

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

**INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE
FIELDS**

At Sydney on Monday 12 December 2005

The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. J. C. Burnswoods (Chair)

The Hon. Dr A. Chesterfield-Evans

The Hon. K. F. Griffin

The Hon. C. J. S. Lynn

The Hon. R. M. Parker

The Hon. I. W. West

GARY MOORE, Director, Council of Social Service of NSW, 66 Albion Street, Surry Hills, 2010, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: You have received many questions as we prepared?

Mr MOORE: Yes.

CHAIR: Would you like to say something by way of an opening statement?

Mr MOORE: No, I would just go straight into questions.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: The first one relates to an overview of your organisation in relation to the Macquarie Fields area?

Mr MOORE: Firstly, NCOSS is the peak body for the State's non-government social and community services sector. We define, develop and advocate a broad range of social policy issues. We promote effective human services programs and we assist in building capacities of non-government organisations through various organisation development products and services. We have several member organisations that operate in Macquarie Fields and we have been advised by some of them of their views about long-term social issues in the area and the state of human services provision. NCOSS and I in that role have been a member of the advisory committee that was assisting work ventures in the Department of Housing to establish a program of neighbourhood technology centres, the first of which was located in Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: What you understand to be the major areas or aspect is of social disadvantage in Macquarie Fields at how does this impact on the lives of people in the area?

Mr MOORE: As with many disadvantaged areas, you tend to have an interaction of a range of social, economic and cultural factors. We are advised particularly from those local organisations I referred to as some of the key elements of social disadvantage are long-term unemployment and underemployment, poor public transport access to jobs and services, a significant level of family breakdown and violence, and a significant level of alcohol and other drug abuse. So, what do some of these things cons by together to lead to? Certainly, for a section of the population a poorer quality of life and significant inequalities; poorer health; a sense of social exclusion and a lack of community engagement; and to a certain degree a sense of helplessness and capture.

CHAIR: I do not know whether you have had a chance to look at the Government's submission?

Mr MOORE: No, I have not.

CHAIR: Last week we discussed it with Col Gellatly. He gave us a lot of statistical figures and comparisons between some of those things you mentioned in Macquarie Fields and those in other areas. Would you agree that social this event is one of the major contributing factors to the disturbances?

Mr MOORE: The social this event in Macquarie Fields is spread across—and this is important to note—both public housing tenants and many people who live in private rental housing and some who continue to struggle at the bottom end of the home ownership market. In essence, we think it is reasonably widespread. It helps to create an environment in which civil disturbances can happen and in which they rapidly escalate. We think that without strong and collective community leadership it can be very difficult to reduce community tensions and part of the specific is years that helped to start the situation. So, the short answer is yes, it is a contributing factor, but not the only factor.

CHAIR: Do you want to say something about the other factors?

Mr MOORE: Certainly from local agencies I guess the degree of—and I did mention this—social exclusion and lack of community engagement, which is an element of social disadvantage but

perhaps not thought of enormously. They would tend to say that within the past six to 12 months there have been groupings of people in that community and enormously frustrating. There has been a range of incidents leading up to this and that is one of the reasons the reaction of some in the community occurred in the way in which it did.

CHAIR: Do you want to say any more about what you think the underlying causes of the problems are? You mentioned, for instance, incidents or whatever in the past few months, 12 months?

Mr MOORE: From what we understand, one of the underlying issues is the intergenerational long-term unemployment in the area and the isolation of parts of the community from almost the outside world. In that sense a frustration and exclusion.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said isolation from the outside world, but in terms of mobility, is there not enough transport, and so on, that those people to interact with the outside world? Are there not malls and street life and interaction of that variety?

Mr MOORE: There is some of the interaction but not all the community is engaged in that. Also, as we understand it from the local agencies, it is like in many other areas difficult to get appropriate transport to get to jobs and services outside the area, in neighbouring areas, unless you have a car. It is a car dependent area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: When you talk about disadvantage, Tony Vinson did some work some years ago. I think there were eight or 10 indices of social disadvantage. Can you comment on that work? Do you think it is relevant here?

Mr MOORE: Yes, I do. Not all of Tony's—most recently 13 indices in his 2004 work on community adversity and resilience are in the present a certainly some of the ones I have said you already are ones that he counts amongst those indicators, and they are all present in Macquarie Fields. My understanding is, and I have not looked at the Government's submission, there are other areas that have higher levels of some these combinations. It is not that Macquarie Fields has all of these at the most extreme level, but it certainly has a number of these present. I can comment personally from having worked in the Premier's Department from 2001 to 2003, where a number of communities were highlighted for working with in terms of the disadvantage and this is one area on that list at the time. There was not a project put forward at the time because the Department of Housing was starting to look at community regeneration in the area and there were other areas regarded as having a higher priority at that time.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So, it is not top of the pops, is not a social black spot in a sense?

Mr MOORE: No, if you want to take it that way, it is not even in the top 20 in Tony's 40 list but it sits there amongst them a bit lower than that.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Where does Cronulla rate on that list?

Mr MOORE: Cronulla does not rate.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Could you give us your thoughts as to the weekend's events?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: And on, terms of reference.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What is the relevance?

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you see any relationship with Macquarie Fields?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Point of order: We have so many questions in relation to Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: Perhaps we could just hear Mr West's question here before you jump on him.

The Hon. IAN WEST: My question relates very much to Macquarie Fields. Can you see any relationship between Macquarie Fields and Cronulla in the events that occurred on the weekend?

Mr MOORE: My response to that, as probably as uninformed as most of us here around the table in understanding what is happening in Cronulla, is probably no. I think part of a reason for the relates to Cronulla being a very different socioeconomic area. Perhaps if I can do a personal explanation. I grew up in Lakemba. I used to be westie who went to Cronulla beach. I used to wear an orange T-shirt and figured in *Puberty Blues* descriptions of that generation. People in Cronulla have been very protective of their beach over many years. In this we are talking about young Arabic speaking Australians and the element of racism that is involved in what is going on at the moment, to my understanding, is not involved in Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: The reason the Committee perhaps should be interested is that our next question relates to our Redfern inquiry and I suppose this is the second time this Committee has been asked to inquire into disturbances in areas that are by any measure in the list of social disadvantage. Yet, as you just said in relation to Cronulla, we have some quite similar actions, disturbances, writes throwing bottles at police, et cetera, occurring in an area that does not figure in any list of social disadvantage. Does that in any way to make you stated differently some obvious issue gave to our second and third questions?

Mr MOORE: At this point in time, no.

CHAIR: Because we all need to wait and see?

Mr MOORE: I think we do. Once again, from outside perspective, there is another set of issues operating here around pride in ownership of place and racism that I do not think operated in Macquarie Fields.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In regard to the comments you made, you indicated there was a need for some strong collective leadership that Macquarie Fields. How do you see that aligning with current thinking in some parts of the community that what is needed is a bit of self-motivation and get up and go, that they should be more individualistic in their approach to their lives?

Mr MOORE: I will not go to the depths of that debate. It is fine to expect people to be as motivated as possible, particularly in relation to finding work. The issue will always be that on the other side you have to provide the jobs and the access to that work. It is probably true that Macquarie Fields, like any community, we have some people who for whatever set of reasons are not perceived as being motivated citizens, but I suggest most communities have that group of people in them as well.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Could I just say, these people were motivated, and the basic cause of the riots that occurred out there at Macquarie Fields was the fact that there was a gang—

CHAIR: Can you phrase this as a question?

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Yes, it is a question. It was a gang—

CHAIR: It is good to phrase it that way.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Let me put my interpretation on this, because we have a politically correct version of disturbances as opposed to what many regard as riots. We had the police here last week—

CHAIR: Mr Lynn, excuse me. I must interrupt you. I think you are talking about an in-camera session.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: No, I am not talking about the in-camera session. This has nothing to do with in camera.

CHAIR: I warn you again, what you are talking about—

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I am talking about a riot at Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: You just said, "material we receive from the police last week." The material you are talking about was given in an in-camera session.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: No, it was not.

CHAIR: I am asking you to be very careful and distinguish between the public part of the police evidence—

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I do not want a schoolmarm lecture on what was or was not in camera, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: I am asking you to be very careful and distinguish between the public part of the police evidence and the in camera evidence.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: This was not in camera. You do not know that until you hear the question.

CHAIR: If we hear the question and it relates to the in camera evidence, I assure you again it will be too late, so I ask you, Mr Lynn, to be very cautious.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I will be cautious. In the session that was not in camera the police advised us that a gang was organising housebreakings and car thieving rackets around Sydney. I think it was mentioned out of camera that they would come back to their home base at Macquarie Fields. The accident that caused the riot occurred during the pursuit of one of those people.

CHAIR: Mr Lynn, I am sorry, you are referring to some of the in camera evidence. I remind you again that you may not do that. I also remind you again that one of the reasons that evidence was in camera was because it related to court cases. There is, for instance, a hearing in the District Court in Liverpool tomorrow. I rule that question out of order.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I have not asked the question.

CHAIR: If you wish to rephrase this lengthy preamble in more general terms—

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: It is lengthy because of your interruption.

CHAIR: I am interrupting, Mr Lynn, because you are breaking the rules. You are quite obviously knowingly referring—

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: You are interrupting.

CHAIR: You are referring to in camera evidence. I saw the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans start nodding agreement when you got onto some of the material. Would you please ask a question rather than making speeches that are inappropriate?

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I think you have out-rated me for speeches, Madam Chair, in using up the time of this committee.

The basic cause of this riot at Macquarie Fields was a law and order problem. Police were trying to enforce the law. How do you see that as opposed to a lot of people saying it was caused by social disadvantage? These people were part of an organised gang that was breaking the law. They were caught breaking the law.

Mr MOORE: One of the things I have not talked about is the levels of crime and of specific crime, such as property crime. I am told by member organisations of ours working in the Macquarie Fields area—and as I said at the beginning of my comments—that the environment in that area is such that any incident of this sort might well have happened. That is the point I was trying to get to. I am

not aware of the information that you have just provided about a particular group. Going to Dr Chesterfield-Evans's question, some of the things that Tony Vinson's indicators go to are the level of crime, particularly property crime and domestic violence and family violence. Both those features tend to be found in many of the most significantly disadvantaged communities.

CHAIR: You mentioned family violence.

Mr MOORE: Family violence and property crime are present in most of the data that is available. In trying to respond to you, I am advised by our local members that what happened and the reaction within the community was not specifically about a law and order issue concerning a particular individual or group of individuals. However, that community has higher levels of family violence and property crime than many other areas.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Where should police draw the line in their enforcement of the law? In your view, if they had acted swiftly and resolved the issue might the issue not have escalated to the level that it reached? Do you think their delay in taking decisive action allowed it to escalate and then become virtually a media event?

Mr MOORE: I cannot comment on that because I honestly do not know. I cannot comment on specific action because, like everyone here before you conducted this inquiry, I have as much information as anyone else.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I am interested in your comments about violence. As a generalisation, would you say violence is part of the way of life or the culture of a large number of families living in Macquarie Fields?

Mr MOORE: Certainly as I understand the data as represented by apprehended violence orders and child protection figures it is significant, but it is significant in many parts of the State.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Is it therefore an indicator to us as well of communities that might explode as a result of a significant incident?

Mr MOORE: Yes, I think it is indicative of communities where the notion of resilience and, I guess, the assets that people talk about, are probably in shorter supply.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You talked before about family violence: why do you call it family violence instead of domestic violence? Why is this there a new politically correct term called family violence?

Mr MOORE: Because one is also talking about the extended family. Unfortunately, lots of perpetrators of sexual violence, in particular, tend to be relations or other people well known to the family. That is my understanding of the use of the term as opposed to violence strictly within the principal place of residence.

CHAIR: So you use domestic violence to refer to things that happen to people living—

Mr MOORE: By people living together in a relationship, a family.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you consider family violence and domestic violence to be criminal behaviour?

Mr MOORE: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Violence against women has statistically come within the Premier's Department and shows as a high level indicator in Macquarie Fields. What is your view on taking the Violence Against Women co-ordinators out of the crime area—from the Attorney General's Department and putting it into the Department of Community Services?

Mr MOORE: My honest view about that and the other things that go with it is that most of those things should not be in DOCS anyway. They should be in a broader base in the Premier's department or in a central agency. That is where whole-of-government should be.

CHAIR: When you say 'most of those things', what do you mean?

Mr MOORE: I mean Community Solutions, Strengthening Local Communities, Families First, etcetera, the types of things that were in the Cabinet office and the Premier's department before 2003. To come to your point, my view is that the matters relating to violence against women especially should have stayed in the Attorney General's Department. The other stuff should have stayed in the Premier's Department.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What do you think about the fact that those Violence Against Women workers are now only temporary work positions?

Mr MOORE: As I understand it, they have been temporary positions for a considerable period of time as the strategy that funded them had a time limit on it. My view is the positions of course should be permanent, irrespective of where they are located, with a long-term commitment.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In relation to length of funding periods, a lot of evidence has been presented to our committees and various inquiries that in communities such as Macquarie Fields and Redfern there are too many agencies providing services and they are not co-ordinated enough. They are all doing very good work but there is some overlap and duplication. Also, they are funded for inadequate periods of time. What is your response to those points and do you think there is a point where we should co-ordinate and consolidate? Is there an ideal length of time for funding community organisations?

Mr MOORE: There are a lot of questions there.

CHAIR: Basically it is our question 5.

Mr MOORE: Starting with the latter, there is no doubt that short-term funding of community services is a major impediment to doing things better. Technically and conventionally, funding is for 12 months across most state government agencies. There are a few that have moved to three-year commitments with annual reviews, but none beyond that. There are also issues about what should be funded and the purpose of the funding. I do not think you can draw a line and say everything should be for 10 years or for two years.

In the areas we are talking about, the evidence in this country and elsewhere suggests you have to be in for the long haul. My experience relates directly to Redfern and Waterloo. That is why there is a 10-year commitment to a plan for those areas and that is why, in terms of the economy and jobs, the built environment and the human services plan the horizon is five to 10 years. The one I have been working on is a 10-year horizon. So you cannot turn around from whatever set of reasons—the kinds of poor investment, lack of investment or changes in demography and demand—simply by going and putting a fix on a co-ordinated project for 12 months. It does not work.

Having said that, there are two issues that operate here. One is that, yes, there are involved various examples of not adequate co-ordination of services. But also there are a lot of examples of not enough resources. We seem to get into this debate and it has to be all about money or it has to be all about doing things smarter. Yet the reality—the truth—lies in between the two of those. Part of the problem structurally is how do you get better co-ordination on a spatial basis when you generally have three levels of government putting money into the area. You have at least two sectors—the public and not-for-profit—and, increasingly in some areas, the for-profit sector. That is why I think there is some attraction if you are looking at a spatial area to make changes over a long period of time about new governance structures to do that. That is why I think there is benefit in looking—and I guess we will have the test through the Redfern-Waterloo Authority—at a new governance structure. Ultimately, to my mind, the sense there would be to pool and put all the money against the plan and roll it out over a period of time. So the focus is very much spatial and the focus is about changed arrangements.

I was going to say in response that it may well be that you may want to look in terms of Macquarie Fields at thinking about whether there is the case for a Macquarie Fields community development corporation or something of that sort in terms of the work that Housing is doing there with regeneration of the estate, the work that is coming out of the DOCS communities division and so on. Getting change, as we all know, is enormously difficult. Everyone thinks they have the best service—"We've been doing it this way so long." My experience in Redfern-Waterloo is that we are talking about two or three years of solid negotiation, which is starting now having got to the stage of trying to get a decent plan framework, before you are going to see the changed system of services—people doing different things, people opening at night as opposed to not, the co-location of services because that makes sense; that sort of stuff. That is two or three years at least of solid, hard work. You have got to get over turf, ego and ownership let alone lots of other things. It is true of government agencies as well as agencies in my sector.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In talking about the co-ordination process and what you feel needs to happen in future, can you comment on any of the programs that are working well at the moment between some of the groups—State, Federal, local, NGO and community? Are there some models that are doing good work or that seem to be working well, with that co-operation between a whole range of groups?

Mr MOORE: Some of the early intervention work that has come out of Families First I think is quite good, from my understanding. There is a degree of good co-operation happening. I think you are visiting agencies in the next couple of days so obviously some of that will come up. But I would have to say that my understanding from talking to local agencies is that it is very early days about people working much more effectively together than perhaps historically they have done. It is interesting.

If I could mention the example of the Neighbourhood Technology Centre because it throws up an example of some interesting integration. Housing and the local tenants group along with the major not-for-profit WorkVentures and its corporate partners, Microsoft and IBM, have pulled together a facility that acts as a point of, firstly, tenants' engagement; secondly, an employment and training facility; and, thirdly, developing or providing lower-cost technology directly into people's homes in that area. It is a partnership that took 15 to 16 months to put together. It had to bring together the residents—this was effected through the public tenants group at that point in time—Housing came on side and WorkVentures acted as the catalyst to make it happen. It is an example of a facility that people use both for community and their own purposes and also for jobs training and so on. It has a direct credible product: lower-cost PCs going into people's homes and into organisations around the area. To my mind, that is a good example. It is well thought out, the partners knew exactly what they were getting into and some of the end users were part of helping to design the service.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Can you comment on the relationship between local police and the residents of Macquarie Fields before and after the disturbance?

Mr MOORE: I cannot comment on that because I would not be making credible comment.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I want to chase the subject of Vinson and the social indices. Presumably what Vinson said in his initial work was that you get these indices and target suburbs that have the worst problems. There was some fuss initially when he did that because those suburbs said that they were being labelled. Vinson responded by saying, "Look, we're trying to get co-ordinated help here; I'm merely taking indices that have always been there and trying to use them for your benefit." We have a black spot road program, under which you look at the number of deaths and target those spots. Does the Government, to your knowledge, have a top of the pops of social indices problems and plans to deal with those?

Mr MOORE: That is what the Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Program that came out of Premier's in 2001-02 was designed to do. It looked at the 30 top spots that you talked about largely based on Vinson's indicators from 1999. That was the program—\$50 million worth of new money over three years. It was rolled out expressly to do that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How much is \$50 million for 30 places over three years? Mathematically, that is—

CHAIR: Half a million dollars a year per place.

