about us. They can start making inquiries and can ring up.

CHAIR: That is partly why I asked about the reunion process, whether it is being funded by Government, to support your being able to do that. Thank you so much for being with us today. I apologise for the tight schedule. If you think of anything else you would like to put in writing and send to us, it would be very much appreciated. Please also let other people know that the Committee is still accepting submissions.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: The homes are heritage listed.

CHAIR: Yes. That is a good point. In some ways that is very good, but you said when we visited the home that it also constrains what you can do with the site.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: Yes.

CHAIR: You are limited. You cannot put more houses on it because the site is constrained to having five buildings.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: We did have residents living there but we had to move them out because they were wrecking the place.

Uncle WILLY DIXON: That is why I stay there every weekend. Young kids were smashing windows. It is not my piece of cake.

CHAIR: No. Again, thank you. Please feel free to make contact if you feel that there is something else you would like to add. I know what it is like; you walk away and think, "I should have said that." Do take the opportunity and let us know. It has been valuable having this time with you. I really thank you for it.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: I think that Alan Jones wants to rethink his stupid comments.

CHAIR: In the last week quite a few people have taken him to task. It was a very shocking thing. Sometimes it is those shocking things being said that wakes people up and makes them stop and think. They become aware of how important this issue is and how wrong he was in saying what he said. You are right to raise it. It has upset a lot of people.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It was shameful.

Uncle WILLY DIXON: Tell him, Fred.

Uncle SONNY SIMMS: I would not like to see this ever happen again.

CHAIR: No. One of the notions of reparation, once there is an acknowledgement of wrongdoing, is that there is a responsibility to ensure that it does not happen again. The Committee has heard concern expressed by people across the State about the removal of children today. We are looking at that and have received submissions on it. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew)

LES FARRELL, Solicitor, Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre, affirmed and examined:

JAMES ALLEN, Chairperson, Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council, and Coordinator, Murra Mia Aboriginal Tenants Advisory Service, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I welcome Mr Les Farrell and Mr James Allen. Mr Farrell, just to clarify, are you the author of the submission?

Mr FARRELL: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you; it is a thorough and a very constructive submission.

Mr ALLEN: I will speak personally from a family and community point of view and share some stuff about my own background and stories about my mother, who was a member of the stolen generations.

CHAIR: I invite either or both of you to make an opening statement.

Mr FARRELL: I will make an opening statement, and I think Mr Allen will then make a short statement as well. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet, the Yuin people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and future. In particular I would like to acknowledge those members of the stolen generations who are here with us today. I thank the committee for inviting us to participate today. I would like to give special thanks to Mr James Allen, who is here with me today. Jim is a Kamilaroi man, coordinator of the Murra Mia Aboriginal Tenants Advisory Service, former board member of Aboriginal Housing Office and the current chairperson of the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council. He is also a descendent of a member of the stolen generations. I will be ceding to his direct knowledge and experience in Aboriginal affairs and experiences as a descendent of a member of the stolen generations throughout questioning.

I have been a solicitor with the Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre for the past five years and part of my role is working as the Aboriginal Legal Access Program solicitor. In this role I provide outreach in community advice sessions and advocacy to members of the Aboriginal community along the south coast as far down as Eden. While I have been fortunate to spend much time with members of the Aboriginal communities of the south coast I have also been privy to the dark history associated with many of the stolen generations through stolen wages claims and victims compensation claims for abuse following removal. I do not profess to be able to fully understand the damage suffered and this is another reason I am grateful that Mr Allen is in attendance here with me today.

Our submission identifies that these forced removal policies went further than causing suffering to those families directly affected; they fragmented the entire Aboriginal people, a people held together for tens of thousands of years through a complex network of family connection and kinship—stifling the continued passing of traditional knowledge and culture to future generations, including through fear that they too will be persecuted—leaving a culture shattered at its very foundation. It was shattered by policies that created fear and pain for the stolen generations, their families and the Aboriginal people as a whole. This fragmentation has revealed deep suffering for generations of Aboriginal youth extending to a bleak outlook on life as suffering turned to anger and disconnection, contributing to disproportionate incarceration rates, unemployment and homelessness, an example of this can be found at pages 23 to 25 of our submission.

Our submission identifies these policies and practices causing intense fear—not only fear of children being taken but also an intergenerational fear of other oppressive laws that may harm Aboriginal youth, as can be seen in our discussion of New South Wales fishing regulations at pages 26 to 28. This entrenched disconnection and exclusion has had the effect of oppressing the outlook for many of the young generation—lost in society with no identity or understanding of their value to society. These wide and varied effects detailed throughout our submission are the reason why reparations need to take many and varied forms.

The underlying message is one of trust: the New South Wales Government must gain the trust of the Aboriginal people not only that they are truly sorry but also that they accept and understand the deep damage suffered not only by individuals but also by the Aboriginal people as a whole. This damage has flowed through generations and will continue to do so without adequate reparations in many forms. The failure to provide adequate reparations will not only deprive generations of Aboriginals of their culture and family connection but

also deny the wider community the chance to embrace the value of the Aboriginal culture and people in building a better, more tolerant society that values difference.

This damage cannot be undone. However, we submit that our recommendations with respect to culture and identity that extend from cultural fishing rights to employment and housing schemes will help rebuild this value in the society of the future. Our recommendations with respect to education, remembrance and memorials will guard against repetition for generations to come while at the same time providing opportunities for advancement of young Aboriginal people through memorial scholarships and trust funds. Complemented by counselling and opportunities for the reuniting of extended families, these measures will have the dual effect of providing real opportunities for healing for those directly affected by the forced removal policies.

However, none of this can be accepted as complete commitment to reparations without monetary compensation giving rise to the trust of the Aboriginal people that the New South Wales Government is demonstrating true contrition that includes acknowledgement and acceptance of the suffering from the mere fact and circumstances of removal along with recognition of their proportionate liability for the abuses suffered by many following their forced removal. Let me finish with the words of one victim that gave confidential evidence in the Bringing Them Home report who was taken in Victoria at the age of 12 months. Their evidence is extracted in our submission at page 41:

> I have been a victim and I've suffered and I'll suffer until the day I die for what I've never had and what I can never have. I just have to get on with my life but compensation would help. It doesn't take the pain away. It doesn't take the suffering away. It doesn't take the memories away. It doesn't bring my mother back. But it has to be recognized.

I think Mr Allen would like to say something to the Committee before questioning.

CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Allen?

Mr ALLEN: Thank you. Thanks, Mr Farrell. I would like to pay my respects to the elders that have been here today, to past elders, to those elders from the stolen generation and to the land of the traditional owners that we meet on here today—and my respects to all of you, Senators. Thank you for doing this work. I have looked through some of your transcripts and read a lot of the stuff that you have done. I know that you have been all over the place and spoken to lots of our people. I think you would have a pretty good insight now into what has happened and is still happening.

We tend to look back at a lot of the past history around the stolen generations. But in my role—I am the manager of an Aboriginal tenants advocacy service which is funded by the State Government—I work with a lot of Aboriginal tenants in all of the housing sector, which is the public housing sector, Aboriginal social housing and private sector. I know there is a strong move in the public housing sector at the moment to make it a temporary accommodation type of system, to move people from public housing into the private rental market, and that probably has got some benefits to it too, but I know that there are a lot of people that have entrenched poverty that will be reliant all their lives. Probably their siblings will be on social or public housing. There is that safety net issue that we have to think about around public housing.

I see a lot of our Aboriginal people. The area my staff and I cover is from the top of Wollongong to the Victorian border and out as far west as Mildura, which takes in Hay, Balranald, Wagga, Griffith and all those areas. It is a huge area and there are only four of us. On Sunday I will go to Griffith and have nine tribunals at the residential tenancy tribunal—NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]—and four of them are going to be for vacant possession. These are Aboriginal people that are affected by poverty, disadvantage and a couple of hundred years of policy. The stolen generations is a part of that—the removal from land onto missions, the exclusion from the economic system. Our people were taken and excluded. There have been 200 years of it.

I know that when I look back and understand that I will be probably the first in my family to pass a house—a home—on when I die. When my wife and I pass on, my two children and six grandchildren will have some benefit from that, but I will be the first. So it has taken 200 years in my direct lineage to have some intergenerational wealth be transferred. Prior to that there has been none—no land transfer, no education transfer. It has just been poverty for generation after generation after generation. And it is around the policies that have been executed on our people over the 200 years and it is around the policies today that are happening. We are the three per cent that do not fit—the round peg that does not fit the square hole. Policies are developed and they are probably developed around the 97 per cent. But that three per cent are being really disadvantaged by a lot of those policies. Currently that public housing stuff is going to be another rod on our backs for the next period of time.