Mr MOORE: Yes. It does not go a long way. I guess I would be urging the Committee—if you are interested in looking at that because that program is, as I understand it, largely coming to an end in 2005-06 and 2006-07—to look at how the Government is evaluating the achievements of Community Solutions. It was always intended to be a program that ultimately changed the practices of government agencies, particularly, in what they provided in those communities. So if there is to be an ongoing financing commitment it is supposed to be picked up within agency budgets. Maybe part of what they were doing had a two- or three-year life and then it was completed because that was what was happening. In some areas you would make a further commitment. From my perspective, we do not have an answer to those questions. But I think it is probably important that, as an example of a strategy that targets so-called high socially disadvantaged communities, the Committee looks very closely at what the lessons are for the last three to four years out of Community Solutions.

CHAIR: Arising out of that question and Ms Griffin's question, the other places on the list seem to me to have more of an identity—which can be a good and a bad thing. For example, Redfern-Waterloo is, for a variety of reasons, seen as having an identity. A number of places on the list are in rural areas. I would have thought Macquarie Fields is part of a whole complex of suburbs—we are talking to Campbelltown City Council and they might have something to say about that. There may be a difference in a place-based approach to a suburb like Macquarie Fields compared with many others on the list.

Mr MOORE: It is interesting. If you go to a place like Mount Druitt, which is 16 different suburbs, and talk to people there, there is a view "How well does Mount Druitt talk about the identity of the place and how many of the little bits and pieces are where you might want to focus your effort?" I am not sure it particularly matters, to be honest. I think what does matter, and what I have not said, is part of the longer-term solution, which has to be much more part of the subregional strategy for south-western Sydney for a place like Macquarie Fields. But I do not think there is an issue about focusing on that place necessarily. It is interesting. This is an area with public housing that is not exclusively public housing compared with other areas, which is why I expressly said it at the front end. It has got a lot of low-cost private rental housing and struggling owners at the bottom of the market, but it is not 80 per cent public housing. It is not like Minto—

CHAIR: Or Waterloo.

Mr MOORE: Or Bonnyrigg or whatever. But I still think you can do a place-based approach. But it is what you are attempting to do. If I can go back, a lot of what the government has done to date in place-based approaches has really been: We want to re-focus the human services system. What it has not been about is really genuine community development and building long-term capacity. What it has not been about is engaging better things in terms of jobs and transport. Although the rhetoric goes around it that way, if you look inside a lot of the packages they are very much about improving early intervention services and improving domestic violence services. All of that is terribly important but it is only one bit of the picture if you are going to engage in a long-term urban renewal community regeneration approach.

My other comment comes then. The Government released the Metropolitan Strategy on Sunday last week. It targets 15,000 new jobs in and around Liverpool and 100,000 across south-western Sydney in the next 20 to 25 years—which is terrific in terms of subregional stuff and corridor development. The trick is going to be: How do you make sure that people in a place like Macquarie Fields get their fair access to those jobs? Ultimately, having far greater market incomes is probably more important to improving living standards than having better human services. I would want to say to the Committee in terms of Macquarie Fields: You need to talk to the planners, Ed Blakely and Frank Sartor and so on about how some of what was put out last week has a relationship to improving the living standards in Macquarie Fields in the longer term.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But if you are talking about \$500,000 per suburb as part of the community development package and you are saying that that mainly ends up being spent on the reorganisation of human services or even on the augmentation of some of the features—you mentioned domestic violence—to have a huge rise in income you would need to look at

that 100-fold, would you not? It would be like the affirmative action job-creation schemes of 20 or 30 years ago. For example, Sydney Water had to take on X number of extra people out of gaol—those sorts of programs. I guess the willingness of government to job create has declined hugely since then. It would not even be discussed now whereas it might have been in the 1960s. Is that the situation?

Mr MOORE: That is probably a fair comment. I guess in recent years there has been a battle between the Commonwealth and the State about who has responsibility in these sorts of areas. You would have thought that some of the Community Solutions money could have been used effectively to leverage a lot more Commonwealth money into these areas in terms of employment creation and vocational training.

I agree with you, in terms of trying to offer employment positions as agencies partially decentralise across Sydney. There are lots of little things that could be done if there was the political will to in fact improve job opportunities and pathways for disadvantaged people in the communities that we are talking about.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you saying that the decentralisation of bureaucratic jobs is one of the things that can be done? Is that your suggestion? You referred to "community development." They are good words, but what do you mean?

Mr MOORE: Okay, some tangible examples. If you are going to create more government jobs in Liverpool, Campbelltown or Parramatta you should make a conscious effort to ensure that some of the new jobs you create in those parts of the world go to people who live in these areas. You should talk with the councils about local employment plans as part of the development approval processes with new employers coming into the area. This is the stuff that people like Blair and others do all the time, and we just do not get it here.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you mean Blair in England?

Mr MOORE: Yes. We freak out about intervening in the market too much, but if you want to make a genuine difference to these communities that is what you have to do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you saying that when jobs are created in Western Sydney people come from the eastern suburbs to fill those jobs? Is that what is happening?

Mr MOORE: No. I am not saying that. What I am saying is that if you are going to create new jobs in Western Sydney, make sure that enough disadvantaged people get access to them and also create some high-value jobs. The big problem with the Metropolitan Strategy is that, fine, we have got the numbers for the jobs, but if all the high-value jobs stay in the global arc between North Parramatta, North Sydney and the airport, and all the scummier jobs go to Western Sydney, that is a very real problem. Who is going to have the leadership in government to intervene in the market in that way to deliver that.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In regard to your answer, are you able to comment at all on the Macquarie Fields Community and Government Action Plan 2005-06?

Mr MOORE: It is too early. I had a look at it and talked to a couple of people about it, but no, I cannot—except to the point of saying what I have said before about co-ordination of services and longer-term things. I would really say that there needs to be much more investment in enterprise development and jobs creation by this State Government, whether it uses some of its money to leverage the Commonwealth in a better way or working with Liverpool and Campbelltown councils or historically have shown some interest in local enterprise development in various ways.

CHAIR: You referred to "leverage" in reference to the Commonwealth Government. You have made that comment a couple of times. Are you able to give the Committee some specific examples?

Mr MOORE: All right. Take the Grow program or the Co-ordinated Regional Development program, the Department of Transport regional services, why should the State Government not be

saying, "We will put in \$1 for every \$3 or \$4 you put in, in terms of some targeted job creation. We are prepared to spend a bit more to reorganise the way that TAFE does things, if you put some dosh in terms of focusing on specific learning pathways." They are the sorts of things I mean. We just seem to have an impasse there because the Commonwealth does employment and the State does training, and never the twain shall meet. Here in these communities you have the classic example of trying to grow the economic base and the employment base, as well as reform the human services system.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I understand that Chris Corrigan has for many years been trying to build a large container terminal at Minto, but has been stopped by the State Labor Government. That would generate enormous employment out there.

Mr MOORE: I cannot comment on that but obviously that is one of the things I mean. Once again I will go back to the Metropolitan Strategy. If you are going to create 100,000 new jobs in south-western Sydney over the next 20 years, which is the target set last week, you will have to be quite creative and innovative in what you do.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you have any comments on the Government's plan to reshape public housing in Macquarie Fields?

Mr MOORE: Yes, I have two main comments. First, I would have to say that the Government's general policy on reshaping public housing at the moment poses some problems. One of the reasons, of course, is that, carried to its logical conclusion, it will in fact further diminish the number of low and modest income earners living in public housing, because it will simply make it even more welfare housing than it currently is. That is in terms of the changes to eligibility and the focus in that area. To my mind that is a problem because one of the things many people have told us they would like to see in Macquarie Fields is an improved greater social mix and an improved mix of income levels. Unless the Department Housing takes on board that sort of approach, of having some decent affordable housing sitting alongside the social housing, it is hard to see how you are going to achieve the aim of having a greater mix of income levels over the time. For example, my argument would be that if you are going to encourage more underemployed people in places such as Macquarie Fields to get into work, albeit the part-time and more lowly-paid work, and at the same time throw them out of public housing, it is silly.

CHAIR: The Committee has representatives from the Department of Housing as the next set of witnesses. One of the things we propose to take up with them is the fact that the rebuilding, renovation, regeneration program so far has worked on something like 900 properties out of a total of about 1,400. Do you have any comments on that physical reshaping program that has been going on?

Mr MOORE: Yes, positive comments, in particular going back to the example of the neighbourhood technology Centre, where housing has shown quite a strong innovative lead. Once again, with regard to the scale of this, it would be terrible to see more segmentation of the housing market in Macquarie Fields because of reshaping public housing policies, when the community regeneration ethic is to create a much greater mix of income levels.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: The Reshaping Public Housing document states that in the 1970s, 70 per cent of people in public housing were couples. That has dropped to 11 per cent, a very dramatic drop. What emphasis should the Government place on supporting the family unit, which is nature's welfare system? Are you satisfied that the Government is putting enough effort into the family unit?

Mr MOORE: The demographic changes that have resulted in one in every two of us living as sole persons in households have a lot to do with a huge range of complex issues. I would simply say to you that a lot of the figures that you have are because of sole parent families in public housing now. I would also say to you—which I think is an issue that needs to be thought about—that in light of the Commonwealth's welfare-to-work changes there is the very real likelihood of a number of sole parents going into part-time work and welfare, who will become ineligible for public housing in New South Wales because they will be excluded through the income test arrangements. I think the issue is about a mix of household types, a mix of income types and a mix of cultural backgrounds. That is the issue. The Government should be looking, in Macquarie Fields, at some other affordable housing

strategies, which is about bringing in traditional nuclear families but also recognising that sole parent families have exactly the same sets of rights and responsibilities.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: If I could just come back to the role of police. In an area such as Macquarie Fields, given that there are a number of both government and non-government organisations doing very good work, do you see the role of police as being a social welfare role or law-enforcement role so that when there is a breakdown they move in and fix the breakdown without disturbing the community?

Mr MOORE: In communities—and I can mainly only speak about Redfern, in terms of recent direct experience—I think the role is principally a law-enforcement role, but I believe that if police do not have decent community relations they cannot perform the law-enforcement role. There is an issue in many communities, and it was true in Redfern before the disturbances there and for a short time afterwards, not so much of staffing numbers but of having a lot of inexperienced front-line police working in difficult communities. I think the issue is more about getting enough experienced police into local areas where there are tensions and difficulties and developing and maintaining community links. I think that is much more the issue in respect of moving ahead in these areas.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In regard to that, would I be anywhere near the mark if I were to say that law and order issues and socioeconomic issues are interwoven, and you cannot separate the two; that they are cause and effect in many regards?

Mr MOORE: Individuals, of course, have to be responsible for their behaviour but, as I have said before, when you look at Vinson's data and at every other piece of data on socioeconomic disadvantage and the relationship between certain forms of crime in the property and personal assault areas in families, unfortunately the link with other socioeconomic disadvantage indicators is high.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: You referred to family breakdown as one of the social indicators. You mentioned drugs and alcohol. One is a legal substance in one is an illegal substance, but drugs seem to be a major cause of the problems because people deal in drugs and can make money out of it. Of course, it has a major impact on the community. What do you think the Government should do in regard to its policy on drugs and illegal substances in areas such as Macquarie Fields?

Mr MOORE: What can I say to you, Mr Lynn? I think it is both alcohol and drugs. I do not think you can draw that distinction, particularly given that in respect of the violence we are talking about, domestically and in families, alcohol has played a far greater role. One of the things the Government should be thinking about doing is not expanding the opportunities for retail access or community access to more retail become outlets for a start. In terms of the drugs issue, I understand that in an area there probably does need to be a greater investment within community-based rehabilitation services. I am not aware of how well the community drug action team model has worked, so I cannot comment on that, but I think that should be looked at much more closely to see what experience has been in the past couple of years.

CHAIR: I think the Committee has just about covered the questions. We did not specifically ask about the lessons learned by service providers from the Redfern issue, but you have come back Redfern and on several occasions. I am assuming we have covered that. What would you like to see come out of this inquiry?

Mr MOORE: I have thought a bit about this. I think better spatial distribution of market outcomes, transport services and community facilities would go some way to helping to reduce the social and economic disadvantages. I think the inquiry should make special mention of targeting the economic and employment objectives contained in the Government's Metropolitan Strategy to areas such as Macquarie Fields. I also think that, like the better overseas examples of community regeneration and urban renewal, there is a case for the State Government and Campbelltown City Council to look at establishing a Macquarie Fields community development corporation through which local, State, Commonwealth, private sector and community efforts could be channelled. This would include overseeing the community regeneration efforts of the Department of Housing, and developing employment, infrastructure and human services plan in a similar manner to the Redfern-Waterloo Authority.

The corporation would also oversee the pooling of funds from government and human services agencies and section 94 and other developer levies to be used for new community facilities, and the current human services, as the plans I have mentioned are developed and implemented. I think it is worthwhile thinking about a package of that sort that is focused once again on getting more market incomes distributed and available into the surrounding areas, as well as doing the reform of services, but from the position of some strength within the government structure.

(The witness withdrew)

MICHAEL RICHARD ALLEN, Deputy Director-General—Operations, Department of Housing
223-239 Liverpool Road, Ashfield, and

CLIFFORD JAMES HAYNES, General Manager—Housing Services, Department of Housing,
Level 4, 106-108 Church Street, Parramatta, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: You have received some questions from us which we will run through. Do you want to say anything by way of an opening statement?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I would like to make an opening statement. The Department of Housing has a presence in the suburb of Macquarie Fields, not only because of the number of houses it owns and manages but also through its engagement with the broader community and its involvement in a number of successful programs and projects which have been developed to strengthen the local sense of community and to assist tenants into training and employment. While to many people Macquarie Fields is synonymous with the Department of Housing, the suburb of Macquarie Fields is much larger than the department's housing estate.

The number of public housing homes represents approximately one-third of the total number of residences in Macquarie Fields. Historically the public housing estate was built in the late seventies in the Radburn-style design, with backyards of houses and townhouses often facing the street and with a large number of laneways connecting the streets with large parcels of open space. While these styles of housing estates have not proved over time to be a successful means of providing safe, affordable public housing, the Macquarie Fields estate is generally a well-established community, with an average length of tenancy of approximately eight years.

To address the concerns being raised about housing estates such as Macquarie Fields, the Department of Housing implemented a program of estate renewal in the mid-1990s to improve the physical living environment and quality of life for residents. The Community Renewal Program builds a greater sense of community pride, trust and social responsibility. It also builds partnerships with local communities, other government agencies and service providers and improves the physical living environment for residents.

Despite cutbacks in Commonwealth funding over recent years, the department has spent \$52 million since 1996 on major physical improvement work through the Community Renewal and Accelerated Improvement programs in Macquarie Fields. Macquarie Fields estate contains approximately 1,458 dwellings, of which 50 per cent are townhouses and the remaining 50 per cent are freestanding cottages. Work on the 865 cottages under the Community Renewal and Accelerated Improvement programs has now been completed, including reorienting the cottages so that the front door faces the street, new landscaping, carports and fencing, plus upgrading of the bathrooms, kitchens and laundries and internal and external painting.

Community renewal and accelerated improvement work has also been completed on a further 130 townhouses so far. This work has also included relocation of services infrastructure, construction of roads. Many of the laneways and open spaces, which provided an ideal location for opportunistic petty crime, have been closed. In addition, \$747,000 has been spent under the community renewal umbrella on non-physical improvements, and they have included things such as the WorkVentures Connect neighbourhood technology centre, the WorkVentures Connect Program as a partnership between the department and WorkVentures Connect and their partners, Microsoft Australia and the Westpac Foundation.

The program has implemented a number of neighbourhood technology centres [NTCs] in disadvantaged public housing areas in central Sydney and south-western Sydney. In 2000 the NTC was established in Macquarie Fields to provide disadvantaged social housing residents with access to information technology, the Internet and relevant training. A number of public housing tenants from Macquarie Fields have gained employment because of their involvement with the neighbourhood technology centre.

The Community Greening Program is another example. This is a partnership between the Department of Housing and the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney that assists social housing residents to create and maintain community gardens and green their homes and communities. Literally thousands of public housing tenants across the State have participated in the Community Greening Program. We received over 800 entries in the department's annual gardening competition that we run in conjunction with the Royal Botanic Gardens. The department and the Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group's community garden committee is currently in discussion with Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and the Eden Garden Centre to work on the proposal to develop a community nursery in Macquarie Fields.

Employment and training is also a significant issue for Macquarie Fields residents. Despite the fact that this is principally a Commonwealth responsibility, the Department of Housing has implemented a range of local strategies to increase social housing residents' access to employment and training opportunities. These include the WorkVentures Connect neighbourhood technology centre. WorkVentures has also conducted a work for the dole program with the Wesley Mission in 2005 to refurbish the centre and to conduct a web page design course. The department and WorkVentures are currently working together to identify potential partners to provide outreach employment services from the technology centre.

The department is also currently in discussion with H &H Accredited Training to establish a work for the dole project in Macarthur to commence in February next year. Some of the tasks of this project will include the rejuvenation of open space and helping to establish a community nursery in Macquarie Fields. In discussions with a number of agencies, the Department also will be establishing an employment focus group to improve the co-ordination of the employment and training services to residents in this community. The first meeting of the focus group was held on 28 November just past.

There are a number of other programs happening in the Macquarie Fields housing estate. They include the Premier's Working Group. The Department of Housing is an active member of the Premier's Working Group and participates with senior management of various human services, agencies and selected community leaders to discuss joined up strategies to address the issues facing the community. Staff from the department will continue to work with this group and various forums to progress the Macquarie Fields community and government action plan.

There is also a Macquarie Fields interagency group. Staff from various human service agencies, which are government and non-government, meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues affecting mutual clients and to develop a co-ordinated response to address these issues. The department also established some time ago a Neighbourhood Advisory Board for Macquarie Fields. That has been in operation since 1995-96 and there is a new group now, the Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group, which is an incorporated group that is replacing the Neighbourhood Advisory Board.

The Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group is supported and chaired by an elected group of residents. The group's mission is for residents to work towards actively building a strong, vibrant and cohesive community in partnership with service providers. The newly formed group meets on a monthly basis and has actively been recruiting residents outside the estate, including Ingleburn and Glenfield. Membership of the group includes residents, WorkVentures, Glenquarie Neighbourhood Centre, Schools as Communities co-ordinators from Curran Public School, Primary Connect from Guise Public School, St Vincent DePaul and, of course, the department.

In 2003 the department initiated a group of residents to co-ordinate an end of year celebration for Macquarie Fields. Since then the department has co-ordinated a monthly meeting with a group of residents for this event, which is called Carols in the Fields, and to plan the Christmas celebration to this year. Hundreds of local residents and their families directly participate in Carols in the Fields. Under the Neighbourhood Facilities Program in 1998 the department allocated a purpose-built property at Peppermint Crescent, Macquarie Fields, to the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army provides a range of services to the local community including welfare assistance, long day care and vacation care services for children aged 0 to 12 years. In 2000 the department converted and allocated a three-bedroom detached cottage at 123 Eucalyptus Drive, Macquarie Fields, to WorkVentures to establish the neighbourhood technology centre program.

Following the incidents in February this year, the department allocated another dwelling at 4 Mallee Place, Macquarie Fields, to create a community meeting space. The department will continue to work with local residents and other agencies to develop a proper management structure for the meeting space. Campbelltown City Council has also agreed to fund any additional work required at the property, and the department will fund a co-ordinator position to manage the operations of this new community facility. In conclusion, it is the view of the Department of Housing, particularly my staff who have worked closely with the residents of Macquarie Fields, that the Macquarie Fields community has put the events of last February behind them. A new neighbourhood advisory structure has been set up with a view to improving the lot of residents and the local community as a whole, and the department will continue to work with these and other stakeholders to progress the various actions and initiatives that have been put in place.

CHAIR: I think, in that, you have probably addressed many of the issues that the Committee had in the first four or five questions, but we may have some further things to take out of that. Could you go back to question one. In relation to the renovation and rebuilding, et cetera, program, you mentioned approximately 800 cottages that were finished as well as so many townhouses and so on.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

CHAIR: I have two questions about that: firstly, has that program resulted in a reduction in the total number of properties in public housing in Macquarie Fields? Is the program basically an upgrade in terms of kitchens and bathrooms and things you mentioned? Secondly, does it also change the housing mix in terms of whether for instance it provides the larger families or sole residents, older people, younger people and so on? Can you just flesh out that program a little for us—you or Mr Haynes?

Mr ALLEN: There are a number of elements to the program. Certainly upgrading existing dwellings in terms of kitchens and bathrooms and laundries is an important part of making those homes more amenable for the residents. The other aspect, and perhaps the major aspect or focus of the program, has been to undo, if you like, the Radburn design of housing where housing is oriented away from the street. Our experience has been that where we can provide a more traditional street frontage, that works much more successfully for the people who live in those streets as well as for the broader community. So that has been an important part of the department's approach.

Many public housing estates were developed on broad acres, so there was not always separate title. Very rarely has there been separate title to individual homes on those estates, so part of the work that the department has done in community renewal of Macquarie Fields has been to achieve separate Torrens title for the cottages, hence the focus initially on the cottage component of the estate. We have now been able to achieve separate title for a number of dwellings in that area.

CHAIR: Is that because there is a proposal to sell some of them—to introduce a mix of public housing and other forms of housing?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is right. There are about 350 of the cottages there now that have separate title. We are working to achieve separate title on the others. That allows tenants, where they have the financial means, to be able to purchase those homes. They must be purchased at market value and the income generated from those sales to tenants or sales on the open market is reinvested in public housing elsewhere in the general Western Sydney area. We have achieved approximately 75 sales of properties on the estate to date.

CHAIR: Is there a community housing component in Macquarie Fields as well as the standard public housing?

Mr ALLEN: There is certainly community housing in a variety of locations in Campbelltown. I do not have a figure to hand of how much.

CHAIR: This Committee previously did an inquiry into community housing and we are aware of some of the others but I could not remember whether any of the properties were in Macquarie Fields.

Mr ALLEN: I could take that question on notice. We understand that there are some in Macquarie Fields; we are just not quite sure of the specific number at this time. The department has a very strong relationship with a number of community housing associations that work in south-western Sydney. The Argyle Housing Association particularly does a lot of important work for the department, and we were not only in partnership with them in local communities but also in providing other services to community housing residents. The Hume Housing Association, which also operates in south-western Sydney, is another partner of the department in bringing forward a mix of housing opportunities for local residents.

CHAIR: You say it has been universally accepted that the Radburn model has some grave disadvantages. Has any research been done to substantiate that? Is it a matter of experience? When you say that turning the houses around, et cetera, makes a difference, are you talking more about crime, perceptions of safety, or are you talking more about a sense of neighbourhood and people being able to mix with one another?

Mr ALLEN: I am talking about all of those things. It certainly creates a strong sense of community and neighbourhood. The work is also consistent with CPTED principles, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. By having homes face a more traditional street frontage there are more eyes on the street so to speak. So in terms of visual security and perceptions of security that is important for those residents. Also, the other elements of the program about closing laneways and underpasses and removing some of those areas that have in the past been subject to petty crime have also been an important part of improving safety and security in the area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Does this not increase the car focus of the suburb? I think the Radburn plan was designed to take emphasis from the car as the centre of the group and also to get the kids playing in open areas, not on the street where the cars were. Was that not the theory?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that was certainly the theory, but our practical experience has not demonstrated that that sort of approach works in public housing estates. We have had very strong feedback from residents in a number of public housing estates where we have undertaken this work to deradburnise the estate, so to speak. They have found it a much more successful approach to them being able to feel more a part of a traditional community and they have been far more comfortable with traditional streetscapes rather than a focus away from the street.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is there good evidence on this? Have there been comparisons of housing estates internationally? Is there literature on this subject?

Mr ALLEN: There is some literature on the subject. I do not have any of that at hand with me today but there has been some literature and some research into the issue. I understand that the only successful Radburn estate is the original one in New Jersey outside New York. It has not been particularly successful anywhere else.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have had some praise in this Committee from both DOCS and the mental health people for being a relatively co-operative department with difficult-to-place people. Have you had a great increase in the percentage of your tenants on welfare over the years and to what extent?

Mr ALLEN: There has been quite substantial change in the demographic profile of public housing residents over the years. As you may recall, in the immediate post-war period the department or the then Housing Commission was in fact housing more two-parent families and that has changed quite dramatically over recent years. The demographic projections into the future clearly show that we will have more elderly people and more single-person households seeking our assistance over time. I have some statistics that I can quote to you. In the early 1970s more than 70 per cent of applicants for public housing were couples with children and only 29 per cent were elderly couples or singles. By comparison, today only 11 per cent of tenants are couples with children, more than one-third are aged over 65 years, another third are single parents and a quarter have various disabilities.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So in terms of the percentage on welfare, what change has that meant statistically? Can you give me another ballpark type figure on that?

Mr ALLEN: A ballpark figure again, in the 1970s approximately half of the department's tenants would have been on a subsidised rental because of their low income, because the others were low waged families. Today we see approximately 90 per cent of the department's tenants receiving a rental subsidy, which means that most, if not almost all, of those people would be on a social security income.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: There was purchase of housing land embedded in small groups within other suburbs, was there not? There was a move towards, I guess, role modelling, if you call it that, for housing tenants by buying little bits of housing. Then there were big estates and they were differing periods of the history of housing. You are now going back to embedding private housing within public housing estates. Is that the change in the model that you are trying to work towards?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is definitely our approach. Small is beautiful, to coin a phrase. We find that where we are able to mix public housing into broader communities that achieves a more balanced community with residents from a range of different backgrounds and a range of different income sources. It is true to say that in the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s—and perhaps even into the early 1980s—public housing was generally constructed in very large estates or clusters. Even some of the older housing in areas like Bankstown, for example, were in fairly large clusters. Where they were separate cottages, some mix has been achieved over the decades through various sales to tenants programs, so you do not see the same level of concentration that you still do in many Radburn estates. In the Radburn estates separate title was not available so those various sales to tenants programs of the past have not been able to have any positive impact on those communities. That is why you see some difference even between older communities where they were cottages as opposed to the Radburn style estates.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Macquarie Fields has this stippled mixture of private and public, does it not?

Mr ALLEN: Yes it does.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So why is it getting the problems? Riverwood and areas like that, which are very large Department of Housing estates, are not having as much trouble as Macquarie Fields. Can you suggest a reason for that?

Mr ALLEN: Riverwood is quite different. Yes, it is a public housing estate. It is smaller in number than Macquarie Fields. There are about 1,000 homes at Riverwood and almost 1,600 at Macquarie Fields—quite a change in number. Also, Riverwood is not a Radburn estate. There are largely apartment complexes and unit complexes for the elderly at Riverwood and very few of the concentrated townhouse and cottage style estates of Radburn. Part of that Radburn design of course is a number of access ways and cul-de-sacs. Riverwood again is very different; all of the buildings face a more traditional street frontage so there is quite a substantial physical difference between the two.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you are a subscriber, by the sound of it, to the theory that the architecture determines the social behaviour to a large extent. Is that right?

Mr ALLEN: I think there is some weight behind that argument, yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I know Mr Allen has a very intimate knowledge of the Riverwood housing estate because he was very involved with it over many years. Certainly, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Department of Housing on the work that has been done over recent years with the Riverwood housing estate because it has made a big difference to tenants and people in the area. Mr Allen, what financial and social impacts will the department's reshaping public housing policy have on an estate but particularly the Macquarie Fields estate?

Mr ALLEN: There are a number of aspects of the reshaping public housing reforms that will have an impact on public housing estates, particularly the renewal of the public housing property portfolio over the next 10 years, based on long-term projections of demand and highest needs group, both in terms of the quality of the dwellings to be provided and value for money. Under the plan, 12,000 new homes will be built or acquired using the proceeds from sales or demolitions of old, outdated houses, reflecting a fourfold increase versus our 2004 activity. One-bedroom and two-bedroom homes will increase in overall proportion to reflect the larger number of smaller households we will need to assist now and into the future. Over 3,000 older dwellings will be refurbished or converted to reflect contemporary living space and standard, and over this period an additional 10,000 homes will receive disabled modifications. There are other aspects of the reshaping public housing plan. Clearly we will be focusing on those people in greatest need who require the department's assistance. There is very limited impact on existing tenants but into the future we will be focusing the assistance that we provide to clients based on the length of need they have.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In terms of the Macquarie Fields estate, are any Department of Housing staff involved with Macquarie Fields local residents in the area?

Mr ALLEN: I am not sure how many of the local staff actually reside in Macquarie Fields. Certainly, the greater bulk of all our staff who work in the Campbelltown local government area actually reside in that area so they are local residents in the area in which they work. Our client service team at Macquarie Fields is conveniently located in the Glenquarie shopping centre which is on the fringe of the estate, so the staff are where the clients are. The client service team comprises the team leader, 10 client service staff and a handyperson to provide tenancy and property management services for that area. Further to this, we have created an additional senior client service officer specialist position. This position requires social welfare work qualifications. So that will be an additional resource put in place for the Macquarie Fields team.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In your opening statement you mentioned the change to the neighbourhood advisory board in terms of it now being an incorporated body. Is that standard with advisory boards now or is that something different particularly in the Macquarie Fields area?

Mr ALLEN: No, we see neighbourhood advisory boards as a strong part of engaging with communities and helping communities to take responsibility for managing their local area in consultation and co-ordination with a range of government and non-government agencies. Local democracy is an important fundamental, particularly in public housing communities. So we work with residents to help them take up roles on groups like neighbourhood advisory boards or the action group which is now in place in Macquarie Fields. We work closely with them. We provide training and support to them in their roles to take charge of their local community.

CHAIR: Does the name North Campbelltown mean that there are other estates beyond Macquarie Fields included in that new body? Or is it a change of name to reflect the geography?

Mr ALLEN: It was a desire on behalf of the group to focus not only immediately on the Macquarie Fields housing estate, but to involve public housing communities in other parts of northern Campbelltown, such as Ingleburn and so on. Also, it was to have a more broadly based name. Sometimes "neighbourhood" means a relatively small area to some people. They are looking to have wider activities and also to involve private residents as part of the local democracy.

CHAIR: So did the neighbourhood advisory board cover Ingleburn as well as Macquarie Fields?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

CHAIR: So it is not a collapsing of neighbourhood boards gathering smaller areas into a bigger organisation?

Mr ALLEN: No, it is an extension.

CHAIR: A change of focus and name?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

CHAIR: The Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans was going to ask question number three concerning what the department is doing. There is a specific question about whether the department has strategies for tenants with complex needs. Implicit in that is in relation to Macquarie Fields and whether Macquarie Fields is different, or standard, in the department's general provisions for tenants with complex needs?

Mr ALLEN: Macquarie Fields is not substantially different from many other public housing areas. The aspect of local co-ordination of services and activities is really important. The element of local democracy and allowing local residents to be involved and engaged in the process is important, such as some of the structures that I have mentioned earlier; the Premier's working group, the employment focus group, the interagency group, as well as the neighbourhood advisory board. Those are important elements for the local community. As part of the reshaping of public housing reforms, a new housing and new services accord has been put in place. That will improve the co-ordination of housing and social support services as a key component of the reshaping reforms announced in April.

The accord establishes a framework for partnerships between the New South Wales government agencies that provide housing, health and education and other social support services. The reforms reflect the government's social justice goals and aims to ensure housing is available for those most in need. A combination of stable housing and co-ordinated support services is vital for people in need to make the most of their opportunities. Under the accord people who are shared clients of human services, government agencies, will receive co-ordinated housing and support services. This will provide also an opportunity for accord partners to develop shared access arrangements so that support agencies can nominate clients with complex needs for public housing.

This will facilitate the provision of co-ordinated social housing and support services, to assist social housing tenants to live independently. The accord will also improve inter-agency responses aimed at reducing social and economic disadvantage in a number of larger public housing estates. Non-government organisations play a key role in the delivery of social housing through the community housing sector and through the provision of community and support services to clients living in social housing.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You commented that your staff are tapped into the community. Did any of your staff have advance indications of the riots that occurred in Macquarie Fields, that trouble was brewing?

Mr ALLEN: Not that I am aware of.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How is it that if they are so tapped into the community they did not have any indication that things were likely to explode?

Mr ALLEN: The events of February followed a very tragic accident. It is exceedingly difficult for any staff to predict that a tragic accident would occur.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: But it did not happen immediately after, did it?

Mr ALLEN: Sorry?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Did the outbreak of violence, the riots, happen immediately?

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Spontaneously?

Mr ALLEN: My understanding is that they did happen fairly quickly following the tragic accident, but I am not sure of the precise time frame. Perhaps the police can advise you.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The riots went on for four days. What were your staff doing during that time in communicating and working with the community?

Mr ALLEN: Our staff were involved with a number of government and non-government agencies in looking at strategies and actions that could be put in place. They were certainly in regular contact with all of our tenant groups and tenant leaders in the local area. They were particularly liaising very closely with the New South Wales police service to try to deal with problems that were occurring.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Earlier you referred to it as an "incident". At the initial hearing it was referred to as a "disturbance". Most people in the wider community say it was a "riot". What are your definitions of the three terms?

Mr ALLEN: That is an exceedingly difficult question for me to answer. It depends on an individual's perspective of each of the three terms. It would be difficult for me to try to make a distinction that would be beneficial to this inquiry.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: In the paper "Reshaping Public Housing" you referred to the Carr Government introducing a strategy to reduce antisocial behaviour, which you explained. You then said that the initiatives are currently being piloted in Newcastle and Wagga Wagga. Has any action been taken in Macquarie Fields since the riot?

Mr ALLEN: Both the pilots at Wagga Wagga and Macquarie Fields are currently under evaluation. We have not applied the pilots to Macquarie Fields. But certainly any lessons that we learn from the pilots will be applied to the department's activities and operational procedures more broadly across the State.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Currently if you have families or people living in your houses who are known by police to be dealing in drugs or committing antisocial behaviour offences, what strategies do you have in place to address that?

Mr ALLEN: The department has a good neighbour policy. We expect, consistent with the terms of our tenants' tenancy agreements, that they will allow their neighbours to enjoy their tenancies quietly and peacefully. When there are breaches of a tenancy agreement we take an escalating set of actions. In the first instance, we talk with the tenants who are alleged to have undertaken that behaviour and then move to more dramatic solutions, if that behaviour continues. When we are able to substantiate the behaviour we take action, we will go to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal [CTTT] and seek, in the first instance, a specific performance order to require the tenant to cease and desist from that behaviour.

When that is not successful, ultimately the department will take eviction action against the tenants if their behaviour does not improve. We have done that in a number of locations across the State and will continue to do so. The essence of that outcome is being able to substantiate behaviour; it is a breach of a tenancy agreement and we take action with the CTTT. The other matters you mentioned, where criminal behaviour is involved, is a matter for local police. The department essentially does not have powers to deal with criminal behaviour. Where that occurs, and we get evidence and information from police—and our staff certainly liaise closely with local police in those situations—we will take that tenant to the tribunal. In serious cases we seek to have that tenancy terminated, perhaps with the support of police at the tribunal hearing.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I refer to the original Radburn model. When was that introduced? Who introduced it? Do you see it as a failed attempt at social engineering in the 1970s? It does not seem to—

CHAIR: I am not sure that that question is within the Committee's terms of reference, given that it was more than 30 years ago.

Mr ALLEN: My understanding is that the Radburn concept—and Radburn is not a person, it is a town in New Jersey, just outside New York—was a housing estate developed around the 1940s, it was introduced by the Housing Commission in New South Wales in the late 1960s and into the 1970s.

CHAIR: That might have been by a Liberal government, which is not what the Hon. Charlie Lynn wanted you to say.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Who was the Rhodes scholar who introduced it?

CHAIR: The Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans has a question that may be related to our terms of reference.

Mr ALLEN: Large public housing estates, in fairness, were genuine attempts to house as many people as the then Housing Commission could reasonably do with the resources available. Clearly someone thought it was a good idea to develop estates along the Radburn lines. It was the Housing Commission in the late 1960s and early 1970s that thought it was a good solution. In fairness, they were planning that housing for a particular demographic profile of tenant. As can be seen from the numbers I have quoted, the demographic profile has changed quite significantly and we need much smaller housing these days than the traditional three-bed room style of accommodation that the Housing Commission largely built across New South Wales.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The legislation was changed in order to allow you to evict people. How many have you evicted under the new laws?

CHAIR: In Macquarie Fields?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In general, and in Macquarie Fields in particular.

Mr ALLEN: In terms of antisocial behaviour?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

Mr ALLEN: I would not be able to give you a figure off the top of my head. Certainly, pre and post the legislation the department has taken, and will continue to, a strong approach where antisocial behaviour is displayed in our communities and by any of our tenants. I will take the question on notice and give you a specific answer.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Once people are expelled, they become homeless. They would then hang around, trying to stay with other tenants rather than going into the private rental market, otherwise they say homeless. When they leave you there must be a behaviour which happens. Do you follow that at all? Are you forced to follow that? Do they come back? Is there any follow-up of that situation?