As Mr Farrell pointed out, my mother was a member of the stolen generations and a couple of her siblings were also removed. There were nine children in Mum's family. My grandmother had health problems. My grandfather was a hardworking rural worker—fencer, wool presser and that sort of thing. That is Mum's dad. So my mother's eldest sister was a part of raising the rest of the kids, because Nan struggled with health problems. Mum was taken and, as you would have heard across the State, it is difficult for people from the stolen generation to talk about the things that happened to them. I know my mother felt deep, deep, deep pain to ever get involved in a conversation. So a lot of my knowledge about Mum's past virtually comes from my father who would talk about what transformed Mum.

My mother was a beautiful, attractive Aboriginal woman—a very intelligent woman. She was a good writer. She was very, very well read. She married my father and had three children. But Mum was taken from her family in the late 1930s and she was put into domestic service. She was moved first, to my knowledge, to Cooma where she lived on a property down there. From memory, the property owners also owned, I think, the Australian Hotel. So she worked there as a domestic—you know, cooking, cleaning and doing all that stuff—obviously with no wages or income from it. Then she was moved to a couple of other properties elsewhere. By the time she was, I think, 16 or 17 she was in Newcastle. So she had been moved around to these different domestic servantry situations. When my father met Mum in the mid to late 1940s she was working as a kitchenhand. Dad had to get permission for Mum and him to be married. My dad was also Aboriginal. That is what happened.

When I was 12 or 13 years of age, my mother, who had never been a drinker, out of the blue became a drinker. In those days they rolled tobacco. She would smoke a little bit, but not much. She went from being a non-drinker to being a chronic drinker. We spent the next 15 years battling her demons. She would drink herself into a stupor. I mean wine and I mean lots of it. She could drink two or three of these water jugs full of wine in a day. Imagine how much wine that is—even four of them in a day. There is a story behind how she got the stuff. I do not need to get into that. She went from being a beautiful homemaker, mother and wife to being someone who was deranged. She would attack my father.

Mum passed away when she was 52 because of the drinking and the disadvantage that she experienced in her early life. If you are going to drink the amounts that she was drinking, you cannot do it for long. It killed her. My brother and sister and I would sit with Dad. In our household, and in most rural households, the billy was on all the time. We drank a lot of tea. We still do that. The question always was: "What you think caused it, Dad? What happened to her? Where did this all come from?" We got to the point where we started to delve into the things that would have happened to my mother. I heard Uncle Sonny talk here earlier about that girl who was continually raped and mistreated. I know that was not isolated. I am talking about my mother. You have to know the transformation. Any one of you ladies here would be struggling to be the person my mother was. She was a beautiful woman. To see that change take place is an insight into what the stolen generations policy created in this country and what damage it has done to Aboriginal people.

I saw my mother attack my father. He was a burly man, a wool presser and fencer. They worked hard in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. They worked hard, long hours. My dad was a pretty tough bloke. He was a very soft-hearted man. He loved my mother until the day he died. She died early. He died just on 80. He never took another wife or even held hands with another woman after she went. What she put him through destroyed our home, destroyed our lives. She was bordering on being a lunatic. We could not go to family. We could not go to the football. We could not go anywhere. The violence affected my brother; it affected my sister; it affected me. She would become hugely violent.

That violence affected me. I started to become very similar. If I had problems, which all kids do, I solved them through violence. I am in my mid-sixties. When I was a boy the racism in schools was intolerable. There comes a point where you have to deal with it. The only way I could deal with it was through violence. I had seen that in the home. My brother withdrew from life. My sister was gone at 21; she passed on. It affected her hugely. My dad's life was destroyed. He had no relationship with his nine brothers and sisters because of it. It also affected all my cousins. There was a ripple effect. This is just an example of one person being stolen, being taken. Her life was destroyed. She was treated badly. I cannot go into detail, but I know what happened. Some years afterwards, I am as far from being that violent young fellow as I will ever be, but my daughters witnessed it. My youngest daughter portrayed it. Her youngest boy also has trouble with violence because of her actions. That is three generations that I can say have been directly affected by my mother being taken.

The policy of taking Aboriginal children has not stopped. It is rife today. Only last night I was talking to a family who have care of two six-year-old nephews. One of the boys hurt himself on the trampoline. This is a really good family, a very nice family. It looked as though the little boy had a fractured arm. When they went to the doctor, the doctor abused them about having a trampoline and said kids should not be on trampolines. I cannot understand the reasoning behind that. She also reported them to DOCS. In other words, that same threat is there now. The stolen generation stuff is continuing.

CHAIR: The Committee has heard, even today, that people still fear the authorities coming in and having that power over them. You have talked about intergenerational trauma and impact. What do you think could be done now to break that cycle, to try to support people whose lives have been damaged and ruined? We do not want to see this continue. What would be the remedy? What kinds of reparations by government could make a difference? That is why we are here. You have had the experience. You have worked in a lot of different areas and have a really good understanding of the personal experience and the broader process.

Mr ALLEN: I am the chairperson of the Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council and the manager of Murra Mia and a few other things. Through the Murra Mia work, one of the things that I find is that we occupy about 30 per cent of public housing yet we are only three per cent of the population. I see a high rate of turnover in Aboriginal tenancy. It is family issues that create the problems that destabilise tenancy. It is family issues caused by history, including the experience of the stolen generations, that destabilise Aboriginal families and lead to intergenerational poverty. One thing that I find really lacking on the ground is family case management. Family case management is a role for Family and Community Services [FACS]. FACS New South Wales funds family case management. I have good relationships with the directors of FACS in my region. I deliberately do that because I know that that is where I need to be to get the best outcomes for Aboriginal tenancy and housing services.

It is a struggle to get wraparound services through family case management. It is nearly impossible. I spoke about the nine or 10 cases in Griffith on Monday. I know that I am going to need services to help children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], mental disabilities, intellectual disabilities. These things are affecting their households and in turn jeopardising tenancies. We fix those things. We have the wraparound services. Family case management provides that. But they need to get family case management. The special homelessness services do have some dollars, but very little; and I do not think they are geared for it. I think Family and Community Services [FaCS] need to have a real shakeup around how they have even basic case management for Aboriginal families.

CHAIR: I would like to just follow up in relation to whether or not there are Aboriginal providers operating here to deliver those services and whether they have been supported—to be established, to be trained and to do those things. Should there be a recognition that cultural awareness training is needed for non-Indigenous FaCS people as well as the promotion of Aboriginal services to be able to give that support that is needed and to understand the broader cultural context and family context. I think, as you have alluded to, it often affects the problems that exist, because people do not understand the broader mob issues around who cares for one child—that is, the whole community. So are the services available? Are they Aboriginal services? Are they being skilled up to be able to provide that support?

Mr ALLEN: The reduction in funding for Aboriginal services over the last 15 years has been incredible. So there has been a huge reduction in those types of services across the State. I know that is the area where the services should be delivered from. There are a lot of faith based organisations like Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army doing a helluva lot of good work. But I have to say, and this is an absolute fact—a known fact—that Aboriginal people do not access mainstream services. They just do not.

I get calls from Housing NSW. Steve Shanahan, the regional manager, rang me last week from the Queanbeyan office. He said, "Jim, I'm trying to track down a tenant. We can't get onto her. Can you find her?" I found her that afternoon. We had a meeting and we resolved the problems. They were going to the tribunal. There were a whole lot of complexities. But they cannot get to these people—the people who are homeless, the people who have drug and alcohol problems, and the people who have psychological and mental illnesses. They are not being seen and the problems are not being fixed.

The services that are there now are well meaning, and they do tender for these things. They get a lot of money to do this type of work. But the taxpayer should be getting a better deal. If we are having problems in public housing and we cannot get any family case management around those difficult families, police and law and justice outcomes are not going to change it. It needs to be driven by smart governments that understand that

there is entrenched disadvantage and poverty in these families. It goes back to education. It goes back to not working, not having employment and having all of the problems that come from intergenerational poverty and the stolen generations.

CHAIR: I think Mr Farrell wants to add something there.

Mr FARRELL: Just on the issue of communication, roughly each year between 10 and 15 per cent of our client base are Aboriginal community members. The contact issue is a very serious issue, as is transport. We have clients even just out at Jerrinja, which is about 30 kilometres away. There is no way for them to get into Nowra to access services, phones are very difficult for them to maintain and all the rest of it. So that contact becomes very difficult. Even if we do engage a client who has a legal issue, and often it around debts and those sorts of things that can be sorted out fairly early, it is very difficult to get in contact with them.

I think it comes back to health. You will note that in our submission we talked about on community health services that are being pulled out as well. It is all well and good to say, "We'll do outreach there," but those people are willing to access the service at that time that they want to access that service, and it is at that time they can get the assistance. If they walk out the door, getting back in contact with them can be very difficult. And then the problem festers and becomes a bigger problem—fixing it then costs more for them, costs more for the community and costs more for the taxpayer and the government. So I think that is a really serious issue that needs to be looked at.

You mentioned cultural awareness training. I think cultural awareness training is another serious issue. I have a lot of dealings with the NSW Trustee and Guardian on particular issues. I have Aboriginal clients I am dealing with through the Trustee and Guardian. I cannot really think of a specific example but just anecdotally I talked to them about cultural appropriateness and the way they are dealing with these people on the phone. They sent me a letter back saying, "Oh, we have cultural awareness training." Yes, well, it is not working. I do not know whether it is about the delivery of the cultural awareness training or whether it is that those who are receiving it are just doing it in a tokenistic way and not really committing to it. I do not know. But it is certainly not working. So when they are delivering these services that are not doing so culturally appropriately.

It comes back to trust. In my opening statement I talked about trust. It needs to be that the Aboriginal people can trust that the NSW Government is not just putting forward tokenistic cultural awareness training so that workers can tick the box and say, "Well, we have had cultural awareness training so you cannot tell us that we are not treating these people culturally appropriately." Sorry, but they are not—regardless of what the training is that they have had. So I think that really needs to be looked at.

We heard Jim talk about Aboriginal workers delivering the Aboriginal services, and that is exactly what needs to happen. I can think of a way forward with that. Again in our submission we talked about the Community Development Employment Projects [CDEP] program. I know it is a Commonwealth program but run in partnership with the States. There was some criticism about that program as being like a pseudo work for the dole program and all the rest of it. But in terms of delivering services to the Aboriginal people we had Aboriginal people delivering those services and bettering those communities. They could relate to those communities. They did not need cultural awareness training. Whilst they were only getting a little bit more money than they would be on the dole they did not look at it as a work for the dole program. They never did.

All of the Aboriginal people I have talked to have said, "CDEP was fantastic. It gave our young people things to do. It gave them something to work towards. It gave them training. It gave them self-esteem." So while there might be proponents out there who say it is racially discriminatory or whatever because it is a pseudo work for the dole program and no-one else had to do it that is not the real effect of it. The real effect is that these people get training, they have self-worth, they are delivering services to the Aboriginal community culturally appropriately and in connection with that community, and they have a better outlook on life. That all flows on. It is all interconnected.

As I said in my opening statement, when that flows on you then have lower rates of incarceration and you have people who have self-esteem so they go out, they have got some training and they work towards achieving more. They have a better outlook. They start to have a place in society and they can see that. Following that, incarceration rates will go down and homelessness rates will go down. If you have on community health services delivered on community by Aboriginal people—and they could be just health education services; the doctor does not need to be Aboriginal—then there are better health outcomes for those communities.

CHAIR: Mr Farrell, sorry to interrupt. That is the best clarity we have heard about the issue of Aboriginal delivered services and some of its positives. But I know we are rapidly running out of time and there are some key questions coming. We do have your fantastic submission, and I would like to say again that it is a really great submission.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: It is a fantastic submission with a lot of recommendations, which will help us make our recommendations to the Government and help us put our report together. Following on from what you were saying, it really boils down to recommendation 6 about the establishment of a stolen generations scholarship scheme. Is that what you are suggesting?

Mr FARRELL: That is one of the suggestions. A scheme like the CDEP is a separate issue to the scholarship scheme. As I say in the submission, the scholarship scheme has a dual purpose and that would be perpetual recognition and some recognition for those members of the stolen generations that the scheme is there for them and that young people are given opportunities to achieve greater education or for training purposes. That is just another avenue; it is separate to schemes like the CDEP. There need to be many and varied approaches to this. There is no one approach that can fix this. In terms of giving a better outlook and opportunities to young Aboriginal people, there needs to be a multitude of them—a scholarship scheme, the CDEP, the ACDP and those sorts of things. I do not think that any one thing is going to be enough.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You said about 10 per cent to 15 per cent of your clients have an Aboriginal background?

Mr FARRELL: Ten to 15, yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How many of them tell you that they come from the stolen generations or their relatives or family members are from the stolen generations?

Mr FARRELL: I would not like to hazard a guess. They do not come out and say, "I am a member of the stolen generation". I spend a lot of time building rapport with these communities and people so that they will trust the service I deliver. In building that rapport in general conversations—we deliver our service by standing around and having a yarn with people—we sometimes say, "We might be able to talk about that because we can do something about that". I suggest that close on 100 per cent of the people I talk to have some damage from the stolen generation and certainly some connection, whether it is through a cousin, an uncle, an aunty, a grandparent. I am not exaggerating by saying that this has affected everybody in the Aboriginal communities.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In recommendation 9 you say that reparations should extend to the Aboriginal people as a collective. Is that as distinct from individuals or families getting reparations?

Mr FARRELL: As I have been discussing, there need to be approaches that can advance the Aboriginal people as a whole, a community, so they get some idea that they and their culture are valued in society, not that they are different but that their difference is valued. In terms of reparations as a collective those are things like putting on the health services for different communities. Those are not reparations for individuals who were directly affected by the stolen generations; those are reparations for the whole community to try to repair some of the bleak outlook and oppressive racial profiling that has happened and was perpetuated by—and in some cases arose from—the stolen generation policies.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: So for both individuals and the collective?

Mr FARRELL: Both, yes. I am not saying it should be just the collective. If you look at the submission you will find that there are particular recommendations with respect to counselling services. I had a client who suffered horrific abuse in Kinchela boys home. He talked about the counselling service that the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation provided. He was further down the South Coast and the corporation is based in Redfern. He would ring up when he was having a hard time, which probably saved his life. He did not say as much—too proud—but I got the feeling from him that on occasions ringing a counsellor would save his life as the counsellor would hop in the car and drive down to talk to that man and then he would feel better.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I echo the comments of my colleagues and thank you for your comprehensive submission and powerful testimony. My question is around the idea of public commemorations.

We were out in Bomaderry this morning and a lot of testimony from the Coota girls, the Kinchela boys and a number of members of the stolen generations has been that there is a need to raise awareness. You have said that that would be a guard against repetition. Could you expand on that?

Mr FARRELL: People's memories and society's memory are short and without perpetual recognition people forget that although the responsible government of the day thought this was the best thing for everybody, it was not. Those sorts of things remind people that even though this was done under the laws and policies in place at the time, it was not right. We need to question what we are doing particularly when there are cross-cultural things and one culture is saying what it believes is right. In terms of the wider society understanding, all in the Aboriginal communities I talk to understand. They understand better than I do about the stolen generations and the damage, but the wider community does not. It might start conversations—what is this about? That gives greater understanding of the damage done through policies and legislation of the day. We do not want that to happen again.

Mr ALLEN: To add to that, I have been told on many occasions over my 65 years of life and my mother and father were told, "You fellas have to move on and forget about this stuff that happened 200 or more years ago". It must have happened before any white fellas got here, the way they say it, but it did not just happen then; it has happened right through the whole period. There is a statement to the Aboriginal people, "Forget about it and move on". Then we talk about white man's history here and it is "Lest we forget". Why can we have one statement to forget and move on and the other one lest we forget? They are both very important issues and need to be remembered. We should lest we forget about the whole lot, not just one side of the story.

You fellas are going to wind up, but I want to say three things to you. If there are three things, the first is down to member case management—that is, there is an absolute necessity on the ground for Aboriginal people as part of the overall reparations to get families back together and to get back people together from the fragmentation of the stolen generations and the movement off land to the missions. The other part of it is at the end of June people on unemployment, Newstart benefits, will be required to work 25 hours—I think—a week, which is probably three or more days a week. In the past CDEP was a Commonwealth program that was also supported by the State.