Mr ALLEN: Evicting a tenant is a very serious action and a very serious responsibility. The department takes that responsibility very strongly. When tenants go after they are evicted there can be a variety of different situations. Often they will go broadly with other family members. Sometimes they seek housing in a completely different area. Occasionally they may well seek to get short-term housing with another public housing tenant. So, there are a variety of situations where people go and we are not able to monitor that because our contact with those tenants ceases after we take eviction action. Sometimes we see them come back to us and seek further assistance, but there are a variety of criteria that must be addressed before we consider providing further assistance to someone who we have taken such extreme action against.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The community development program was introduced by the Government to address disadvantaged areas with roughly \$500,000 per target area per year. How much of that money have you seen or what effects have you seen on the way the Department of Housing works in those areas, and the Macquarie Fields area in particular?

Mr ALLEN: Approximately \$750,000 in recent years on community development activities in Macquarie Fields. We see community development as an important part of engaging communities, such as those in Macquarie Fields. That community development is a range of things. It is certainly about local democracy such as neighbourhood advisory boards and so on. It is certainly through better working relationships with other service providers, whether the government or non-government. We see in the department that we should be contributing to that community development through our

activities and being a strong partner with other government or non-government agencies and, where appropriate, we will fund some community development positions.

As I have mentioned, we have an additional senior client service officer specialist that we are recruiting for the Macquarie Fields team—someone with social work and welfare work skills. I have also mentioned in the new community cottage, the new meeting place for Macquarie Fields, that the department will fund a co-ordinator position for that. So we are actively contributing both in a literal and financial sense as well as in the broader operations of community development.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Did that come from the Premier's Department's \$55 million? Did you specially get any more money or is this just something you have done at the same time and from your own budget?

Mr ALLEN: It has been an initiative of the department from our own budget but certainly we work very closely with the Premier's Department in a number of locations across the State and we do receive additional funding from the Government in some of those locations. I am not familiar, off the top of my head, whether we have received any additional funding in Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: If I could interrupt. I think I created a bit of confusion here. The figure you quoted, I think, was my rapid calculation for the community solutions program. There are obviously, as Mr Allen is talking about, other community development programs within agencies or across agencies, but that figure you are referring to was specifically related to the community solutions program.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I had the name wrong. The community solutions program: did you see any evidence of that or did you see what happened from that money?

Mr ALLEN: Certainly I am quite familiar with the community solutions funding that has been provided to the Mount Druitt area, and there have been a number of really positive outcomes from that funding in Mount Druitt. I am less familiar as to whether any of that funding has been provided in the general Campbelltown area, but certainly that funding has made a valuable contribution to community development activities in the communities that I am aware of.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is that because you are not responsible for that or have delegated the Macquarie Fields area or is it because there is not any money going into the Macquarie Fields area of that community solutions money?

Mr ALLEN: I am just not familiar whether any of the community solutions funding is going to Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: We have been told that it is not. Macquarie Fields is not one of the areas that is receiving money under that program.

Mr HAYNES: There was some Families First money.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You got Families First money at Macquarie Fields?

Mr HAYNES: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But Families First was a separate program from that one?

CHAIR: Can I suggest that perhaps the Department of Housing is not really the best agency to direct these questions to. We have got the Department Community Services coming later this afternoon and they are actually administering some of these programs. It may be better to ask some of these specific questions of them.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If you ask the agency that is getting the money they always know.

CHAIR: But we have already been told that they are not getting the money.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If you want to know how widespread the effect is it is often good to ask another department which might see an effect if it was being successful.

CHAIR: A good try, but it would be nice if we ask some of our specific questions about things that are happening in Macquarie Fields.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Could I just go back to one of the things that Mr Allen mentioned about dwellings having separate title? I think you mentioned, Mr Allen, that 75 places have been sold?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Has that been in recent times—and you may have to take part of the question on notice, I realise—to tenants within the housing estate or to people outside of the estate? And, leading on from that, what sort of assistance does the department give tenants who wish to look at purchasing dwellings?

Mr ALLEN: My understanding is that the 75 has occurred over recent years and the department does provide some assistance for those tenants—the Government provides some assistance for those tenants because there are a number of concessions around stamp duty that apply to public housing tenants that provide a significant financial benefit for them in home purchase. We do require that the home is purchased at market value and we do get an independent valuer to assess that market value, but there are other savings for a tenant as well: there are no real estate agencies if they are purchasing from the department; there are obviously various other grants programs—the first home owners grants, which may apply to them—and the fact that they actually do not have to move their home saves them a considerable amount in removalists' fees. So there are a number of opportunities for public housing tenants to take advantage of some of those sorts of programs if they wish to purchase one of the department's homes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: As I said, I realise part of this question may have to be on notice but could you give the Committee some information about when those properties have been purchased and also if there is a mix of tenants purchasing those properties or people from outside the estate?

CHAIR: When you say "tenants" you mean tenants actually living in the property?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Yes.

CHAIR: As distinct from tenants, say from another estate?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Yes.

Mr ALLEN: The sales have some mix: there are some sold to sitting tenants at Macquarie Fields and some have been sold on the open market by way of public auction.

CHAIR: Can you perhaps take that question on notice?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, we will take that question on notice and come back with some more information.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: How is a decision made about how the property is sold? Is it because there is no interest from tenants that it is sold on the open market, or is that a policy decision of the department?

Mr ALLEN: It is more about a decision about the approach that we are taking in Macquarie Fields and some other locations where it seemed to be desirable to encourage home ownership and to try and facilitate that for some of our tenants to achieve a more diverse result and help the community.

CHAIR: I do not know whether you were going to ask one of the questions we have prepared. I am conscious of the time. We need to ask specific questions.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: They are Government questions.

CHAIR: No, these questions were prepared by the Committee staff.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: They are not Opposition questions; they are Government Dorothy Dixers. It is absorbing the time of the Committee.

CHAIR: Of the questions we sent you, can you describe your department's involvement with the State Government's Macquarie Fields Community Government in Action plan and can you tell the Committee whether that plan is related, from your point of view, with Campbelltown City Council's social plan and the Campbelltown co-ordination group?

Mr ALLEN: Certainly the department is an active participant in the community and government action plan for Macquarie Fields. There is a project management group that has been formed. I understand that is led by the director-general of the Premier's Department. Senior staff from our department participate in the various structures within that Government process, both, as I have mentioned, the project management group and there is also a local reference group, and the department is actively involved in that and the provision of the additional community cottage as a meeting place is an outcome of the work of those particular groups.

CHAIR: In your opening statement you referred to a focus group that I think met just last month. Is that connected with the development of the plan?

Mr ALLEN: The employment focus group is an initiative of the department, but certainly the work of that group will provide valuable information and resource to the broader activities that have been covered through the Premier's Department process. We are ensuring that there is a sharing of information and knowledge and co-ordination of all of those activities at Macquarie Fields.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I just wanted some clarification. I thought you said earlier that the community in Macquarie Fields has moved on from the riots in February. Is that basically what you were saying?

Mr ALLEN: That is what I said, yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What gives you grounds for that statement?

Mr ALLEN: Feedback from local residents through the various groups in which the department is involved, particularly the neighbourhood advisory board—what is known as the Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: So you think that the community is more cohesive now than it was in February?

Mr ALLEN: I think it is fair to say in general terms that is the case, that the community has taken some strength from the events that have occurred and there is certainly active engagement by a number of local residents, particularly public housing tenants, in some of the various groups and activities that are taking place. I understand there was a day of healing and a number of activities that the community sponsored, with the support of government agencies, to move forward.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Last night when I was watching television, I noticed there was a preview of a program to be aired tonight, I think it is on *A Current Affair*, and a snapshot of that showed people from Macquarie Fields being interviewed for that program saying things are no better. They must be perhaps different people from those that you are talking to. Has your department taken

active action specifically related to the riots in Macquarie Fields or are these initiatives that you have established initiatives that were going to be established anyway?

Mr ALLEN: The department has taken active action following those earlier events. It is important though to remember that Macquarie Fields is a very large area of which the Department of Housing estate is only one third of that entire community and there can be problems that arise from time to time in any community. I have not seen the material that you mentioned from that TV program but it is not unreasonable to expect that any community—and I think we have seen that in recent events as late as yesterday afternoon: that problems can occur in any community.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How can you then make generalisations, if that is the case, that the community has moved on?

Mr ALLEN: Because that is what the community are telling us. As I said, I am not familiar with the particular TV program that you have mentioned. That may well be a small, isolated situation that is not reflective, in fairness, of the feeling for the whole of the Macquarie Fields community, let alone the whole of the Macquarie Fields public housing estate.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: But the sorts of people that are involved in your consultative groups are people who are actively interested in being community participants, actively interested in being involved in community matters, are they not?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, they are.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Are they then the type of people that perhaps might have been involved in some of the riot behaviour that occurred in February?

Mr ALLEN: I am not aware that any of the tenants involved in our active groups were involved in that behaviour.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: So how is it then that you would have feedback in terms of the overall community if you have only got a percentage of people on your consultation groups?

Mr ALLEN: The people in the various consultation groups are representative of the broader community and a number of those people are elected to the positions that they hold and they do have a resident constituency that they are representing, and the views that they are expressing would generally be the views that other members of the community would be expressing to them.

CHAIR: We did ask you specifically whether the department has conducted any inquiries or investigations arising out of the disturbances and if so what conclusions you have come to. Obviously, Ms Parker's question partly touches on this, but have there been any formal inquiries by the department?

Mr ALLEN: There have not been any formal inquiries by the department but we have actively participated in a number of other inquiries processes both in assisting the local police during and following the events that occurred in February; we have also been a very active participant in the processes led by the Premier's Department and we feel that has been the most appropriate approach for us.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Just following on from those questions I was asking you before, you mentioned the Northern Campbelltown Community Action Group as an organisation you have been involved with. They have presented a submission to us, which we received on 8 November, and comments in that submission say, "Morale in Macquarie Fields is at an all-time low". Other comments say, "Drug dealing and bullying are significant local problems. People are too afraid to say anything for fear of reprisal". Do you have some comments on that? Surely that contradicts the statements that you are making about the way the community is in Macquarie Fields currently?

Mr ALLEN: I am not familiar with the submission you refer to from the North Campbelltown Community Action Group. Our organisation works very closely with that group and if there are any issues we need to work on jointly or separately we are quite happy to do that. Matters of

drug dealing and other criminal behaviour are principally matters for NSW Police. They have far wider powers to deal with those issues than does the Department of Housing.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Have any specific inquiries been made by the department since the Macquarie Fields disturbances and, if so, have there been any conclusions or recommendations?

Mr ALLEN: We have not undertaken any separate inquiries. We felt the most appropriate approach was to work with both the police and the Premier's Department in a joint fashion in the inquiries and investigations they were undertaking. The clear outcome from those recommendations is that engagement of the whole community in bringing forward solutions for Macquarie Fields was the critical point. So, we are actively working towards achieving the objectives and action that came out of the community and government action plan, and those strategies and actions came out of a community forum that was a precursor to the development of the plan.

The Hon. IAN WEST: However, obviously having a whole-of-community approach and having as many people from Macquarie Fields generally involved in those discussions, would it be true to say that the incidents, the disturbances, whatever you want to call them that occurred in Macquarie Fields, did not involve the whole of Macquarie Fields?

Mr ALLEN: They certainly, to the best of my understanding, did not involve the whole of Macquarie Fields. I understand only three public housing tenants were charged as a result of those events and the department has taken action against some of those.

CHAIR: What would you like to see come out of our inquiry?

Mr ALLEN: Firstly, the department fully supports the inquiry. We therefore welcome any advice or assistance this Committee can provide to enhance our response and approach to issues in Macquarie Fields. I think particularly we would like to see some positive support for the efforts the Macquarie Fields community is making as well as recognising that some stigma applies to public housing tenants as a result of some of these things. Yet, all public housing tenants were not involved in this event—a very small number of public housing tenants were involved in this event—and negative stereotypes sometimes get portrayed and public housing tenants get labelled by it and we would certainly like to see the work of this inquiry debunk some of those stereotypes and stigma.

CHAIR: In some cases we have not asked the questions we previously circulated to you. Obviously you have prepared answers to them. Would it be possible for the staff to talk with you and maybe you will have material we could still ask you to table for us as well as the questions you have taken on notice?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is more than fine.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

PAUL FRANCIS TOSI, General Manager, Campbelltown City Council, Queens St Campbelltown, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: From the conversation we were having during our tea break, I gather you formerly worked for the Housing Commission?

Mr TOSI: Many years ago I was employed as a land purchasing officer for the Housing Commission of New South Wales, probably between about 1970 and 1975 or 1976.

CHAIR: So you have a double perspective on the issues that we are talking to you about?

Mr TOSI: Yes, I was involved very early on in the housing estates that are a part of our very large city when it was not as big as it is now.

CHAIR: The Committee sent you some questions. Before we get to those, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr TOSI: Only that the council was pleased to put a submission to the Committee. The council was very supportive of the setting up of the Committee and we are happy to provide whatever information we have or any resources we can that help the Committee and its outcomes.

CHAIR: There is probably a little bit of confusion about the relevant boundaries in the area. Macquarie Fields and that area is totally within the Campbelltown city boundary?

Mr TOSI: Yes, it is.

CHAIR: Very close to the Liverpool boundary?

Mr TOSI: Yes, it is. The city of Campbelltown is a long, thin geographical footprint, I suppose, bounded in the east by the Georges River and bounded in the west by what we call the Scenic Hills and Camden Valley Way, which runs from Liverpool to Northern Road and to Narellan. Macquarie Fields is located in the northern part of the city near Glenfield. Glenfield is our last suburb before you hit our boundary with Liverpool. The suburb of Macquarie Fields, both the public housing estate and the balance, which is in private ownership, is all within the local government area of Campbelltown.

CHAIR: In terms of shopping, transport, or use of services and facilities, would people in Macquarie Fields more likely go to Liverpool or Campbelltown?

Mr TOSI: There is a very large shopping centre right at our boundary, Casula Mall, which is just in Casula obviously, so there would be a fair bit of travel into Liverpool because there is a big Westfield there as well. Macquarie Fields is serviced by subregional centres, as far as shopping is concerned in the Glenquarie Centre, which I am sure the members of the Committee are familiar with. There is the TAFE there, which is a very active tertiary education institute at the northern end of town. But there would be a fair bit of crossover between our people and the people in the southern part of Liverpool, yes.

CHAIR: Several of the submissions we have received have made the comment that there is a lack of co-ordination between services run by the different stakeholders. We have three levels of government, yourself, State and Federal. Then we have a mix of non-government agencies, not-for-profit and a growing number of for-profit agencies as well. We know that you have been working on the social plan and the Campbelltown Co-ordination Group and so on. Can you tell us what extent you think there is co-ordination between stakeholders and what has been done about it?

Mr TOSI: I think that one of the issues—and it is one of our answers to the question at the end about the outcome of the inquiry—is co-ordination between all the agencies, that is both government and non-government, and the models of funding and those sorts of thing that are utilised. If we could be part of the solution to that, that would be a very productive outcome to all of the issues that we have dealt with over the last 12 months.

CHAIR: Can you give us some specific information about the council's social plan?

Mr TOSI: Yes. All councils in New South Wales are required under the Act to develop the social plan every five years and our five-year plan—this is our second one—aims to identify and address issues impacting on the quality of life in the Campbelltown local government area. The social plan and all social plans are developed using an extensive process of demographic analysis and community input to identify the issues that the community wants to raise with us. Council and what is described in the documents from the inquiry as the Campbelltown Co-ordination Group then developed a range of strategies aimed at addressing those issues.

There is a whole range of things that come up. If I can mention a couple like traffic and transport issues, recreational and cultural issues, health issues, urban development, the image of the city and council's role in the community. The social plan identifies the things that the community and the stakeholders raise with us and the things that we would like to direct our attention to and, indeed, our resources over the five years of the plan.

CHAIR: What are the specifics, if any, relevant to the Macquarie Fields part of the city area?

Mr TOSI: I think, probably, our role in the community, and our role as advocates. One of the big things that come through our social plan is that our community—and not only the Macquarie Fields community but the community of Campbelltown sees a very strong role for a council the size of Campbelltown to be an advocate for the community in a whole range of things. So I would think in the case of Macquarie Fields residents, both in the public housing estates and outside, that would be one of our roles.

When we set up the Campbelltown Co-ordination Group, which was only a couple of years ago, that was one of the things that we had in mind, to try at a local level to be able to feed into government at both State and Federal levels issues that we thought we might have known more about than they, or issues that we wanted to raise with them.

CHAIR: Who is part of the co-ordination group?

Mr TOSI: The co-ordination group was set up probably about three years ago and it has had a bit of the history of getting going and a few problems as to getting people and getting all the agencies involved. I have a copy, if I could just refer to it.

CHAIR: You might like to table a copy of that.

Mr TOSI: I will provide it when it is in a more appropriate format. The Department of Community Services [DOCS] is on it; the regional person from the Premier's Department attends the meetings, DOCS Metro West, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Housing, ourselves, the health service, TAFE, Centrelink, Probation and Parole, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the police, and recently the Federal office of the Department of Family and Community Services have nominated one of their senior State representatives. I think we are starting to make some good progress now with the co-ordination group.

CHAIR: Are there any community groups?

Mr TOSI: No. There were before, but what we do is we feed back the discussions that come out of the co-ordination group through the Macarthur Community Forum, which is where all the non-government organisations [NGOs] meet, and then, of course, our community resources staff have ongoing conversations with the NGOs and we can, in an informal manner, pick up on most of the issues that the NGOs are interested in and then there is a formal meeting with the NGOs and the council staff once a quarter to meet with them.

The Hon. IAN WEST: How is that different from the Premier's committee? Macquarie Fields does not come under DOCS Metro West or under the Campbelltown area?

Mr TOSI: Yes, they come under the Metro West at the Bankstown location but both DOCS—the list I went through, the Ingleburn DOCS, whatever it is, which is Macquarie Fields, they attend the meeting as well.

The Hon. IAN WEST: As well?

Mr TOSI: Yes. The co-ordination group is not just specifically for Macquarie Fields; it is for the local government area of Campbelltown, which comprises 151,000 people and there are five major housing estates like Macquarie Fields throughout our area.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Sure, but I am interested in the attendance by DOCS. There are two representatives from DOCS?