My third really passionate thing is I do not know whether you have been to any of the missions but I go to them all the time. Earlier last year I done a lot of ABC stuff and it was shown right through the regions and we showed what is happening on the missions. The Aboriginal missions are absolutely appalling. Kids are living in third world conditions and so are Aboriginal people. That is partly social housing stuff and it is about having programs there—CDEP helped that a lot. But this Committee needs to say something in Parliament about what is happening on Aboriginal missions in New South Wales. It is absolutely appalling. I could not stress it to you any stronger than that—so member case management, CDEP and work for the dole but working in our community organisations, lands councils, on our missions, on our homelands, the lands we have acquired through land rights. We have acquired that land; we cannot do anything with it. We need to have programs. I work a lot. I manage our lands council. I have got logging—you are a Greens member—but we do it very strategically.

CHAIR: I accept that is absolutely possible.

Mr ALLEN: We log our land and we have all sorts of products out of that. I manage that. We do Local Land Services work. But to bring it all together is difficult. If only we had other programs. We have about 20 kids, young people, working through little grants we get—$50,000, $40,000 and $30,000. Can you imagine if we had a bit more? I have to say Andrew Constance helped us a lot with us getting our timber forestry stuff. He is a Liberal. We have family case management and the Community Development Program but the missions are horrific.

CHAIR: Did I advise you it might be well put to another committee, that is, the Standing Committee on State Development inquiry into economic development in Aboriginal communities. I hope you have made a submission there and dealt with that opportunity because it is really important. I appreciate your three points. I accept that there are some difficulties with the missions because some of those are Aboriginal run housing?

Mr ALLEN: That is neither here nor there; that is about where they get money from and they cannot do it with no money.

CHAIR: Yes. On page 11 you raised an issue that has been touched on with some other people which is inadequate education. We know that the Bringing Them Home report made a strong point, as did the New South Wales response to the Bringing Them Home report, about the importance of education. From that you point out from 1996 young people are going to be educated properly about the past and the wrongdoings. Your submission very clearly states that is not happening. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr FARRELL: That was the point I was going to come back to; the guarding against repetition and the education around that. The content of our submission in that respect was informed by a number of members down the South Coast who have children in public schools and who clearly stated that they have not learnt about the stolen generations at public school. The only thing they know about the stolen generations has come from their own family. This comes back to the fact the Aboriginal communities know about this, but the rest of the community needs to know. If you want to guard against repetition you cannot have just the people who are suffering knowing. The people who ostensibly caused the suffering need to know so they do not do it again. I believe in our submissions I stated that this needs to be unedited, it needs to be real and it needs to include, where possible, addresses from the stolen generations so that the young people who are not Aboriginal can see the hurt and pain and the suffering that this caused.

Putting this into State schools will again come back to gaining the trust of the Aboriginal people, that when a report like the Bringing Them Home report or the inquiry's recommendations are put forward and there are promises that they are going to put these things into education to create awareness and guard against repetition that this will be done and that it will not be token. They will not talk about the policies of the day and that they were the contemporary values of society because they were not. That is clearly stated in my submissions with regard to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Act, that the international contemporary society did not support separation assimilation.

CHAIR: We are at the end of our time. Thank you for your submission. I know you will get some questions on notice because I will have some and others will too. It is such a comprehensive report and I acknowledge that you have provided positive and constructive things for us to consider for our report.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you for coming.

(The witnesses withdrew)

SHARLENE CRUICKSHANK, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor, South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, affirmed and examined:

Ms CRUICKSHANK: The South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation is located in Nowra but we also have clinics at Jerrinja and Wreck Bay and we do service the whole area around the Shoalhaven.

CHAIR: Do you have an opening statement?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I did think about this.

CHAIR: I will advise you that you can submit a written submission after today if you would like to move to questions now. It is up to you.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I just wanted to say listening to other people's stories I was really sad to think that Aunty Christine did not know that I was a Bringing Them Home [BTH] worker. I guess these days because of changes to funding and changes to government our roles do get called different things. Now I am called a social and emotional wellbeing counsellor, and that basically covers everyone and everything. I started in this role nearly four years ago. Back then I was employed as a Bringing Them Home counsellor but, like I say, things have changed in that time.

I just want to say that even before there was a term called the Stolen Generation I personally was impacted by some people that I met back in 1986, so about 29 years ago now. I went to college in Bathurst. I was staying in an Aboriginal hostel back then. I was pretty naïve, I came from Broken Hill. I lived in this very nice little family which at the time I thought was a bit crazy because I had an Aboriginal dad and a white mum. I was the eldest of six kids and I thought we were pretty crazy. Then I went to Bathurst and I met two girls in particular that still stick in my head.

One was a little bit older than me and she was one of the most brilliant women I have ever met in my life I must say. She told me her story. When you are 19 you don't take a lot of notice of other people and what happens out there in the community, but even at that age I was impacted by her story about being removed from her family, put into foster care from the age of two and the abuse and the trauma and the horrific life that she had. But she still came out of that. Like I say, she was the most brilliant woman. When James talked about his mum, she was brilliant. She was a fantastic writer. She could sing. She was a very intelligent woman. She was about 26 at the time and I just thought that she was marvellous. Unfortunately, she had a very dark side as well and she would self-harm. She would lock herself away. She would talk about suicide. When you are 19 that is pretty confronting.

I also had another girl who I became quite close friends with. She was around my age. It was a very similar story. She had been removed as a child with her brother. She experienced sexual abuse and emotional abuse from generations of her adoptive family. She was adopted. The grandfather, the father and then more recently even the adoptive siblings had been sexually abusing her. Just the stories and the pain that they would talk about when they would talk about it. I think one of the biggest barriers that we have is the pain that people experience when they are talking about their experiences. It is why as a counsellor just trying to engage with people and let people know that we are here and that there are safe places to fall I guess sometimes is really difficult. Like I said, that was 29 years ago. I still can't believe it happened and it happened to people my age and it continued to happen and it happened for a long time before that and I guess possibly it is still happening now. I guess that is why I feel proud that I get to do this job now.

CHAIR: We know that the Aboriginal Medical Service does great work across the State and country. Thank you for coming along.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have heard from witnesses from a few different Aboriginal Medical Services as we have travelled around. I do not know if you had a chance to look at some of the other hearings. As the Chair alluded to earlier, it becomes very difficult to quantify how many people have been affected by this and continue to be affected. As the solicitor said earlier, I think 100 per cent of people that he deals with and most families have some connection. We have talked previously about whether there are ways to monitor people who might come into contact with your service. We have used the tick a box scenario, which is not always ideal because it takes time for a lot of people to want to talk about their history. Would you have any suggestion or thoughts about recommendations this Committee could make through what you do in your service

to get an idea of the numbers of people that are affected and continue to be affected from the past practices of the stolen generation?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: As part of our assessment tool we do have a tick a box sort of thing. It is like does it identify first generation, second, third? Generally, for me, I find that people will discuss it. It is not like you say to somebody, "Are you stolen gen?", but often when you are talking about family history and families it will come up and they will talk fairly openly about it. I guess for some people, though, they do not know any information. That makes it hard. Like it has been said before, just talking about it, getting people educated about it. I guess my personal opinion is that the stolen generation really does impact on pretty much 100 per cent of people to some degree.

Many of the people we see are brilliant surviving individuals and they are powerful people and they have got a lot of strengths, and I think to learn from them as well. They peer support each other and I think that is one of the biggest benefits that we have—that you have individuals and you have groups like the Bommy Kids and Kinchela and Cootamundra Girls and those sorts of people who I think inspire us to say we have gone through all this trauma and this horror and yet we still have great strengths, we still support each other. Like I said, they are their own family; they have made their own families.

Coming back to the tick a box thing about aboriginality, some people are scared to ask—taking away that fear and not making it about a conversation, not making it about a question tick a box stuff. I have been doing some stuff with the Workforce Support Unit and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council [AHMRC] about motivational interviewing and trying to encourage that sort of more positive questioning, making questions open rather than closed questions, getting people into a conversation rather than just firing questions at them and, I guess, skilling up our counsellors and our workers and everyone really from reception to our driver about how they engage in conversation as well.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How many counsellors work at your service—just you?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That segues nicely into my next question. I think in Grafton a lady up there was a Bringing Them Home counsellor, or is a Bringing Them Home counsellor, or whatever the new iteration is. Then there was a young man who worked in counselling for the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service we saw when we were out there a couple of weeks ago. It was interesting to hear them make comments, particularly the young woman in Grafton, who said sometimes it is difficult for the men to come in and speak to her, because they are not as comfortable sharing their story with, I guess, a younger female, and even the young man in Walgett said that sometimes elders do not want to engage with him.

It was not negative but the issue is when you are the only one and you are not someone who they feel comfortable with for whatever reason—we had other witnesses say to us quietly, "I don't want to talk to anyone local about it; I would rather tell someone my story who doesn't know me, who I won't bump into at an event or down the street"—do you find that is an issue you face in being the only one and maybe people do not feel comfortable using the service?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I think that definitely is. When I first came here four years ago I came from community mental health and was expecting a huge caseload; I was thinking there were going to be 30, 50 or 100 people rapping at my door. But when I got here I had one client. It was like I had been led to believe that there are a lot of people out there, but I had one client. Another challenge is that people have counselling and that counsellor goes away. I think before myself there were several BTH workers; there was not a lot of good recordkeeping unfortunately. When I came there was really nothing there to say even what they had done, and I knew they had done some programs and different things, and that had been put into someone's top drawer somewhere.

So it took a couple of months probably for me to even find information. I know that one of the things when I first started is I made sure that I got together some folders and some resources and put that together. A big thing that I started with, I thought if there are no clients I will start with the service providers and other clinicians and the staff I will be telling them about. So I put together what information was out there, some resource packages and training packages—just educating people about the stolen generation and Aboriginal history and a bit of cultural awareness tucked in there. That was really beneficial. I think that helped me engage with other people in the community and got my name out there.

Another thing I started small on, educating our own service about things like Sorry Day, the Apology anniversary, those sorts of things, and over time I expanded that. I think last year and the year before for Sorry Day we did a walk across Nowra Bridge and things like that, and that has grown, including this year where Culburra school did their own Sorry Day walk out at Culburra. But now this year we are hoping to do it together so you have more schoolkids and primary schoolchildren come. It will either be here in Nowra or out at Culburra—so just working with the community.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In trying to help the stolen generation it is a challenge to find them and the different homes. Originally we were focusing on the government homes at Cootamundra and so on, then we went to Broken Hill to the Salvation Army home who were there with the United Aborigines Mission [UAM] home. Is there any directory of homes where Aboriginal children were taken?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I think you can get things online. There are lists of the different homes that people were taken to. I know I have got it somewhere. I am sure you can find it online.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Under what?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I am sure if you just Google in "homes" it comes up with a list.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I just thought some of them may not be on a list, that was all.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I think there were a variety of places that did have children. To be honest, I am not sure where it came from but I know I do have a list of different places.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Have you had much contact with children from the UAM homes or the stolen generation adults?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I have. It is not all about counselling stuff too, because I try like working with Uncle Willy and the children about doing social events and stuff. Like I said, we have done a few Apology anniversaries—we did one only last week. So we try to encourage people to talk about that. I think it is even funny that some people do not know the difference between Sorry Day and the Apology; they get a bit confused—"That is about sorry", and that sort of thing. As I say, a lot of it comes down to education and information sharing. I have worked with other people, not necessarily from Bomaderry, who were taken to other homes, like Cootamundra.

I recently had a lady who is in her nineties and I think Aunty Chrissie talked about how people are getting older, and I think this lady was starting to show signs of early dementia—not early dementia, she was 94—having memory problems, and that then brings around some other issues about anxiety, because she became really anxious and she wanted to talk about her being abused, I guess, and her family were quite distressed by that because she would get fearful and she would be in her room at night and then she would have to ring people and that sort of stuff. So I guess even working with aged care facilities about how we support people. It is a bit like that with people who have gone through trauma and they experience flashbacks or post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] and things like that. How do we support our aged care facilities?

CHAIR: And because you have a mental health background as well.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Yes.

CHAIR: Are you aware that one of the responses to Bringing Them Home [BTH] was a recognition of mental health issues and that there was meant to be distinct funding for mental health services for stolen generations within general health budgets? That was what was determined. Do you know if it happened or is it available? Is there a special fund for specific—

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I am not aware. With the way the funding has changed—as I said earlier, now our service is funded under Prime Minister and Cabinet, so that is why my role is not specifically BTH—we are now called the social health team, not even social and emotional wellbeing. We are the social health team and that covers drug and alcohol, mental health and social and emotional wellbeing in one bucket.

CHAIR: But the change in name does not give people an awareness of your role.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I think that is the thing that would get lost. That is the thing people do not know—that I am there.

CHAIR: That you are there for them.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Even though I am there. I feel, like I said, a bit sad about that. But that happens.

CHAIR: That is a relevant point. It has not come up before and it is really interesting. If the change in the name of a role means that people do not realise what the role is about and that it is there for them, that is really interesting.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Following on from that, when you came here you found that you had one client. Over the past four years what strategies did you put in place to increase awareness about the work that you do and engage more with clients?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Like I said, I did a lot of education with other service providers, with the local health district, with non-government organisations [NGOs], with probation and parole and people like that, trying to get them information. Pretty much anyone that I could talk to I would go to staff meetings and say, "This is what my role is. This is how I can help. Send all your clients to me." It was that sort of stuff. And it did work. I did make quite a few contacts. Because I do not just work with first generation people, I work with everybody, that is sort of how I get around working with pretty much everybody. I have worked with younger people—youth—and older people, like I said. It does give me the opportunity to get to community events, to do community consultations and to get involved in a lot of community activities as well.

CHAIR: You go to them rather than expecting them to come to you.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Yes—very much so. Probably for the first 12 months I did a lot of going to other staff meetings and things like that. Also we have a Shoalhaven Aboriginal Community Alliance Interagency. I have been involved with that over the past 3½ years, again making good contacts with other service providers and community members. My family actually came from Nowra. My dad was born and bred in Nowra. I was back and forth to this area my whole life, so I have always had a real connection here, but as an Aboriginal person I still had to work really hard for people to get to know me and I am sure there are still people that do not, in four years. I had to get people to vouch for me and say that I was an okay person and that sort of stuff.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Given that you are the only social and emotional wellbeing counsellor, who supports you when you need support yourself? Obviously it is emotionally draining and impacting. Who supports you and do you have access to support?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Actually, we have a really good team. I work with mental health workers and drug and alcohol workers. Our service actually has the workforce support unit with it. They cover the far south coast and around this area. They do workforce support, so they provide support to all the workers that work in social and emotional wellbeing and drug and alcohol. I say "all"—you know, depending on your funding—but they are very good. I have clinical supervision; we have professional supervision—line management supervision.

I have done lots of personal stuff myself. It does not help me at times, but that is the joy of being human, I think. I guess it is doing the self-care stuff as well—having the opportunities to talk, even though it is way out of my comfort zone, and sharing stories. With the stories that we heard today—it always blows me away that people share their stories—the more we hear of those, the better. I am part of Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council [AHMRC] as well. They do quite a bit of work obviously around workforce support as well. Our workforce support unit works with them. That has changed again because of funding, as I am sure you are aware.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: My other point—

CHAIR: Maybe elaborate on that too if you can, because we are hearing the changes or the short-term money and those things do have an impact.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Yes, I think it really does. I know last year our service was waiting for the funding to come through and it does cause quite a lot of anxiety and angst amongst people. They have been given this bucket of money and told, "Continue doing the programs that you are doing and do more." But that is not always possible and if there is a bit less money one program will not happen—if that is not the "most important" one happening. Like I think I have said before, with BTH and stolen generation stuff I always try to tag it onto everything else.

I have been lucky enough to work with Good Grief doing some training on Seasons for Healing. That is a really lovely program around working with grief and loss and dealing with changes. For me, having the opportunity to do that has been really good. I did a bit of it myself and it is a really lovely program that is safe and soft. It is not therapeutic; it is not counselling as such; it is more education around grief and loss. We would like to have more programs like that. We hope over this year to saturate the whole area with Seasons for Healing. Hopefully everyone in the Shoalhaven will be doing Seasons for Healing, so we will all be healed, or on our way to it.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: A number of witnesses throughout our inquiry have supported the idea of healing centres as part of the reparations. What is your view on that?

Ms CRUICKSHANK: I think it would be fabulous. I wish I had the money to do it myself. I would build it out at Jerrinja on the corner and you would be able to look over the sea and the river. I think it would be amazing, using other therapeutic things such as music, art and all those sorts of facilities as well, not just counselling. I think sometimes we get over talking about stuff. We need more practical stuff, more hands-on things and a place that you can actually go to.

Like I said, I think it is having that safe place that people can go to. I think it is lovely having something at the Bomaderry homes, but again we hear that some people struggle with going back there because of the trauma, like Uncle Sonny talked about his father who could not even look at the place. So for people who maybe cannot face going back there, there is that. Again, in saying that, to have positive things happening there such as elders groups, art groups and other positive things happening at that site rather than maybe the historical stuff may also be beneficial as well.