Mr TOSI: I think it is three.

The Hon. IAN WEST: There are three.

CHAIR: There is Campbelltown CSC, Ingleburn CSC?

Mr TOSI: Yes, DOCS Metro South West, that is the regional people, DOCS Campbelltown West, DOCS Ingleburn, and the community division of DOCS, so we try to get representatives of those groups there.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You mentioned that the Federal Government had nominated a representative to come on board. Has it always been invited to be part of the co-ordination committee or has it just been State and local?

Mr TOSI: It started off as State and local and there has been a need to expand it. A lot of things have happened over the last couple of years and one of those was probably late last year or the beginning of this year—we have been involved with a couple of pilot programs but we were involved with a pilot program, which was a review of Federal Government funding getting into regions and it was probably out of that initiative and those conversations that the staff and I tried to get the Federal Government involved.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Did you just consider one Federal department or did you consider more Federal departments being involved?

Mr TOSI: We just looked at Family and Community Services but I must say that they were most enthusiastic about joining.

CHAIR: I think you mentioned Centrelink.

Mr TOSI: Yes, I beg pardon. Centrelink have been involved since the start. The question before was how does this relate to the Premier's one?

The Hon. IAN WEST: Well, how is it different?

Mr TOSI: It started before the issues which are in front of the inquiry and it came out of an initiative of myself and the local member, whom most of you would know, Graham West, in that Graham and I went to a forum once, which was a discussion about community funding in the local government area of Campbelltown. A lot of things have been happening over many years. In conversation we thought it would be a good idea to put some sort of initiative in place so we could meet regularly with the agencies, and that is how it started.

The Hon. IAN WEST: This is about three years ago?

Mr TOSI: Yes, about that. It has built from there and has gone reasonably well. It is a good forum, and everybody tries to attend. It keeps people up to speed about what each group is doing. It was very local as far as its relationship to the Premier's department was concerned. Initiatives were at a very local level before the incident that resulted in the issues that are in front of the committee.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Given that there are so many different boundaries, and we have referred to the difficulties relating to DOCS boundaries, did that create difficulties for the Commonwealth departments and people involved in these meetings as well?

Mr TOSI: Yes, the regional boundaries. It has always seemed fairly obvious to me, but trying to align those boundaries is fairly difficult. The Commonwealth labours under the same difficulties as the State agencies in that their boundaries are not always aligned.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: And local government—

Mr TOSI: Local government boundaries are different and the Regional Organisation of Councils (ROCS) boundaries are different again.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Trying to fit them all in the committee probably means it has more representatives than you anticipated.

Mr TOSI: Yes. Initially getting the right people was difficult, but in the last 12 months it has been working quite well. It is starting to do some good things, which, as I said, were quite independent of the incidents that are the subject of this inquiry.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is there a continuity of representatives, particularly from government departments, attending the committee meetings?

Mr TOSI: Yes. We have had to request that from time to time. That happens in large government departments. I usually chair the committee and, if not, Lindy chairs it. That is the sort of relevance the council wants to attach to it. In the last 12 months the continuity of membership and attendance has been very good.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Following up that continuity issue, you mentioned DOCS had five representatives. I assume there has been some co-ordination and perhaps one representative talks to the other four.

Mr TOSI: Yes. The person we utilise most is Anne Campbell, the regional director from Bankstown, who may well be appearing today.

CHAIR: She is one of the witnesses later today.

Mr TOSI: Anne has been very helpful and supportive in ensuring we get the right level of representation. Indeed, her position, running south-western Sydney is a quite difficult position, but she has been attending. She is always willing to give of her time if we need her to attend. That has worked pretty well.

CHAIR: It has often been put to us in previous hearings or inquiries of this committee that these kinds of co-ordination groups are very dependent on the goodwill and commitment of the individuals who take part. There is not only the issue of continuity of representation from the agencies, but also the need to get the right mix of people. Would that be your experience?

Mr TOSI: I would agree with that. I have contacted people from time to time. Lindy or I contacted the senior members of various departments at one stage to make sure we were still heading in one direction. I guess we are a little lucky—I do not know whether that is the right word—in that in local government terms Campbelltown is not a small operation. We have probably a little bit of influence with the departments and agencies with which we work. We have good relationships with government agencies—you would know all the ones I am referring to. We are able to hit at the right level. But yes, it does depend on an element of goodwill. This is not a formal subcommittee established by resolution of the council. The council is very aware of what we do and gets the minutes and is able to ask the director or me what is happening and whether we know about something happening in our community services committee, or whatever. As you say, it relies on goodwill and the commitment the various agencies have to what they are doing in our area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We hear about changes in roles of different levels of government and that the State Government withdraws from services and leaves the council to pick up the tab or the responsibility. Has that been a problem and, if so, in what areas?

Mr TOSI: Yes. There was a recent inquiry into what is entitled cost sifting in local government. I think it is called the Hawker report. Over several years there has been a tendency for local government to pick up more of the one-the-ground services. The ones that come to mind are mainly in the childcare area. We still run a very big childcare operation. It used to be subsidised by a combination of Federal and State funds, but our level of investment in childcare is a lot higher than when I first came into the game.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What order of magnitude is that and how much money is involved?

Mr TOSI: I think we put nearly \$1 million a year into our childcare operations. We run 8 long day care centres, 2 occasional care centres, a large number of before and after school operations and a very large family day care operation, where three, four or five children are minded in somebody's home. On a daily basis 500 children are involved in that program, so childcare is a big area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is that more noticeable in areas where there is welfare housing?

Mr TOSI: Definitely. If you spoke to my colleagues in any of the major councils in the western areas of Sydney or indeed growth areas in the major capital cities, they would say it is more noticed. It certainly is in our areas.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the DOCS inquiry the importance of good child supervision and role modelling was stressed very much. Are you involved in quality control of those areas and how systems work? At what level do you supervise these things?

Mr TOSI: The guidelines and parameters within which we operate are set by DOCS in consultation with not only our people but the councils that run big childcare operations, such as Penrith, Blacktown and Fairfield, Bankstown, Canterbury—these are the ones our staff deal with regularly. We do not get involved with the inner-city councils. We stick with our western Sydney colleagues, which is a combination of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) and the Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils (MACROC). So DOCS sets up the guidelines and we have to work within those parameters. Rigorous staffing levels have to be maintained—professional, administrative and cooking staff, and all those things—to ensure that the level of care provided is of the utmost quality.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you get any Federal help for that sort of initiative?

Mr TOSI: Until recently we were funded fairly well by the Federal Government, but there has been a change in the way support programs are funded. These programs were direct funded to local government for many years to ensure that children in disadvantaged circumstances accessed the right programs and were able to be catered for under the Federal Government requirements. That money is now being directed more towards non-government agencies and local government is coming out of that area. We were probably a little disappointed with that result, but that decision was made at the Family and Community Services level.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The funding went from you to the non-government sector?

Mr TOSI: To somebody else.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you have reasonable liaison with them so that you know the tabs are being picked up or are you meeting your obligations from your own resources?

Mr TOSI: We have actively made representations about it in the last couple of weeks and I will be meeting Family and Community Services on Wednesday. The council will be making appropriate representations to the Government to ensure service levels are maintained.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you likely to have to cut your operations and let the non-government ones pick up the slack?

Mr TOSI: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will you formally transfer functions across?

Mr TOSI: There will be an element of that, but in the overall scheme of things the service is maintained, as are the levels of service. We will not be doing it, as I understand.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You will still be doing some, but less of it?

Mr TOSI: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are there other areas where the Welfare to Work changes have impacted on you or where you expect them to impact?

Mr TOSI: A report on exactly that issue will be in front of the council tomorrow night. Yes, we expect there will be some impact on us.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think you will end up having to pick up some welfare services?

Mr TOSI: I am truly not sure. We do not think so.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I asked some questions about Tony Vinson's indices of social disadvantage. Presumably you have to provide more services for the ones that are worst?

Mr TOSI: I am not familiar with the Vinson report.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It was not a report, it was an indices of social disadvantage which, he said, correlated with crime and other problems.

Mr TOSI: My response to that would be in broad terms. I cannot answer in any detail. There are probably indirect impacts on us.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I am keen to get through some of the questions we have. However, one thing that is not on the list of questions supplied to you has come up in a number of submissions. I refer to accessibility of public transport in Macquarie Fields, in particular, people feeling geographically isolated and the flow-on effects to their social isolation. Is lack of public transport an issue?

Mr TOSI: Yes, I think it is, not only in Macquarie Fields but in housing estates across local government. Because we do not have government-supported bus facilities—we have only private facilities—the services have to operate on a certain level of user. Very light services operate during the day and in peak hour buses service the railway stations. That is a difficulty for the housing estates because it is hard for people to move around.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Has council taken steps to address that?

Mr TOSI: Many times.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What has been the response to that?

Mr TOSI: Usually that there is a requirement for a certain number of people to be utilising the facilities, but they will do what they can. The buses are excellent for school services and in peak hour, but there can be a difficulty in out-of-peak times.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Their response is there are not sufficient numbers to provide better public transport?

Mr TOSI: Usually. Better activity during off-peak hours.

CHAIR: Are they all private bus services?

Mr TOSI: In our local government, yes they are, and they service the railway stations.

CHAIR: Is there much of a community transport network?

Mr TOSI: Yes, there is, but is mainly for our Community Options program and those sorts of things—for people with disabilities or with particular issues.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Can we put those buses in perspective? Although they are called private buses, the services provided are very heavily publicly funded. Is that not correct?

Mr TOSI: I understand that to be the case. I am not an expert on the buses.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: He is just trying to make the Government seem better.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I am not. I am trying to explain what happens with funding. The buses are funded by taxpayers. You indicated earlier there were some very good services at higher peak times.

Mr TOSI: Absolutely.

The Hon. IAN WEST: And at off-peak times the services are not as good.

Mr TOSI: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: And it is not your area of expertise to give us advice on the fact that the services that are provided in the non-peak times are non-profitable?

Mr TOSI: No.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I would like to know about the council's relationship with the Macquarie Fields local area command. Do you run any programs in conjunction with the police?

Mr TOSI: We enjoy a sound working relationship with both local area commands, Macquarie Fields and Campbelltown. As stated in our submission, we acknowledge that the Macquarie Fields local area command takes a proactive and co-operative approach to its role in the community and its involvement with the council on a number of issues. That raises the question of the Police Accountability Community Team, an initiative that was set up a couple of years ago whereby the local area commander meets with the mayor, the general manager and members of Parliament, and provides a lot of feedback about issues the police are dealing with and that are of interest to the council.

We have been heavily involved with the community safety committee, which meets bimonthly and which the police are strongly supportive of; our crime prevention and community safety plan, which the police are involved in; our joint operational projects, which are day-to-day operational projects, like trail biking, enforcement programs; and undertaking safety audits for developments. We have a memorandum of understanding with both local area commands that we actively seek comment from the police about safety audits. We have also been heavily involved with

our youth development planning projects, such as the Campbelltown City Youth Strategy; driver education programs, whereby we work with schools; the young offenders task force, and those sorts of things. I would say that our relationship with the Macquarie Fields police is sound.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: With regard to the riots at Macquarie Fields, was the council aware of problems in the area that had been simmering prior to the riots, or do you think the riots were incident related only?

Mr TOSI: It is a slightly difficult question, but I think it was probably incident based. We were advised immediately of the incidents. We were asked to do certain things with our outdoor work force, for instance. Our people attended from day one, and there was no trouble for them at all. Our outdoor people were able to go down and clean up, or fix things up, or do whatever, without any problem at all.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: There was no indication to you prior to the riots that trouble was brewing?

Mr TOSI: No, not to us.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What do you think were the causes of the riots? What were the underlying problems?

Mr TOSI: I think there are a number of things. With regard to the public housing estates, I saw some information that has already been provided to the Committee, so I will not bore you by going over that. There is a high welfare dependency, and there is certainly intergenerational unemployment, and the estates have had pockets of social disadvantage. We have already referred to their physical isolation from the rest of the city, through transport and other matters.

There are higher percentages in the public housing estates—and it is not only in Macquarie Fields. We have five major public housing estates, of similar size to Macquarie Fields, with youth unemployment and those sorts of things, and I know the statistics have been provided to you. Over the last 18 months to two years we have been working with the department on a redevelopment of the Minto housing estate, a 1,200-unit estate of which the council is highly supportive. We are looking for a better mix of public and private housing in the estates so there is a better blending in.

In the case of the Minto renewal, that will be a change in the urban and physical environment, but it will also support the community through improved social capital, better services and the like. I think there is a whole range of issues underlying the incidents that occurred at Macquarie Fields earlier in the year, and many of them have been put forward here. The items I have covered, from our perspective, are some of the issues that played a role in it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have there been any local inquiries or investigations arising out of Macquarie Fields? If so, what actions or recommendations have been made and how have they been implemented?

Mr TOSI: We have not carried out any inquiries, but we have been involved in all the initiatives, particularly with the Macquarie Fields project management group, which we were invited to attend from the start, together with government agencies, community representatives, residents, non-government organisations, and particularly local schools.

The outcome has been the development of the action plan, which you are familiar with, and the establishment of the local reference group. The report goes to council tomorrow night. We have been invited to chair the local reference group. The feedback from the community groups, the non-government organisations and the stakeholders is that they are very supportive of the council taking that sort of role in the local reference group, chairing it, and being involved in it. As far as our carrying out inquiries is concerned, we have not; we have just worked with the government agencies that have approached us, and attempted to assist where possible.

CHAIR: Were you involved, for example, in the community forum that was held in October?

Mr TOSI: Yes, we were. We attended the community forum, and we helped in the facilitation of some of the discussion groups and did the sort of things you would expect us to do. We saw that as a useful information-gathering process to assist us in the development of the action plan, and hopefully we will have an ongoing support for the community in Macquarie Fields.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Were you surprised that it took until October before the Government convened a community forum, given that the riots took place in February?

Mr TOSI: The discussions about it started just after the incidents. However, the communities in these housing estates have seen reactions to various things before. What was put to us—and I support it completely—was that we needed to have sustainable programs and implement long-term measures. To do so very quickly—to consult them and then move away—would not have been the response that the Macquarie Fields community wanted. Although it seems that it has taken a long time, from our perspective and the perspective of our community development people, you have to consult the community, and you have to consult them correctly, and I think that process has worked pretty well so far.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The community forum was held after some planning had taken place, which did not involve consultation.

Mr TOSI: A lot of consultation took place, and a lot of groups came to various meetings, some of which I attended and some of which Ms Deitz attended, and indeed some of which our other staff attended. So at various levels within the community we were getting feedback as to what was required, how the youth would be involved, and how the various interagency groups would be involved. In my opinion, that culminated in the community forum that was held in October.

CHAIR: I think Dr Gellatly said last week that the first meeting was held in about April.

Mr TOSI: Yes. I do not know whether he said so, but it was an initiative of himself and the former local member. Certainly a number of meetings were held before the local member finished up, and I was involved in most of those at the start. I would think that the first meeting would have been in around April. It was the meeting that the council was aware I was attending, and indeed the former mayor, Councillor Banfield, attended two or three of those meetings with me. Then the view was that I would just go, and if I could not go, the director would go, and we have been at that level ever since.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: During the Redfern inquiry people commented that it took a riot to get that level of consultation and involvement from the Government. Do you think that is the case regarding Macquarie Fields?

Mr TOSI: Without a huge amount of detail, I think that, certainly from Campbelltown City Council's point of view, in the years that I have been there we have had a number of initiatives or contact with the community representatives in the Macquarie Fields area, indeed in all the housing estates. I do not think the riots were the catalyst for us suddenly saying, "We have to get into there." We were already doing that.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I did not mean—

Mr TOSI: I understand that. At agency level, a lot of that work was being done.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Has that work increased since the riots?

Mr TOSI: Again, in my terminology, I think it has become more focused. I think some of the issues with regard to some of the more successful programs, which over time had been competing for funding with other requirements on other housing estates, as happens, I think we have been a bit more focused on some of that. When I was waiting to give evidence I heard Mr Allen's comments about the community meeting place. We have moved quickly with the Government; we are involved in that as well. That was one of the very strong issues that the community raised through the meetings we attended.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What message does that give to other communities, in terms of improvement to their community and social conditions?

Mr TOSI: I think that probably they keep in touch with the local people to start with. A lot of resources go into the housing estates, and into the human services activities across our local government area. We are not perfect, but we certainly work hard with the agencies to try to deliver a good standard of service. I do not know what message the response to Macquarie Fields sends to the other communities, suffice it to say that we have the same sort of networks with our other communities as we have with Macquarie Fields. Probably the lesson we have learned is that we need to work harder on making sure that we have those relationships in the right areas and that we are hearing what everybody is saying.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you think that the Macquarie Fields community feel confident that there will be some tangible delivery of services in a way in which it will improve their way of life, after all this consultation? Or do you think they have a view that it is just another round of consultation with little result?

Mr TOSI: To use your word, I could not say they would feel confident. The proof of the pudding will be in the delivery. But I think there is an air of confidence on the part of the community representatives there whom I know from my many years working with the council, and the community representatives that the staff of our community services people negotiate with, that there will be a difference. I really do think that that is their attitude.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You mentioned your community safety committee, which meets bimonthly. Who are the representatives on that committee?

CHAIR: Perhaps you would like to take that on notice.

Mr TOSI: I might have to take it on notice, if I may. Obviously, the police are involved, there are community representatives on the committee, and there are elected people from our organisation on it. These committees have been set up with elected people as the chairs rather than the staff, and the staff attend to provide professional advice.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I suppose that I am more interested in the number of community representatives and where they come from.

Mr TOSI: Can we provide that information, Madam Chair?

CHAIR: Yes, you can take that question on notice.

Mr TOSI: We will certainly do that as quickly as possible.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In terms of young people in the Campbelltown council area do you have a youth council?

Mr TOSI: Yes, we do.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Apart from the youth council and obviously the people within your community services division who work with young people, do you have any other forums of young people that report back to council about issues such as whether you have the facilities that they want in the community or perhaps some of the other social issues that affect young people? I think the Macquarie Fields community was quoted as comprising about 50 per cent young people. Do all your other housing estate areas and suburbs have the same high percentage of young people?

Mr TOSI: Yes, they would.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So it is pretty much across the board.

Mr TOSI: In the housing estates, yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What about the rest of the Campbelltown community? Does it have the same percentages of young people?