CHAIR: Thank you so much. I hope that today has encouraged you to make a submission. It would be really useful for us to get more information on a few points that you talked about. You mentioned motivational interviewing techniques. That is valuable information. If you could take that on notice to make some of that available and anything else that you would like to submit to us we would be really grateful. The work you do is really important and you have good practical understanding of what goes on. Thank you so much.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Thank you.

CHAIR: You have until 31 March.

Ms CRUICKSHANK: Okay.

CHAIR: That goes for everyone—submissions are open until 31 March.

(The witness withdrew)

LINDY LAWLER, Community member, sworn and examined:

ERIN FRASER, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor, Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Do you have an opening statement?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Before I speak I would like to pay my respect to my elders past, present and future and to acknowledge the custodians of this land on which we are gathered here today. Today I am speaking to you about my personal life and my current situation based on being removed from my parents at the age of five months old, with my twin sister, Mandy. Mandy, also known as Jean Patricia Cooper, my twin, and I, also known as Elsie Rose Cooper, were born on 21 December 1958. We lived at Browns Flat, Silver City. It was called Silver City because of the humpies on the reserves. We lived with our parents until 11 June 1959. On this date we were taken to Ashfield Infants Home and were considered under the control of the Aborigines Welfare Board. Our mother refused to give us up and didn't sign any adoption papers. The board declared her an unfit mother.

From then onwards, Mandy and I were moved and placed in many homes and were looked after by many different carers. From 1959 to 1968 we lived in nine different homes. We were moved nine times. In 1959 we lived in Ashfield Infants Home for three years. We then lived with a foster carer in 1962 for one year. We were then moved to live with another foster carer in 1963 for two months before being placed back with the original foster carer for another seven months. In 1964 we were placed with Mrs Dellit, who later became our long-term foster mother, for five months in 1964. We were then removed again and placed with the original foster carer for another two years. We then spent five weeks with another foster carer before being placed at St Catherine's Brooklyn Orphanage in 1966 for two years.

From 1962 to 1966 we spent time with a particular foster carer who caused physical and emotional harm and abuse to both Mandy and I. I do not want to name this foster carer for legal reasons. This abuse was part of her physical punishment method. She would call us into the kitchen and tell us to stand in front of the oven at the stove. She would hold my right hand over the stove and I would feel the flames and I still remember the screaming. Mandy then experienced the same abuse. As an adult I have attempted to talk about these experiences yet it still brings me to tears as I can see myself as a young girl experiencing the pain. Now I am afraid of open flames and keep away from gas stoves as this triggers memories, panic attacks and moments when I freeze and have anxiety. I have accessed my files and this abuse is not recorded but I have memories of these events and it has happened. I don't understand why this wasn't recorded in my file.

We were permanently placed with our foster mother, Mrs Betty Dellit, in approximately 1968. She was different. She wasn't nasty or cruel and treated us as equals. Being removed from an Aboriginal family and being placed in non-aboriginal homes caused us to grow up disconnected from the Aboriginal community. As young girls, Mandy and I didn't even know what Aboriginal people were. We have missed out on family connections and knowing who we are and who we are related to. We were not able to meet grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins who have since passed away. I live a non-Indigenous life because that is how I have been raised by a non-Indigenous foster mother and I have then raised my children in the same manner.

I come to the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service for social and emotional counselling. I experience panic attacks and stress due to my history and past experiences. I discuss these experiences and receive support from my Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor. I have been attending these services and have received counselling for over 10 years. I have seen numerous counsellors over the years and I am able to speak behind closed doors in a private manner. The Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service has short wait times, great services such as dentists, doctors, specialists, podiatrists and counsellors. All staff highly respect the elders and we get invited to Indigenous community events. Most importantly the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service provides transport to all appointments.

Being removed from my family and my culture has affected Mandy and I in so many ways, it is difficult to piece the memories together to understand our history and our stories. It is like a jigsaw puzzle. I am currently trying to organise a time line of my story, using my ward files, with the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor. I gained access to this file in 2008, around the same time that former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to the stolen generation. My twin sister, Mandy, was unable to read this file due to illness. Mandy sadly passed away in 2009. I am confused as to why and how Mandy's name and my name were

changed. According to my file, in 1976 Mandy's name was changed from Jean Patricia Cooper to Mandy Jean Dellit and my name was changed from Elsie Rose Cooper to Lindy Elsie Dellit. I am still determined to learn the truth about our past. I remember agreeing to change my surname to my foster mother's maiden name, but I do not remember agreeing to change my first name.

I have since learnt what it is to be an Aboriginal person. I also have a better understanding of where I have come from. I have contributed to and gained acknowledgement and acceptance from the Indigenous community and the non-Indigenous community. I was named Elder of the Year in 2012, and I am highly respected in the Indigenous community and by non-Indigenous people. I am standing before you, telling you not only my story but Mandy's story also. Although she is not here to share her story, Mandy experienced the same journey as me. She stands beside me today in spirit.

CHAIR: Thank you so much. Congratulations on the recognition that you have received in the community. I acknowledge the importance of the support service that Aunty Lindy has told us about. Erin, would you like to make any comment about that?

Ms FRASER: No.

CHAIR: Aunty Lindy, are you open to questions now?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you very much for coming and telling us your story, your pilgrimage to where you are today. It is wonderful to rediscover who you really are, to be a complete person. A lot of people we have talked to are from the stolen generation. They were taken away and put in Government institutions. You did go to one or two, but mostly you had carers until you were adopted. I note that you were at St Catherine's Orphanage, Brooklyn, yet you had parents; you were not an orphan. You would have been very young then.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Very young, and not knowing what was going on.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It was very cruel to do that to you. It is hard for us to find all the people like you who have been on that pilgrimage, going to different families and so on. It is easier to find the people who were at the United Aborigines Mission homes, say, here at Bomaderry. How can we find these people? You have been helped by a counsellor. I suppose there are people who are not sure where they are from. If we advertised for people who were transferred from carer to carer, I wonder whether they would know that they were a stolen generation child. It took you a while to know.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: And yet I was originally from here in the first place. The people here know my family. I am still trying to learn them all. It is not easy. I would love to know more. I love speaking with them. I would love to learn more about my mum and my father.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: When you got to the stage of trying to find your mother, she had passed away before you could get to her.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: She has gone.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That is very sad.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: I met her only once. I was 18 when I met her, with my twin. I still remember what she wore. She knew who we were.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is great that you had that meeting with her. Thank you very much for what you have shared with us.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Thank you very much for sharing your story with us. We have heard so many heart-breaking, dramatic stories of victims who suffered at the hands of the State. We are here to hear suggestions and ideas about reparations. We know that nothing could ever compensate you for the suffering that you and many other people have gone through. What do you think would be a starting point for us to recommend to the Government as reparation?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: I have some dot points. I do not know if money as compensation exists anymore. The Government should listen to us and not turn its back on us. It should stop the closure of Aboriginal Medical Services around Australia. The Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service provides for families and encourages connections. It supports communications across different services. It provides transport. It would be great if there were more money for the Aboriginal Medical Service, for support and counselling for people affected by the stolen generation or people removed from their parents, families and culture. Local Indigenous cultural centres require more money to provide cultural activities for the community. It is important that the Government acknowledge the stories of people affected by the stolen generation or people removed from their parents, families and culture. I have photos here.

CHAIR: Thank you for those.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have a question for you, Aunty Lindy, but I am happy for Erin to add something. You told us earlier that you were trying to piece together your story and get clarity about why your name and your sister's name were changed. As we have talked to people we have found that accessing information can be really difficult. Would you tell us more about where the barriers are or why it has been hard to find out more about your past and your story? Perhaps Erin would assist you in answering, if she has been helping you with that.

Ms FRASER: Aunty Lindy accessed her ward file. In that file are forms that show a request for her name and Mandy's name to be changed. There are also forms that show the request was granted. There is no record of discussions with Lindy or Mandy about that. As Aunty Lindy said, she does not remember discussing that with anyone or signing anything. There are copies of the request for the names to be changed and forms saying that the names have been officially changed. That is all.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There are no other records?

Ms FRASER: No.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you think that they do not exist anymore? It is hard to know.

Ms FRASER: I would say they do not exist, because we have gone through multiple channels to obtain Aunty Lindy's file. We have gone through Ashfield Infants Home, DOCS and other avenues and have received numerous copies of the same thing, but nothing other than those four pieces of paper.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Does it say who requested the name change on the form?

Ms FRASER: No, I do not think so. From memory, no. I think it just says the family, and Aunty Lindy says that she does remember discussing changing her surname to her foster mother's maiden name because she had a lovely relationship with her foster mum and she wanted to have that name, but the middle name and first name, she does not remember being asked to change that or sign anything.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Could you identify what those photos are?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: This is the Ashfield Infants' Home, in Sydney.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Orphanage?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: It is like an orphanage.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And this one?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: They are all the same photos from the infants' home.

CHAIR: Can you clarify how long you were there before you went into—

Ms FRASER: She has a time line here from her file information. She was in hospital in May of 1959 and then taken to the Ashfield Infants' Home in June of 1959.

CHAIR: Is that document able to be tabled with us?

Ms FRASER: Yes.

CHAIR: We can take out anything we do not want. How it happened would be—

Ms FRASER: We did this together going through Aunty Lindy's file and just putting down the dates of information of where she and Mandy moved. There is a gap between 1966 and 1968. We know that Aunty Lindy was in the St Catherine's Brooklyn Orphanage in 1966 and, in 1968, she was placed with her long-term foster mother, but there is no information in those two years from her file, so there is no information—no formal documentation of her accepting the two girls to live with her full-time. That is Aunty Lindy—

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: That would be my twin sister, Mandy, and I am the one—

Ms FRASER: On the other side.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: On the other side.

Ms FRASER: I get them mixed up. They look identical. Twins!

CHAIR: They are gorgeous photos. Were you able to get those through the home?

Ms FRASER: Yes.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: They came through what they call the Mitchell Library. It has all the records as well, in Sydney.

Ms FRASER: The only photo she has is from her time at the Ashfield home.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You have done a lot of work chasing those details. Would it help if the Government allocated funds for a special unit to trace the stolen generation?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Yes. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Ms FRASER: Yes.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Yes.

Ms FRASER: Definitely. Even creating the time line took a lot of energy and going through these old files. Some of the dates do not match up. They are handwritten and they are faded, and things like that.

CHAIR: Can anything be done to make the experience of reconnecting with your community better? Are there supports that the Government can provide to make it easier to have a reunion and to connect with your community, your place? Would that be of assistance to you if you were able to do that?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Absolutely, yes. If it can help, yes, for the lost ones, yes.

Ms FRASER: Can I just add, Aunty Lindy did a lot of that herself with Mandy, connecting with family and community.

CHAIR: Did you have contact with Link-Up to work with some of their reunion programs?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: I heard of them. I probably did it once and then I don't know what happened to them at the end.

Ms FRASER: Aunty Lindy did not have any formal reunions with Link-Up. She did have access to Link-Up, but I do not think that eventuated. That was before I started working with Aunty Lindy.

CHAIR: Do you think there is a general problem—we discovered it through the inquiry—that people do not know what opportunities are available and how to make those connections. Is there something we can learn about the engagement process to ensure that Aboriginal people know that the supportive services are there, so they can find out about the opportunities that are available? You can write to us if you think of something, or if you know of any other good programs that other organisations or community groups are doing, or how you do consultation. Those things are helpful.

Ms FRASER: It is about education, as we have discussed today, getting out to the community what our roles are at the Aboriginal Medical Services [AMS], and that things such as Link-Up do exist. A lot of people do not know it does. Accessing Link-Up can be difficult at times, as people in the community have told me. Once again, the same as Sharlene, I am a social and emotional wellbeing counsellor. My role was a Bringing Them Home counsellor. People come to see me about mental health concerns, not knowing that I can assist in this aspect as well regarding the stolen generation, accessing files and going through the files in a supportive and therapeutic manner, rather than accessing your file and reading some of that horrific stuff at home. I suppose getting it out there in the community is what we do and that there are services out there. Whether it is funding or not knowing about these services, the community is not accessing them as much as they can.

CHAIR: Do you know if your role is funded by the State or the Commonwealth?

Ms FRASER: Prime Minister and Cabinet.

CHAIR: No State funding contributes to what you do?

Ms FRASER: No. There is one of me at the AMS in the Illawarra. We have a drug and alcohol worker, a family worker, a crisis support worker and that is our community team. The rest is all medical staff. We are all funded by different pools of money. For example, the family worker is funded by different money, the drug and alcohol worker is funded by different money.

CHAIR: Does that mean they might not all be secure positions for the same period of time, that one can drop off at any time and then it breaks down the team?

Ms FRASER: In the last financial year—June/July of last year—we were all worried, as Sharlene mentioned before, about the potential job cuts due to lack of funding and tenders and things like that.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Coming back here, when I saw a book called Bringing Them Home, it was like, I am home. I am back home to where I come from, the original place. My family is half of them here. I know them. Communication is hard but I will get to know everybody and they will help me because I only have to come down here and they know me straightaway. Even though I might not know them sometimes, but they remind me. They tell me who I am and who I look like, so I feel I am home.

CHAIR: Do they recognise you? They know who you are?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Straightaway, so I am home again. Back home, yes, where I started in the first place.

CHAIR: Sorry for your losses, but we wish you well. Thank you so much for coming and sharing with us.

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Thank you.

CHAIR: We will talk to you about taking copies of the photos. Will you be okay with us taking photos of the photos?

Aunty LINDY LAWLER: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

NICOLE MOORE, Managing Director, Habitat Personnel, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you for being here at such short notice.

Ms MOORE: Habitat Personnel is an Aboriginal employment organisation here in town. I have actually only been in the position of managing director for about 2½ days now so if anyone has any questions about Habitat Personnel I will probably have to take them as questions on notice to get the details. We are a former Community Development Employment Projects [CDEP] organisation. I am not sure if everyone is familiar with what that is.

Back in the days when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission [ATSIC] was providing funding and just afterwards there was a scheme called the Community Development Employment Projects scheme. Under this people who were eligible for income support from the Government agreed to have that money paid to a community organisation such as ours rather than getting paid a dole payment. They would then be employed by us. I guess it was pretty much an early version of the work for the dole programs. But the concept of it was that people would say, "Rather than being paid welfare benefits we choose to pool all of our money together into a community organisation and then be employed by that organisation to earn that money."

What that meant we could do as a CDEP organisation was to run lots of community development programs. So people were employed in the community doing things that would help the community, and that program ran nationally so there were lots of community development outcomes as well as the employment outcomes. That has gone now. The policy climate and the funding climate that we operate in now, in the days of the Council of the Australian Governments [COAG] and closing the gap, is that I guess issues are looked at individually and they are looked at in silos. I want to speak to two things that that means.

The first one is the removal of self-determination and the removal of community capacity, and the fact that our communities have lost a lot of social capital because the focus on mainstreaming means that there is no attention paid to whether it is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation that gets funding or that gets programs. In a way it kind of gets swept up and lost in the mainstream. I understand from a government point of view that they do want to see Aboriginal services delivered well by the mainstream but the problem is that it comes at the expense of specific programs and a specific focus on Aboriginal communities.

The other problem when you have siloed agencies focusing on core business is that only individual needs get looked at. So education will always look at education; health will always look at health; and law and justice will always look at law and justice. The problem is that there are holistic issues here. When we are talking about socio-economic disadvantage it is so closely linked to social and emotional well-being. The trauma and the intergenerational trauma—the disconnection from culture and the disconnection from family—is all one big issue. It is all interconnected, and you cannot look at individual things like jobs or housing without acknowledging that there is that huge impact and they are complicated issues. Aboriginal community organisations deal with that.

At Habitat we do not just provide an employment service, even though that is all we are actually funded to do; we will spend our time helping people who are looking for things like confirmation of Aboriginality. There are not many community controlled organisations left that will issue that documentation. We are one of them. In a lot of cases our workers, and technically we are getting paid by the Government to provide an employment service, will sit down and help people access Link-Up NSW and access the records held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AITSIS], because that sort of work is not anybody's core business that I can see. So it does fall back onto us to just incidentally do that. I am trying not to talk too much about Commonwealth issues; I am trying to keep it to state-based issues here.

CHAIR: Could you clarify something on your point about the confirmation of Aboriginality. Do they need that to be able to get employment in any program that is offered as an Aboriginal funded employment program? Is there a link there?

Ms MOORE: Not automatically, although in a lot of cases yes. It is really up to the employer as to what burden of proof around Aboriginality they put on things like identified positions. Even things like applications for housing assistance need a confirmation of Aboriginality so people will come to us.