Mr TOSI: It is not that high but it is still far higher than the average. Yes, we do have other structures. There is a section in Ms Deitz's division which is dedicated to youth issues. We have a community committee which assists in running our network of youth centres and facilities that are used by youth. That is probably another sounding board. We are working through a review of that at the moment.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Does Campbelltown City Council have any involvement in the programs that operate through the PCYC?

Mr TOSI: We have a close relationship with PCYC at Minto. There is a major facility at Minto. Probably within the last two months they have spoken to us about access and funding and working in tandem—jointly—with us. We will be exploring that in the New Year, but we have always had a good relationship with the PCYC.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Perhaps you could take that question on notice.

Mr TOSI: That has been brought up with me. I do not know the details, but the initiative was mentioned to me. We were asked were we supportive of it and, yes, we would be. I can find out the details of that and forward it to the Committee.

CHAIR: When we have the transcript and the issues are pinned down the staff will contact you.

Mr TOSI: Of course. No problem.

CHAIR: Talking about young people reminds me of something. Our first witness today was Gary Moore from NCOSS. One of the things that he stressed particularly was the employment needs of the area, and overwhelmingly the employment needs of young people. He talked about the responsibilities of all levels of government. Does the council have any specific preference for local people? Is there a tendency for the council to help with what is obviously a very difficult employment situation?

Mr TOSI: We are foundation board members of what is called Macarthur Group Training Incorporated, which is a trainee apprentice network. I will have to provide information to the Committee, but we employ a very large number of trainees out of that group on an annual basis and at the end of that try to assist them, with Macarthur Group Training, in getting permanent employment. We have been involved in that program for many years. We have an indigenous employment program that we run. We have a high number of indigenous people in the local government area—I think it is the second highest in the State. So we are doing what we can in those areas and also lobbying at State and Federal government levels about employment opportunities, employment-generating lands, youth unemployment programs and the like.

CHAIR: Do WESROC and MACROC get involved in those sorts of programs—encouraging local businesses and other organisations to employ local people?

Mr TOSI: I have an idea that WESROC was recently involved in attempting to source some funding to provide employment programs for young people. MACROC is certainly not on the same level as WESROC. We are a reasonable size council and there is Camden and Wollondilly but at this stage we do not have any direct involvement in those sorts of programs. But we at council level certainly do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I want to ask question No. 1.

CHAIR: I think we have been through question No. 1 pretty much but we can go back.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you aware of all the submissions to this inquiry?

Mr TOSI: No.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Some of them said that there was a lack of co-ordination between programs and services in the area. You have a social plan. Can you describe how it works and co-ordinates with other groups?

CHAIR: We probably ran through a fair amount of this information in Mr Tosi's opening remarks.

Mr TOSI: I am happy to say that the social plan was drawn up with a wide amount of community involvement. There were agencies and public meetings. We have a fairly big arts centre in Campbelltown. Public meetings were held there and all the community groups were invited. The objective of the co-ordination group is to improve co-ordination and collaboration between government agencies, particularly in the provision of services in our local area. I think there is probably some validity in saying that co-ordination is an issue, but that relates more to size than commitments for agencies wanting to be involved. We are working on that. At our little, local Campbelltown level, we are working on that. The vehicle for that is the co-ordination group. As was raised before, it sounds like a heck of a lot of people but, with the goodwill and the intention of various agencies and us involved, it has been working well so far.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do they bring up individual cases at those meetings?

Mr TOSI: Yes, we do. That is exactly the purpose of the thing: We discuss funding coming up, who is going for that—"We did not know you were going for that". Those sorts of discussions take place. I see that as a very positive thing.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are there individual sub-plans for each neighbourhood?

Mr TOSI: Not for each neighbourhood at the moment but we are working on two major projects at the moment that relate to the direction and the required outcomes of the co-ordination group. That will get down to a more local level as we proceed through the process.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Does this stop turf wars over role definitions?

Mr TOSI: Hopefully.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So that would enable you, for example, to say to the NGOs, who presumably would be on that board and that committee and say, "Okay, mate, you can have these three areas since you've got the money and we haven't."

Mr TOSI: Yes, essentially that is what we would like to do. This was set up originally because I was always worried, as the General Manager, that the council might ask me whether I knew what programs were happening in the LGA and I was not sure. So I thought it was not a bad idea at the time. If they asked me, I would like to answer them. That is what we are doing now and it is working okay. But we are just crawling at the moment. I think it is a very good model. It requires a lot of work and I think that, since the incident that this Committee is inquiring into, at a government and an agency level they have taken more interest in it because it appears to be a pretty good way of liaising with the local authority—which obviously in this case is us—and we hold a lot of information that would be of use to them.

CHAIR: I think all that remains is our last question, which gives you fairly free rein: What would you like to see come out of this inquiry?

Mr TOSI: Picking up on the last question, Madam Chair, I think we would like to see a recommendation about co-ordination and collaboration between the various levels of government. We would like to see a maximisation of funding for the proven programs for the area to achieve longer-

term and long-term outcomes. We would like to see long-term recurrent funding—the operative word is "recurrent"—for programs that are successful, achievable and are supported by local stakeholders. I think it is very important that the local people are consulted at every level.

Ms Deitz points out to me that you have not asked the question: How do we think the disturbances affected residents? I do not want to prolong the conversation but we would like to say, as the council, that the stereotype that Mr Allen talked about is something that a local government area like ours has laboured under for a long time. Feedback from the community following these incidents, riots, disturbances or whatever you want to call them at the beginning of the year is that residents are disappointed, and indeed distressed in a lot of cases, at the negative media and publicity that this has caused for their area. I heard the questions to Mr Allen before. I cannot say whether they have moved on, but the vast majority would like to move on. I know that. Not only is it the incident and the issues that have happened, but it has had impacts on their children, on things like job applications and all those sorts of things. That is what has come out of it. Our people and the residents that I know down there—and I know a lot of them because I have lived there since 1982—would like to move on. And we would like to make that point to the inquiry. Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIR: We hope that some of those people who love stereotypes might now look at places such as Cronulla instead of focusing on Macquarie Fields.

Mr TOSI: I was going to say that, Madam Chair, but I thought it might be a bit inappropriate coming from me.

CHAIR: It came out earlier.

Mr TOSI: It came from you so I am very pleased to hear it.

CHAIR: We note that a lot of stereotyping goes on. This is the second inquiry of this kind. This Committee held the Redfern-Waterloo inquiry. It keeps things in perspective.

Mr TOSI: As I am sure you know, our city enjoys a great deal of wonderful amenities and facilities and it has a great group of people as residents. We would like that to be seen and highlighted from time to time.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You would agree that the riots in Macquarie Fields were not based on racism.

Mr TOSI: Yes, I would agree with that.

CHAIR: I am not sure that the riots in Cronulla were. Thank you very much for coming today and giving your evidence to the Committee.

Mr TOSI: Thank you to members of the Committee.

(The witness withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

JO ALLEY, Policy Officer, Uniting Care Burnside, 13 Blackwood Place, North Parramatta, and

DEBORAH HINCHCLIFFE, Co-ordinator, Uniting Care Burnside, 132-138 Guernsey Avenue, Minto, both affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: We have sent you some questions, but before we take up those and other questions the Committee might like to ask, do you wish to make an opening statement saying anything about Burnside in general and, particularly, the local office?

Ms ALLEY: The first question was more about the local office. I will do a brief introduction. Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to present at this hearing. Rather than make a long opening statement we are happy to respond to the indicative questions because they cover most of our submission, which has been based on consultation with service providers from Macquarie Fields and some local residents. In general, Burnside provides services to disadvantaged children, some people and their families across different locations in New South Wales.

CHAIR: Ms Hinchcliffe, do you want to talk about the services provided in the Macquarie Fields area, which was our first question?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: In response to that question, I can. Uniting Care Burnside Northern McArthur Family Support Service provides services to the northern sector of Campbelltown, which is inclusive of Leumeah through to Glenfield and, obviously, including Macquarie Fields. It is a partially funded DOCS-CSGP program with the remaining program cost funded by Uniting Care Burnside. A large majority of our services are targeted and focused in the Macquarie Fields area. The services that we provide currently in the area of Macquarie Fields include in-home family support interventions for families with children and young people. We operate two crises drop-in services that provide support, referral, advocacy and information for families, children and young people, one of which is conducted at James Meehan High School and the other at Guise Primary School. We provide two school-based social skills development and resilient building programs for children who are aged five to 12 years, and there are children who have been identified as being at risk of failing at school or disengaging from school. We run care and education programs. Most recently we have run a number of programs for parents with teenage children in partnership with the local high school, being James Meehan.

We have conducted school-based anger management programs targeting young people attending James Meehan High School. These young people have been identified by the school as being most at risk of suspension from school, and disengagement from school. In partnership with the Benevolent Society's Scarba service we provide a community-based mobile supported playgroup, which is called Really Good Fun, for families with children aged 0 to five years. The program targets families who are somewhat isolated, vulnerable and least likely to access services in the area. In partnership with other key local service providers we deliver a range of community building activities and initiatives, some of which include regular community lunches, community barbecues, holiday activities for school-age children and community events. Over the past 12 months we have provided services for approximately 130 families in the area. Despite the diverse range of services that we currently provide, clearly we are unable to meet the increasing need, particularly in areas of referrals for family work interventions, crisis drop-in support and significantly increased requests from both the primary schools and high schools for specifically targeted programs.

CHAIR: That is quite a range. Did you say the funding is from DOCS?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: Yes, part of the CSGP funding program.

CHAIR: Any funding from any other levels of government or any other government agencies?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: Yes, we receive some recurrent funding from Commonwealth money from FACS for half a family work position targeting families with children aged 11 to 16 years, and we have some short-term funding under the FACS Reach Program, which has approximately 12 to 18

months left to run, which targets families who are particularly vulnerable and suffering issues of mental health and drug and alcohol use and misuse.

CHAIR: That funding relates also to programs that you offer that cover the Macquarie Fields area?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: Yes, we used some of those resources to complement the under core funding that we have.

CHAIR: I asked that partly because of our second question about co-ordination and the fact that a number of submissions have mentioned that and the people to whom we have already spoken today have talked about co-ordination between three levels of government and then also between the government and non-government sector and so on. Would you like to tell us how you go about co-ordinating your services with the others and what problems you see in the whole area of co-ordination?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: For the Burnside Family Centre, which I co-ordinate, as I have mentioned we receive some other small amounts of Federal money and we use that to complement these services and to extend what we refer to as the Northern McArthur Family Support Service Team. It gives us a few extra hours and a few extra people to put into those teams and then to deliver more services. In terms of the local area of Macquarie Fields, Burnside is a member of the MIG interagency group that operates in Macquarie Fields. That group endeavours to work in collaboration with local service providers in the area. We are particularly interested in working with those who target children, families and young people.

CHAIR: What does MIG stand for?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: Macquarie Fields, Ingleburn and Glenfield. The majority of the programs we provide are in partnership with other local service providers. Apart from our crisis and crisis drop-in services and our in-home family support services we endeavour to deliver most of our targeted group programs. Our current partners in service delivery in Macquarie Fields include the Benevolent Society and specifically their Scarba program, Primary Connect, Macquarie Fields Youth Centre, Guise Public School, Curran Public School, James Meehan High School, the Glenquarry Neighbourhood Centre, Schools As Communities Centre, the St Vincent de Paul Society and their animation project and the Department of Housing and Community Health. For me working in partnership in Macquarie Fields enables service providers to provide more programs for families and children, and that is done by pooling resources and effectively being able to deliver services to more people. A large number of the service providers in Macquarie Fields are poorly funded and resourced, and are often very small services or may just comprise one staff member. Working in partnership is often the most effective means of delivering services and programs, and for some of them it is about their survival or their sustainability into the future.

CHAIR: You have told us who you co-ordinate with, but can you tell us the bit about how difficult it is to organise and how successful it is from your point of view, but feel free to comment on whether the other agencies are co-ordinating well with you? The criticisms in the submissions, without blaming anyone, make the point that co-ordinating a range of different bodies is quite difficult.

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: I would agree that it is quite challenging. In terms of the service providers and the staff on the ground in Macquarie Fields there is a very strong commitment around having an integrated approach to delivering services for families and that is done quite well at that level. The challenges are that it can become quite time consuming. A lot of energy needs to be put into partnerships if they are going to be effective, if they are going to last long term and provide the best outcomes for families. There needs to be a lot of preparation work around the two agencies or organisations that are coming together and looking at the purpose of the program and outcomes that you are trying to achieve, and making sure that you have commonality in those areas. The challenges are around time and matching services that are most alike or that have the most similar target groups.

CHAIR: Do you get together a lot or do you spend half your life on the phone? How do you do it?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: Establishing a new partnership would be quite time intensive in terms of meeting face to face. Email contact is very popular and a lot of time is spent on the phone. We use that monthly interagency meeting as an opportunity to have some of those preliminary discussions. Once partnerships are up and running, and I guess I could use the example of the one we have with the Benevolent Society around the mobile playgroup, it is all about partnering organisations having clear memorandums of understanding drawn up and then building in a regular times to meet, review and evaluate your programs against your set performance indicators or your desired outcomes. The benefits far outweigh, for me, the challenges of working in partnership because what you are able to offer families, the community and children is an enriched service. You are bringing together people from different disciplines and different backgrounds with different areas of expertise to deliver services. Practically that means that often we can deliver almost twice as many services in partnership as it would be able to deliver as a sole agency.

CHAIR: The General Manager of Campbelltown City Council was telling us before lunch about the Campbelltown co-ordination group and what the council has put in. Do you participate in that organisation?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: No, I do not.

CHAIR: Does Burnside at all, or is it more of a government and local government agency?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: My understanding is that it is more targeted towards government and local government.

Ms ALLEY: I wanted to add some points to the co-ordination issue, if that is okay. Just from the literature around preventing crime in public housing areas, having a co-ordinated response is one of the best practice principles that they recommend. But other best practice principles include long-term funding and adequate support for programs. Ms Hinchcliffe alluded to issues around adequate resourcing for programs.

It is very hard to work in partnership if partway through your partnership you find that the partner you are working with no longer exists or is about to close, which is happening with some programs currently in Macquarie Fields. During our consultations many respondents raised the need for long-term funding of projects in Macquarie Fields. One person commented: "Really good projects start up but they are only pilot projects." A recent planning document indicates that seven programs have been discontinued in Macquarie Fields, and four programs have reduced services due to insufficient or static funding, or increased demand in the community. This does not include the Primary Connect program, which is a primary schools program that has a large community interface—it is due to end in December of this year—nor the Schools as Community Centres program, which is the other major primary School community program, which is only funded to June next year. The schools are the hub of those communities, and from the feedback we received during our consultation, the loss of those programs would be a major blow to the community.

The other kind of best practice principle I wanted to talk about in relation to preventing crime in public housing areas is the need for a more responsive service system. This also ties into planning to some extent. There is a big need for increased funding for government departments, particularly Health, to provide outreach in Macquarie Fields area. Our submission talks a great deal about the limited nature of health services in the Macquarie Fields area, due to lack of access to services through inadequate public transport, and also waiting lists for government services. As Deb has been talking about, in terms of the non-government organisations, they are actually effective in reaching disadvantaged populations like that in Macquarie Fields, but they are very much constrained by resourcing. They have the right type of outreach and the right type of soft entry points like the mobile playgroups, which are very non-threatening for residents to access, but they are limited by funding.

Going back to the issue of co-ordination and the need for an integrated response, a place manager-type position and a place based plan is also a principle of best practice in relation to preventing crime in public housing areas. As Deb has discussed, there is a good network of a small number of service providers in Macquarie Fields, but there is a need for additional resourcing of those agencies. As she mentioned, Burnside does not have enough resourcing to meet demand for things like

family support. There is also a need for a position to drive that interagency, and the need for a place based plan. You will be aware that the Premier's Department is developing a place based plan, which is a step in the right direction but it is my understanding that there are not any resources attached to that currently.

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: Just to draw a parallel with the neighbouring suburb of Minto, we also provide a number of programs in Minto from our family centre model. As part of its renewal project, the Department of Housing is currently implementing a place management model in which we have been extensively involved. To date the planning and consultation that have taken place as part of this process have been incredibly inclusive and incredibly valuable in identifying the service delivery gaps, possible overlaps and the emerging long-term needs of that community. The process in Minto has further encouraged collaboration of service providers, so it has really enhanced that already underlying feeling around collaborating and working together; and has highlighted the importance of working in partnership to achieve sustainable change for the community.

To ensure that that is an effective process, and effective provision of services to meet needs, a substantial budget has been attached to that place management process by the Department of Housing. The Manager of Service Planning for the Department of Housing is the person responsible for driving the process in Minto. He will oversee its implementation and monitor the progress for at least the next five years. It has been my experience that having a key person that takes that responsibility for driving that type of program is absolutely vital so that the project does not lose its momentum, its direction or timely progress, because that is the sole focus on that position—rather than drawing on time from service providers in the area that are already overwhelmed with demand. It seems to be a model that is working well in a parallel suburban in a State.

CHAIR: That has been done in conjunction with the Department of Housing starting on the regeneration and rebuilding in Minto. Did anything like this happen before? Did the Department of Housing do anything similar when they started on the renovation of the Macquarie Fields Estate? It has been going for some years.

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: My understanding is no, that there has not been any similar process, up until very recently, with the Premier's Department around a place based type of approach.

CHAIR: Coming back to something you mentioned. I think you said your local consultation threw up the fact that seven programs have ceased to operate because of the cessation of funding. Are you talking about non-government programs, in respect of which government funding was available for a limited period or for a pilot?

Ms ALLEY: It actually did not come from consultation; it comes from this document, "Macquarie Fields Community Resources and Assets Working Document," which was drawn up immediately after the public disturbances to try to assess what exists and what the gaps are.

CHAIR: The Committee would be grateful for a copy of that document. I do not think that has come to the Committee from any other source.

Ms ALLEY: Yes, I can make that available. The list of discontinued services include a housing community assistance program; early childhood worker, home visiting; coffee and creative kids project; after-school program, YMCA, women's support group, Macarthur Health Service. Then there is a list of reduced services: Salvation Army, after-school program, vacation care and long-day care, Macquarie Fields Youth Centre, Scarborough Benevolent Society—which did not have enough funding to meet increasing demand for services—and the Schools As Community Centres program has reduced their preschool sessions from two to one. We can make that document available to the Committee.