CHAIR: So stolen generations people who have difficulty defining their parentship?

Ms MOORE: Yes, and the second and third generations from the stolen generations. Most of our client group is well under 30 years old. So we are dealing with lots of the second and third generations of those who were removed.

CHAIR: And it is still a problem for them?

Ms MOORE: Absolutely. The three-part test about Aboriginality is about being able to prove Aboriginal descent. So they are reliant on the record keeping, which was not done for the stolen generations.

CHAIR: I have a big question, and I heard you recently speaking on the radio. How much of the work that you do is about supporting people so that they can go that next step into employment, into training and into doing something? It is very easy to say that people need a job or need a house or those things without addressing what we have heard about—their social and emotional wellbeing. Is that in and of itself a real job that should be expanded to give them the opportunity to take that next step?

Ms MOORE: Yes, that work is embedded in all of the work that we do. Our current contract arrangements with the Federal Government are that we do not get paid for the work that we have done until people have successfully stayed in a job for 26 weeks. Otherwise we do not do anything for all the work that we have done. So that means a lot of work at the pre-employment stage—actually getting people job ready, matching them to suitable jobs, working with employers to create a culturally safe workplace and the sort of workplace that somebody is going to want to stay in for 26 weeks, and providing that ongoing mentoring and support for people once they are placed into work. At the most mercenary level, if we do not do that then we do not get paid. But also that is the sort of work that needs to happen for that outcome for that person.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Are there jobs out there for people to be filled?

Ms MOORE: Not enough jobs.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Are there specific jobs that your clients seem to be looking for?

Ms MOORE: We try to match our clients to demand. So we work with employers to try to identify opportunities. I will give an example of work that we have going at the moment. ACT Corrective Services, up in Canberra, are looking at doing a recruitment drive for Aboriginal corrections officers. Once we have that sort of project identified we can work with a group of people to skill them up and to get them ready to be competitive in that application process. So there is a bit of both. Some of the demand comes from the jobseeker and some of the demand comes from the employer.

CHAIR: We have run out of time. Thank you for coming forward. Thank you for being here today. You have had the opportunity to make some really good points already but I think you will probably get some questions from us. I invite you and your organisation to make a submission if you are able to because it would be a valuable part of the overall story.

Ms MOORE: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you to everyone who has been with us today. Some absolutely tremendous information has been brought forward. It has been really valuable for us in this last of our hearings. For those people who took questions on notice, the secretariat will be in touch. There is still an opportunity for people to make submissions, or supplementary submissions. If you have already made one and want to make another one that would be great.

(The witness withdrew)

RAY MINNIECON, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you for being here.

Mr MINNIECON: Just for this particular inquiry, this will be personal, private evidence about my work with the stolen generations, or as a pastor. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country here and pay my respects to their elders and to their country. I have worked with the stolen generation since the 1980s as a pastor. It started in Western Australia with the old Carrolup home. They were still sending children down there at that time. I said to the Government at that time, "Please don't send any more flaming kids. Send the mums and dads and we'll put the family together again." So the old Carrolup home was changed to the Marribank Family Centre, which helped us to deal with a whole range of family issues and strengthen the people there.

I came back to New South Wales as the head of World Vision Australia's Indigenous programs. One of the first things I did was to hire one of the beautiful ladies from Wreck Bay who had gone through Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home, Aunty Jean Carter, as the one who would help us to negotiate through all of the issues of the stolen generation in New South Wales. She was very good at that. You will recall, too, that at that particular time, the national inquiry into forced removal was happening. She helped to facilitate a lot of people to go into that inquiry at that particular time.

At that time, one of the ways in which I personally wanted to offer my services to the stolen generation was to work with homes individually rather than with individual members, as I did with the Carrolup home. One of the homes that we worked with, other than the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home, was the Kinchela Boys Home. From that time onwards I walked through the doors with those guys to take them back to their homes in 2001, I think, or 2002. I organised all of that and helped them to build their organisation, do the strategic planning and do all the kinds of things that were necessary. I did most of the funding of that from my own pocket. I have not worked in a full-time position since I left World Vision because no-one will fund this kind of work. So I have to go out and do consultancy work—not in this particular field or in this particular region, but in other regions—in order to put food on my table. Doing that has helped me to really sink my teeth into the issues around this as a private person, as a pastor and as someone who wants to work with his people.

I have been to you government people before. Forgive me if I sound a bit cynical but I am cynical with respect to the New South Wales Government because I have walked a lot of these people through your doors. They have told their stories. They have spilled their guts. I have had to deal with all the stuff that came after that but nothing came from it. So I get a bit cynical—

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Sorry, I did not hear you. Nothing came from what?

Mr MINNIECON: Nothing came from them telling their stories. Nothing came from the New South Wales Government. I am telling you that because the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation was the lead stolen generation organisation that was trying to force the Government to look at this particular issue. It took us, I think, about 12 years before we got some money through the door, and that came from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services [ATSIS], with their Bringing Them Home counsellor. Both the Cootamundra girls and I lobbied to have the Bringing Them Home [BTH] counsellors placed within the organisation rather than placed in some service provider outside, because—you will find this story right across the board—many of the stolen generation will not go to a BTH counsellor and tell their stories.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That would be one of your recommendations?

Mr MINNIECON: Mostly, yes. For the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home I would not ask for one; I would ask for about three to be able to deal with the backlog of work that is needed, just for this particular home. I would recommend that also for the Cootamundra girls as well as for the Kinchela Boys Home and for many of the other homes. I must say that I have dealings with a lot of those other homes, including the Parramatta Girls Home. I have heard and felt—and I bear it in my spirit—the painful stories that they have told, which possibly will never be known or shared around the place.

I also deal with stolen generations who have been taken overseas. They are also on my books, when I think about what we can do about their particular issues, because they are completely different to those who have been taken to homes here. When they come back home here there is a whole range of other types of issues

that they face in terms of their reconnection with culture, family, their own siblings and a whole range of other things.

That is a very brief background, because I do not want to hold you up here all day. In the strategic plan that we developed for the Kinchela Boys Home we were looking for a way forward. You are always asking the question, "What's the end game here? Where are we heading? As a people and as a community how can we do something here that's going to make a significant impact on their lives?"

But not only them, we still have to deal with their children and so those transgenerational traumas are a very real issue. I know when we are dealing with the Kinchela men many of the children were just starting to tell their stories or trying to come to grips with what happened to them because of the issues that their fathers and grandfathers have faced in these homes.

By the way, Reverend Nile, there are over 100 homes in Sydney alone, and the Ashfield home that she was taken to and her aunty was taken to was opened in 1884, I think. The State Government opened it as the Ashfield Infants Home in 1924. If you want to look at the names of all the homes in New South Wales, there are over 300 of them. This is a big issue for this State; the ways in which we have dealt with our children is evil. We have to deal with that. With the Kinchela men, we came up with a strategic plan that had three core units. One was: how do you reconnect back to culture, country, family and those kinds of big issues you have heard about today? The second part is: How do you then reconstruct your identity? The third part is: How do you restore all of that and make sure of the services governments provide back to these people? Reconnection, reconstruction and restoration was the platform upon which we worked with the Kinchela men.

I think three things would be useful to you to consider. The first is if you had the courage, like the Canadian Government, to have a truth and reconciliation commission. You have only heard one story here today; you have not heard aunty's sister's story and about those other 300 homes. Nearly every one of those homes had Aboriginal people, and what about non-Aboriginal people who have gone through these places and been brutalised? I have met many of the Parramatta girls and heard their stories. They are brutal; they are evil. Many of those girls cannot function in society because of what happened to them. I would like to see a truth and reconciliation commission set up straight away.

The second thing is to remember that we are going through a process of a royal commission into sexual abuse. I do not see any plans from the Federal or State Government to show their endgame once this commission is completed. What is the plan to help those people get some kind of meaning out of telling their story or spilling their guts? What is going to come out of that and how are you going to help them to heal? This is part of your responsibility as a government. There are many of those stories.

The third thing I would like to see you consider—and the best thing you could possibly do—is to start talking about having a special Minister of State for these issues, like you had for the flaming Olympics. They could be tasked with government responsibilities and the funds to go with it to help people to deal with these issues. As you can hear, they cannot even get access to their blooming records. That is only one small part of the healing process as the records are locked up in government archives.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you; you packed a lot into a short time.

CHAIR: Thank you for your great input that is a valuable closing statement.

(The witness withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 2.44 p.m.)