CHAIR: It is a mix of government and non-government programs, presumably with government funding from different sources?

Ms ALLEY: I would imagine most of them would be, yes.

CHAIR: Which certainly relates to the co-ordination problem. It is difficult to coordinate if you are not quite sure what is there or what is going to be there.

Ms ALLEY: Yes.

CHAIR: Have you been involved in the State Government's Macquarie Fields Community, Government and Action Plan that has just been drawn up, and prior to that in the Campbelltown Council Social Plan?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: I will just speak to the council social plan first. Burnside, as a key stakeholder in the Campbelltown area, has been involved in many of the consultation processes that led to the council social plan being developed. The council is now 12 months into the implementation of its plan, which is from December 2004 to December 2009, so it is very early stages in terms of implementation. The plan is designed around the nine identified focus areas for the area of Campbelltown. It certainly appears to me that significant progress has been made in each of those areas. The ones that we would be most familiar with would be issues around crime and safety, health, employment, education and training, and strengthening local communities. I am aware that a number of committees and forums have been established to begin addressing the identified issues and needs in each of those categories, and to start implementing the strategies outlined in the plan.

I would be particularly familiar with some groups around the young offenders task force that has been set up, and also the Partners in Employment program [PIE] that are particularly rolling out across the public housing estates in Campbelltown. I guess it is clear that the overall aim of the social plan is to develop strategies to address emerging challenges in its communities, and to ensure that quality of life conditions for all of its residents are maximised. Another on the issues identified in the social plan are particularly relevant to Macquarie Fields, as it would be for any of the other large estates in Campbelltown. Some of those particularly would be issues around transport, poor access and lack of transport, issues of crime and safety for the community, employment, education and training programs and opportunities and strengthening local community strategies. They are what I would regard as most relevant.

In terms of the community government action plan in Macquarie Fields, as a member of the mid-interagency group, Burnside has been part of the consultation process for the development of that action plan. As service providers in the area, we have met with the Premier's Department and participated in the Macquarie Fields Community Forum, which was conducted in October of this year and James Mann High School. The consultation to date has probably been somewhat valuable in gaining insight into the community. However, that it would be good to see a more extensive consultation process take place with a view to engaging a broader range of representatives from a far more diverse community, and some thoughts that have been expressed around that particularly by young people. Having conducted a series of consultations with young people and hearing what they have to say, particularly families from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background and the ageing community, it is my understanding that at that Forum they certainly were not well represented and it was a somewhat small consultation that took place.

Most recently we have been involved in a meeting with Premier's Department to discuss the development of a community implementation group, which would be representative of government agencies, and non-government agencies and residents of Macquarie Fields. It is my understanding that the role of this group will be to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Government and Community action Plan. Six representatives from non-government service providers will sit on this group, of which Uniting Care and Burnside is one. There will be six resident representatives on that group and six representatives from key government bodies. At the most recent meeting we had with Premier's Department, a copy of the Government and Community Action Plan was distributed to service providers, but it is my understanding that to date he has not been distributed to any residents or community groups in Macquarie Fields, despite an undertaking from the Premier's Department at the community forum in October to have the plan written and distributed to all participants within two weeks. That has not yet taken place.

It has been presented that the aim of the Government and Community Action Plan is to ensure integrated service planning and delivery in Macquarie Fields. It has also been presented that there are no additional funds or resources attached to the plan or to its implementation. If this is the

case, it has certainly instilled doubt in many residents, service providers and key stakeholders in the area as to how effective the plan will be in producing long-term positive outcomes for the community, and sustainable change for that community. Somewhere in that process of developing that plan, and the consultation, a Department of Housing property has been identified and allocated as a community meeting space, and that property is on this estate in Macquarie Fields.

I think that that announcement was quite a surprise announcement to most people who were involved at the time. To date it is very unclear as to how the property and the meeting place will be administered: whether that will be administered and overseen by the Department of Housing and the exact purpose that it will serve, in terms of whether it will be a community hub where services are delivered and provided, or whether it will be a space where resident groups meet and network. So it is quite unclear in the community as yet how that will be used. It is my understanding that it is a partnership between the Department of Housing and the Campbelltown City Council.

CHAIR: Both those bodies spoke about that this morning during evidence, but I do not know that they went into the detail about how it all actually operated.

Ms ALLEY: I just want to add one or two points to that. I mean, I do not work in the Macquarie Fields area but I had a bit of a look at the social plan. I guess one of the things is that it has identified a lot of the issues that we have raised about transport and health and so forth, but it is a bit hard to tell how much of an impact it will have because it is early in its roll-out. But it is also across the whole of the Macarthur area or the Campbelltown area, so it is actually a bit hard to tell how much impact it will have.

The other thing in relation to the health section of that plan is that the council has identified that it will work closely with the area health service, but the area health service is in the middle of restructuring at the moment. That means that it is actually quite difficult at the moment in terms of trying to get health services on the ground. With the Premier's Department plan, I think it is really good to have an overarching plan, as I mentioned previously, but there are sort of some gaps and I think it needs a bit more development, particularly around primary and high school education. As Deb has already said, the major concern around it is that there are not any additional funds attached to it.

CHAIR: Although some things I guess have been provided in a sense in kind, like the Department of Housing making a house available to be a community meeting place.

Ms ALLEY: Yes. That is great. I think all that stuff is really positive, but you actually need to have the staff to manage the community house. We have made a number of recommendations about additional services, and I actually do not think it requires a huge commitment of funding.

CHAIR: I was trying to remember whether this morning the Department of Housing had gone into the detail of funding and so on, but they have not. However, we will make that one of the questions on notice because, while they were telling us about it, they did not go further into that area. Deborah, you were a little critical about the community consultation and you named some of the groups which you felt had not been included enough in the consultation that the Government has undertaken so far. The community implementation group that you mentioned, the six non-government organisation representatives, the six resident representatives and the six government agency representatives, how do you feel about that as a model? How do you feel about the six resident representatives in particular and how they will be chosen, and whether that group of 18 people will work to be a reference group?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: I think that the proposed model is a very good one. I was very pleased to see that there were an equal number of proposed resident representatives on that group. We have had some quite lengthy discussion with the Premier's Department around the process of selecting those six resident representatives and selecting them from a diverse range of community groups. It appears at this stage that they will be developing and distributing an expression of interest to the community of Macquarie Fields for residents to come forward and put in an expression of interest to be part of that group.

I think if the process is done well and thoroughly and that it is a very inclusive process and there is a lot of information given to residents about the expectations—the very clear expectations of

them as representatives in terms of what will be involved of their time and their commitment and what benefits they may get from participating—it will be very successful. I hope that it works out that way, that it is not rushed and that the representatives do not then become taken the stick. I think it is vital that they participate equally with the non-government service providers and that government service providers drive this plan in the right direction.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: In your report there are a lot of calls for funding. You are recommending funding for a lot of the government and non-government organisations, and you are also recommending that the police have better resources to be able to do their job better out there as well. Would you like to elaborate a little bit more on where you see the shortfalls in funding, and how much funding you believe the Government should provide for these issues?

Ms ALLEY: Sure. We identified shortfalls—particularly in the areas around early childhood education and care, not necessarily more places in preschools—where we are actually in a position to ensure that children are getting into preschool because there are a lot of barriers to children getting into early childhood education care in disadvantaged areas. That particular strategy, getting children into early childhood education and care, is one single strategy that can have very profound effects on long-term outcomes for children as they grow up. It can be a very effective strategy in disadvantaged communities.

We have put in recommendations about primary school and high school education, particularly including the continuation of the two existing primary school programs that I have mentioned. The reason for that particularly is that there are a lot of suspensions in the area—I was going to talk about that later on—and there is a lot of dropping out from school, early school dropout. Again, improving educational performance and educational outcomes are really important in terms of crime prevention as well as other long-term indicators for people.

The other major area that we made recommendations in relation to funding concerned youth services. A lot of respondents identified that there was a big gap in the provision of services, not only services but also recreational facilities for youth—low-cost recreational facilities for young people. Basically there is nothing for young people to do, much. With inadequate public transport and some other sort of barriers to people feeling confident about leaving the area, including the costs, young people seem to be pretty much stuck in the area with very little to do. The youth service is very inadequately funded. It is open only on afternoons for a certain number of days of the week with a couple of staff members. It is not at all well funded.

They were the major areas, as well as having a place-based position that I mentioned—you know, a driver, a co-ordinating driver. We have made a lot of recommendations for funding but I think that, given that these problems are likely to re-emerge, if it is not in Macquarie Fields, it will be somewhere else. I think there is a real need for additional funding for place-based initiatives to address disadvantage. They are doing that in the United Kingdom. In London, England, they have a very big program where they are pouring additional funding into place-based areas—a pot of funding for each different area. I sort of did a little rough estimate of how much you could spend. Even if it was sort of \$800,000 a year over five to 10 years I think you would start to see a big difference. The program in Minto—do you know how much they have allocated to that roughly?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: It is my understanding that the department has allocated approximately \$500,000 a year for a minimum of five years. Some of that money they would use directly to employ people in specific positions and a large part of that money will be tendered out to local non-government service providers to deliver services to meet the gaps.

Ms ALLEY: But one thing that is for sure is that it needs to be long term because, as many of our respondents indicated, short-term programs, they just get started and they can be really good, but then they disappear. That means the community gets frustrated and angry and loses trust, basically.

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: They are far less likely to engage service providers when they believe that you are there for only a very short period of time. It is a very large ask to ask families to divulge to you their personal details and discuss with you their areas of need when you are not going to be there in 12 months or two years time. They need to know that you are going to be there for a

significant amount of time to support them and that it is in their best interests, and the best interests of their children, to work with you and to build a relationship and put energy and time into building a relationship.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Are you confident that the long-term funding that is available is adequate to meet the needs of Macquarie Fields and Minto?

Ms ALLEY: Currently, no, definitely not.

CHAIR: I think we dealt with quite a bit of that before.

Ms ALLEY: Yes, we went through that earlier.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I have two questions. Could you explain a little bit further for me the place-based plans in terms of recurrent funding? Why do you see that as better than not having it?

Ms ALLEY: I guess that having a place-based plan means that it is more likely that services are able to work together because it would be more clear about what people's roles and responsibilities are going to be, and it should be more clear where the gaps are in funding. When we talk to people as part of this consultation with service providers, they talk about how you can apply for funding but it does not always come to the right target group. You are desperate, you try, and you put in, and what you get does not always necessarily give you what you need. So having a pool of money attached to a place-based plan means that if you sit down and identify the gaps, you can utilise that money to actually fill the gaps.

The Hon. IAN WEST: So you can better target and assess the need? In terms of the needs analysis, you can better target and assess?

Ms ALLEY: Yes, that is right. If you look at this document, there are lots of programs but they are often very small already in Macquarie Fields. It is actually having something that documents what already exists, what the research points to as effective and what areas should we be focusing on, and also looking at what the gaps are, and once you have worked all that out, that is the plan, and then you put the resources with the plan, basically.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In your submission, you made a reference to the residents feeling that the media played a role in the disturbance. Can you elaborate on that?

Ms ALLEY: That is one of the later questions. Perhaps we could, if it is all right, just move through the questions.

CHAIR: Officially, we have only about four minutes left. Do you want to go back? If it is easier for you, we can take them in order. I think we are up to No. 4.

Ms ALLEY: Which is the police?

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms ALLEY: Basically, the question is about relationships between the police and local residents. When we consulted, basically respondents indicated that there was ongoing tension between the police and local residents, especially young people. I will not go into it in a lot of detail because it is in the submission, but there were some comments about people feeling that the police would antagonise young people or antagonise situations involving young people. There were some respondents who considered that policing in the area has been erratic and that there was some unwillingness to respond to callouts. But this does not mean that there are not necessarily good relationships between some individual police officers and community members.

I guess in terms of best practice principles around public housing and crime prevention, it is really important that the police develop good relationships with local residents and that they are seen to be proactive in their policing. Recently there has been a new local area commander appointed to Macquarie Fields and there seems to be some positive steps in this direction. For example, he has

undertaken cultural awareness training with police officers and has started initiatives to build police relationships with young people.

CHAIR: We can come back to the media question. The one in between asks you what you see as the underlying causes and problems that contributed to the disturbances.

Ms ALLEY: I will make this brief because of the time. From the literature it is evident that there is not just one cause of public disturbances, such as those in Macquarie Field. The National Crime Prevention strategy indicates that there are a range of risk factors across individual school and community and cultural factors. The types of underlying factors that we identified from the consultations include socioeconomic disadvantage. This is probably the major underlying factor because it results in boredom and a lack of opportunities for young people and disillusionment from the generations of unemployment.

Other predictors of involvement in crime and risk factors include poor school performance, which I talked about in passing. In terms of Macquarie Fields, it is about kids leaving school early and a high number of school suspensions. Another major underlying factor is inadequate support for effective parenting. Research indicates that poverty makes effective parenting difficult and undermines healthy parent-child relationships. Inadequate parenting such as child abuse and neglect can affect school performance and increases the risk of mental health and substance abuse. So programs that address parenting and building good family relationships are very important. Some of the more immediate contributing factors we identified included underlying tensions between police and local residents, the role of the media and the impact of grief. I will not talk much more about those. We can go on to the media question.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Yes, I will ask it.

Ms ALLEY: The media question: Many respondents identified the media as a contributing factor to the public disturbances. From the respondents' comments it was obvious that the media played a large role in inflaming and sensationalising the disturbances. This included harassing people in the street for news stories to get them to speak. As one person commented, "The media was the problem. We saw a reporter going from door to door opposite the park harassing people. We saw many reporters chasing people up the street as we were driving through the area." Many respondents felt that if the media had left the community alone to grieve the violence would not have continued for so long. There are lots of concerns about the negative portrayal of all individuals, as well as selective reporting.

For example, someone commented, "There was a lot of anger and frustration as they were all labelled as 'scum'." Another person said, "The media was just interviewing all the people who had no jobs and the people who wanted to fight. They did not interview the working class." There were examples given to us of particularly unethical behaviour, including television staff offering cigarettes and alcohol to under 15-year-olds in order to get them to act badly in front of the cameras. It also included filming children in preschool without parental permission, and a media person posed as a university student to get into a community centre. Some of these behaviours contravene the media's code of ethics, for example, using fair, honest and responsible means to obtain material, as well as respecting grief and personal privacy. Burnside would very much like to see a government inquiry into the role of the media in Australia in relation to ethical conduct and mechanisms to address unethical behaviour. Basically, the role of the media came up really strongly and people were very angry about the behaviour of the media in the area.

The Hon. IAN WEST: So when people see the sign "on air" they tend to switch to vaudeville a bit.

CHAIR: He is looking at the red light behind you as you have not seen it.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Sorry, that was a statement, not a question.

CHAIR: Do you want to add to that?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: No, that was very comprehensive.

CHAIR: I guess some of what you just said leads into the next question about how the disturbances have affected the residents of Macquarie Fields. Some of what you said about the negative portrayal by the media is reflecting how they feel now, perhaps more than how they felt during the days of the disturbances. Would you like to enlarge on that and what steps, if any, you feel the community is taking to rebuild things a bit?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: The public disturbances in Macquarie Fields have had an absolutely devastating impact on that community. Immediately after the disturbances my program worked with a large number of families in the area, most of which were suffering from symptoms of trauma. The immediate presenting issues from most of these families included fear and anxiety of further violence and disturbances, disturbed sleep and behaviour patterns for their children, issues of grief and loss, children and young people refusing to attend school or being fearful to attend school, increased violent behaviour from children, and children and young people using violence as a problem-solving strategy. A number of families were desperately requesting that they be rehoused from the public housing estate in Macquarie Fields.

The emotional and psychological impact on children and families has been enormous since the disturbances. A number of residents spoke about the division in the community that had occurred and the isolation they felt as a result of not knowing who they could talk to about the disturbances or the incidences or how they could discuss those incidences within their own social and peer networks without fear of repercussion or fear of being labelled. Parents have spoken about some of the ongoing challenges with their children that they have had to deal with as a result of the disturbances. For younger children, these have been predominately around issues of poor sleep patterns, nightmares, bed wetting, erratic behaviour, excessive clinginess to their parents and fear of police. For older children and adolescents, these issues have been predominately around overly withdrawn or overly aggressive behaviour, issues of grief, decreased school participation, increased school suspensions, particularly long suspensions, 21-day suspensions, and generally poor attitude towards figures of authority and in particular the police.

Since the disturbances families have spoken about their concerns for the long-term impacts particularly around the stigma attached to the area and what consequences that will have for them and their children into the future. Families have expressed concern for their children when seeking employment, and many have suggested that they will tell their children to use an alternative address on application for employment opportunities. Despite the devastating impacts of the disturbances on families and children, a large number of residents have demonstrated amazing resilience and determination. Groups of residents have come together to look at the ways they can contribute to rebuilding their sense of community, pride and spirit.

Residents have developed and signed petitions to lobby for increased services in their area and programs particularly for young people. They have written to and visited their local members of Parliament. They have participated in consultations and forums with the Premier's Department, and they have fought against further loss of services in the Macquarie Fields area, particularly the primary connect program and the schools as communities program. To date, residents groups have been successful in negotiating for the Youth Off the Streets program to commence in Macquarie Fields targeting young people who are most at risk of antisocial behaviour.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: These are pretty devastating outcomes from a disturbance. How do you think it would impact them if there was a full riot in Macquarie Fields? How can you refer to it as a disturbance with those outcomes, using politically correct language, when some people call it an incident, some call it a disturbance but most people seem to think it was a riot?

Ms ALLEY: It is not so much an issue about the labelling of the incident but the effects of the incident. I can see the point you are making but from my point of view whether it is called a riot or a public disturbance, the major issue for the future is how it is addressed in terms of resourcing for organisations in the area.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: We have to be honest about it. Labelling the politically correct version to hose down the perception of what really happened, I do not think you are doing them any favours. It was a riot, it was bad and it had devastating consequences. Now we must do

something about it. You have identified that there were serious areas of shortfalls in funding that we need to address.

CHAIR: I think that was an opinion rather than a question. Finally, what would you like to see come out of the inquiry—your wish list?

Ms ALLEY: We have five so that it does not feel too long. First of all, as we have mentioned, long-term funding of a place manager position to co-ordinate and drive a place-based plans such as the Premier's Department plan. So further development and implementation of a place-based plan could be the Premier's Department plan, and that plan to include services, transport, employment and essential community infrastructure. As I have mentioned before, attached to such a plan, a long-term pot—I call it for a better word—of funding to address the gaps identified in the plan. In particular in our submission we have identified the need for additional positions in early childhood education and care, primary and high school education as well as services for young people that could be funded from such a pot of funding. Another major thing I would like to see is long-term funding of both current and future programs, including the two particular primary school programs that we have mentioned, primary connect and schools as communities.

Another area I would like to see moved on as a result of this inquiry is a commitment from government departments, particularly health, to allocate additional resources to Macquarie Fields. I have mentioned in the past that I used to work for health, but now I no longer work for them I can stand back and cast a gaze over the machinations of health. Our submission details a lot of deficit areas in relation to the provision of health services in the area. There is a need for outreach into Macquarie Fields, particularly from the health service. Whether it means additional funding to them or reallocating resources away from other areas, such as hospitals, which tend to take up the resourcing, whatever way it comes it is very much needed because it impacts on outcomes particularly for children. If they do not get speech or physiotherapy when they are little or assistance with their hearing, that affects their educational outcomes. So those things are very important. On a broader level, it is not just Macquarie Fields. These incidents are likely to happen in other disadvantaged areas across the State. There needs to be a well-funded whole-of-government approach to addressing disadvantage well beyond existing levels of funding allocated to area-based initiatives across different areas of New South Wales, including Macquarie Fields. Otherwise I will be back here for another hearing, basically.

CHAIR: Do you want to add anything to that?

Ms HINCHCLIFFE: No.

(The witnesses withdrew)

BOB PRITCHARD, President, Police Association of New South Wales, Level 4, 154 Elizabeth Street, Sydney,

LUKE HANNON, Executive, Police Association of New South Wales, Level 4, 154 Elizabeth Street, Sydney,

ROBERT MORGAN, Co-ordinator Commissioned Officers and Workplace Safety, Police Association of New South Wales, Level 4, 154 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, and

PAUL HANNEN, Organiser Workplace Safety, Police Association of New South Wales, Level 4, 154 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr PRITCHARD: Yes, on behalf of the association. We stand by our submission and do not wish to add anything. Issues identified in our submission are fundamentally the same as those highlighted in our submission regarding Operation Coburn sometime 12 months earlier. We were disappointed that the Macquarie Fields riots had to occur before a serious attempt was made to implement the recommendations that we flagged at the time of Operation Coburn. We reiterate, our concerns fell under five main headings: the poor quality and scarcity of appropriate equipment, the lack of tactical command and control at the scene, the failings in communications, the lack of logistical readiness, and the absence of good welfare services for our officers.

We are generally pleased with the progress of the recommendations arising out of the deputy commissioner's report after the Macquarie Fields riots. Nevertheless, there are concerns remaining in regard to the numbers allocated to the proposed permanent public order riot squad. Our recommendation was for a permanent strength of 103; this has been reduced to 50 in the current proposal. We feel this is insufficient, given the proposed command structure. We are concerned also that there has been very little progress in the area of a personal issue kit for the operational support group. We are happy to work with NSW Police to rectify the shortcomings that were evident at Macquarie Fields and to ensure that if such an incident occurs again in New South Wales any police attending such incident will be properly resourced and trained. We are happy to clarify any part of our submission or answer any questions by the Committee.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Madam Chair, if the police association has prepared answers to the Committee's questions, could they be tabled so that we can work our way through its report?

Mr PRITCHARD: As such I do not have prepared answers. I have jotted down some notes to be able to answer questions.

CHAIR: Normally it is much better to work through the questions based on the submission, and follow-up questions always come out of that. There is a particular reason why we need to do them in order. Given your concerns and those expressed to us during the inquiry into the Redfern disturbance focused very much on resources, the first prepared question was about the accuracy of resources in the Macquarie Fields Local Area, both before and after the disturbances. That is a good place to start.

Mr PRITCHARD: In relation to that, staffing at Macquarie Fields, as in authorised strength, has not altered before or after the riot. Obviously, because of different things that happen from time to time such as long-term sick, injury and, especially these days, secondment to other groups such as Vikings, the tactical response group, and other agencies that need them at the time, it is an ebb and flow of numbers at every command, not only Macquarie Fields. This obviously causes a great drain on commands. They find it difficult to be able to place enough police on the street for front-line policing within their own communities. We have made a number of recommendations in relation to the increasing in policing strength and we will continue to do that with NSW Police and the Government, especially over the next 12 months. We hope to have a fully written proposal early in the new year.

CHAIR: Will that focus on strength at the local area command or more on specialist groups such as the riot squad that you mentioned?

Mr PRITCHARD: It would be a general report because all groups are suffering at the moment, not only the specialist groups are also the local area commands. People are brought into a number of things, such as Vikings, high-visibility policing within the city area such as of yesterday from Cronulla to Maroubra. Again, people are drawn from every command to be able to police those particular incidents. That, therefore, takes them away from their own communities and someone has to suffer. We need to be able to provide these responses and still be able to look after our communities and help them feel safe.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In terms of resourcing, your submission noted quite significantly that you felt there was a lack of adequate riot gear resourcing to front-line police at the time; camelback hydration, and those sorts of things that you submitted to the Coburn inquiry. Could you comment on Mr Clifford's evidence to this inquiry last week. He disputed that there was not sufficient equipment available on the night. He said that on each of the nights the RSG was deployed to Macquarie Fields there was sufficient equipment available for the officers out there.

Mr PRITCHARD: Certainly we have concerns over what happened at Macquarie Fields and the lack of resources. Paul Hannen was at the scene at the time as our organiser. He would be able to answer your question.

Mr HANNEN: In the early stages of the riot at Macquarie Fields there was definitely insufficient equipment on hand for the number of staff deployed. There were instances where we had members of the video unit who were wearing hard hats instead of properly designed riot helmets. We had insufficient equipment for dog handlers on the scene. Some resorted to wearing ballistic-style helmets rather than riot helmets.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do your members feel let down by the comments by a senior member of the force in dispute with your claims?

Mr PRITCHARD: Certainly our members do feel let down, especially after Redfern when we made a number of recommendations as to what was needed to be able to handle incidents such as that. At the moment they are one-off incidents, but they will not go away. The police have to front up every time and they need to be properly resourced. When it is brought out in the media, at inquiries, in reports that we submit, and they are still not resourced, yes, they are affected by that. It does drop morale. Since Macquarie Fields a number of improvements have been made to the increase in equipment and the quality of such. So we are working towards giving them what they need. Again, there is still a lot of work to be done.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The full-time response group will not be on line until January, is that correct?

Mr PRITCHARD: The proposed public order riot squad will not be on line until next year. There are also permanent operational support groups that we have implemented. No, they are not on the ground until next year and it does take time. Again, we have only limited resources. We have 14,500 police at this time and from that we have to be able to supply all the different groups with the numbers they need. Again, that is a drag on local area commands and other groups if you start taking them to form new groups without giving us increased numbers. Some groups will hurt.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: What about training time for that sort of thing? It seems to me that operational procedures and training seem to be lacking. There seems to be an unco-ordinated response.

Mr PRITCHARD: Again, it was identified after Redfern and the Coburn report. Unfortunately, a lot of those training schedules were not implemented until after Macquarie Fields. There has certainly been an increase in the number of training courses available; more police are being trained. In fact, the commanders are beginning to get the training required to be able to handle these situations. It is unfortunate that over the years we have let that slip. The commanders are put in a position to have to handle these incidents of public disorder and not be suitably trained.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: What do you see as the role of police? You heard that in a previous submission there was a bit of criticism about police work in the community. The role of police lies between the social welfare role that some expect it to have and a law enforcement role. What is your view on that?

Mr PRITCHARD: Police are probably the only government service that is available to people 24/7. Unfortunately, a lot of other government services have been let down by funding, or numbers, or whatever. They are not able to do the job within the community. If they are not able to do it we tend to be the last resort, people come to us. If we cannot help—and sometimes we cannot, especially in the community services and providing housing and all those types of things—and it breaks down to that extent, people become involved in those types of incidents. They certainly tend to become more violent towards police because we cannot answer their questions either. Again, we are the ones who have to deal with it. It does not matter who causes the incident, at the end of the day the police have to resolve the problem.

Yes, we do come under fire from everyone. No-one is ever going to be completely happy with police when we have to go and break up disturbances. There will always be complaints.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: The Committee got a whole-of-government response from Dr Gellatly. In preparing that response to the riots, Dr Gellatly admitted that he had not even read the police report. What is your comment on that? If your report is not even read by government, how can it be expected to fix the problems?

Mr PRITCHARD: I find it rather unfortunate that our reports have not been taken into consideration.

CHAIR: I point out that the person who was with Dr Gellatly had prepared and co-ordinated the work. She had, of course—

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: She said she had read it.

CHAIR: The Hon. Charlie Lynn is slightly misleading you in his question.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Dr Gellatly said he had not read the report.

CHAIR: Dr Gellatly did say that.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Yes, that is right.

CHAIR: But he was not the person who prepared the report.

Mr PRITCHARD: Okay. In relation to any report that this association puts forward, we would certainly expect the Government to look at it. We do not do it for the fun of it; we are there to look after both the community and our police, and the police have to look after the communities. Certainly over the years major changes to the way we police our communities, the way we look after our police and general everyday business with our police has been moved forward by the association, rather than the police all the Government. We have pushed the agenda. I believe that anything we put forward should be well and truly taken notice of.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In your submission you say that social issues underlying the range of problems in Macquarie Fields are not a policing issue. The focus for your members in terms of your submission rests on the NSW Police handling of the Macquarie Fields incident. Is that your submission to this inquiry or to the police inquiry?

Mr PRITCHARD: To both.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If any government system fails, the mental health or the Department of Community Services or health, the police end up picking up the tab, do they not?

Mr PRITCHARD: That seems to be the way it goes, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In that sense you would have an interest in the social problems which give rise to your work and particularly the conflict situations in your work?

Mr PRITCHARD: We certainly have an interest in the failure of some of those services to be provided to some communities and to what blame or fault, I am not going anywhere near. It is very hard for some communities and it is very expensive to provide. It needs a number of changes to be made to assist communities such as Macquarie Fields. Yes, at the end of the day we get the results if they cannot provide what they are required to do. That would be our interest. Our interest is, in the main, to police communities. The effects of some of these other services not being provided obviously affects what we have to do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are at the pointy end, so if you see a service deficient your members would be well aware of those deficiencies, would they not?

Mr PRITCHARD: They would be aware of the deficiencies, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: And do they feed those back to those services or to the government responsible for those services?

Mr PRITCHARD: I think the same as all government departments, the person on the street identifies it and it has to go up through the chain of command in whatever organisation. Yes, we feed it back, the problems we have. What happens to it at the top end—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What mechanism of feedback do you have? Presumably, at one level the constable might tell the senior sergeant, but is there any formal mechanism of feeding things back?

Mr PRITCHARD: Certainly it goes through the command structure and commanders throughout the State identify the problems within their own commands and they deal with it on a local level with the services provided to see whether they can achieve a positive out of everything to help the community. If they cannot do that then—the same as every organisation—they have to go up to another level, and I have no doubt that commanders would hope that that level then tries to do something about it. And finally it rests with government.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would I be able to ask for the feedback documents from front-line police to other departments? And if I were to ask that would I get anything?

Mr PRITCHARD: I will pass you over to Luke Hannon; he is well and truly aware of some of this.

Mr HANNON: In relation to some of the issues, we do have a research department within the police association and the research shows that a lot of the issues our members are trying to solve are issues that police are handling at the moment that they should not be handling, and that includes mental health and it includes systems of work that we have without us putting it up through our chain and through the police Minister and through the Government. It is a matter of changing things so it makes it easier for the front-line copper to get away from procedural stuff. It can be changed to make it a quicker process, cut out the red tape and get on with more policing and make the availability of police on the street rather than sitting on computers in that sort of stuff. So at this stage all that gets passed up through the channels, as far as the police association goes, and the members of the government are well aware of those matters that we pass up through it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The police association gave an excellent submission to our inquiry into mental health. That is why I was surprised by the comment that social issues are not a policing issue in this particular submission. Would these submissions that you have given through your members, which is, of course, not the same as going up through the

police chain of command, which is a government body, would the feedback to the Government of social problems be available to this Committee?

Mr HANNON: All of those submissions that we have handed out and their ongoing issues have already been addressed with the Minister for Health, with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and other relevant government departments to deal with those issues. Those submissions have gone up there. We have been liaising with them on a regular basis, and some changes are programmed for the future.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Which submissions? Can you enumerate them in more detail?

Mr HANNON: The submissions on mental health have gone through.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What other submissions have you done in terms of social problems?

Mr HANNON: Domestic violence. There is a submission that has been handed through to the Government through the police Minister and the Ministry. There have been other matters in dealing with submissions on right to silence; other submissions in relation to—

CHAIR: A lot of occupational health and safety matters too.

Mr HANNON: There are.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would you be able to get a list of the social issues submissions that the police association has made and provide us with those?

Mr HANNON: Is it the social issues or the issues police are encountering with handling issues that they should not be handling, that should be handled by other government departments, which is what our submissions are based on?

CHAIR: Dr Chesterfield-Evans, I think we are getting a fair way away from the terms of reference.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the terms of reference we have considerable evidence that social problems are the fuel which the incident puts the spark to—

CHAIR: But that does not mean that the police association's submissions to other enquiries are something we can chase them for.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am following up Mr Pritchard's comment that formal submissions are made through the association. And given that a good one was made on mental health I am digging for further ones. Surely that is reasonable, if they exist. Do they exist, and can we have them?

CHAIR: I think not if they do not relate to Macquarie Fields.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If they relate to social issues they might relate to Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: Our terms of reference are very specific. If Mr. Hannon, for instance, says they have done something that relates to our terms of reference, yes—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: He did say there was stuff on domestic violence, and that is one of the indices we have been looking at and it has been mentioned in the issues at Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: I think we can perhaps take Mr Hannon's word for it. But I do not think we are here to collect every submission the police association has made on social problems in New South Wales. We have a very specific inquiry to do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I think the submissions they have made on social issues in New South Wales might well be relevant to Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: Perhaps we need to trust their judgment on that. If that is the case then I would be happy for us to ask them to provide—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I have only asked them, I have not told them to do anything. I have asked them have they got stuff that is relevant.

CHAIR: The difficulty is we have got a certain number of minutes to ask our questions about Macquarie Fields—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are taking a lot longer for what would have been a simple question.

Mr PRITCHARD: I would say that any submission we have made has been made available to government and they are not specific to any particular area; they are a generalisation for New South Wales and are there to assist police to carry out their duties. And yes, social issues do affect how we do our job, and in general that is what we try to address where we can attempt to improve the situation.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have asked to double police numbers in this area, from 50, I think you said, to 103, is that right?

Mr PRITCHARD: That was in relation to the public order riot squad where we recommended a strength of 103. They have at this time set out a number of 50.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is for the whole State, that is not for the Macquarie Fields area?

Mr PRITCHARD: No, that is not Macquarie Fields at all, that is a permanent riot squad, as such, that would deal with any public order incident.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I think you mentioned originally the number of police who were involved with the local area command both before and after the Macquarie Fields incidents. What other statistics do you have in relation to the turnover of police who staff Macquarie Fields?

Mr PRITCHARD: We do not keep stats on the turnover of any police station. I think that would more probably be answered by NSW Police themselves. Again, with areas such as Macquarie Fields and the number of other local area commands throughout the State, they do have a turnover quicker than some others. In fact, some of them have a term of policing where they attend and they are there for a contract time and they are then released to go somewhere else. So there is a greater turnover in some areas, and that is not specifically Macquarie Fields, but it does happen throughout the State.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So the association would be more likely to know about the amount of time police are there or whatever time they turn over. If an individual perhaps came to the association you would have more information if someone had issues or talked about their length of service and so on?

Mr PRITCHARD: We certainly deal with our members individually. If they have a problem with tenure at a particular station they come to us and we would deal with it on that basis. Our other responsibility is first-response policing to ensure that there are enough police at any police station to be able to provide front-line policing for our communities.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Do you have any information then, whether it is at Macquarie Fields or any other local area command, about the average length of time an officer would serve in a particular command?

Mr PRITCHARD: We would not have those and, again, it is very mixed and varied throughout the whole State and dependent where it is. Obviously, there are some stations that are a lot better to serve at than others and some police tend to stay there for a very long time. We have special remote locations in the far west of New South Wales that have tenures as low as two years because of the difficulties faced at those stations.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What about issues that are not necessarily in every command about incidences of crime, and if we use the example of domestic violence, for instance—which is an issue at Macquarie Fields—do officers come to the association in relation to concerns about the training that they receive to deal with some of the issues in their service when they are posted to a command?

Mr PRITCHARD: Unfortunately, there are commands such as Macquarie Fields and a number of others that have particular problems within their communities that have to be dealt with by police. We always feel the notion is that before police are sent to those specific locations that if there is an identified problem that requires training that it should be done before they go. That, again, has always been a problem for police. A number of these locations are hard to fill to start with and it has been in the past that police have quite willingly taken anyone that applied, and that presents problems for the police that attend there because they have not been trained up in those particular incidents and in some cases, because of perhaps inexperience or youth, they are not ready for the problems that they have to face in these particular areas and it does present problems. At that time the membership usually come to us to raise their concerns and we continue to deal with the police as to looking after the individual and their welfare and also trying to ensure that any of these communities are properly policed and the police that go there are properly trained.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Mr Hannon spoke before about putting submissions in to relevant Ministers and so on. Does the association put in submissions in relation to issues such as, if you go back to Redfern Waterloo, for instance, cultural awareness training that needed to be done? Whether it is Macquarie Fields or whether it is another local area command, given some of the advice the association has received from their members about training that may be either lacking or, say, training particularly new probationary constables or people who have moved from one command to another, do you put submissions in about those sorts of things?

Mr PRITCHARD: Over many years now the association has been involved in the preparation of training manuals and specialised courses for particular areas. It seems we are able to identify the problems because the membership comes to us. We then put the submissions forward or attend consultative meetings or negotiate with government and police to implement that training, and that starts right from their initial courses down at the academy right through their training, right through to the senior leadership development programs. We do have input into all of those programs and some of them may not be a submission as such, but we certainly have input into them.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: And you do that for a particular local area command if that came to your attention?

Mr PRITCHARD: Particularly some local area commands, as I said, have specific problems and they do raise them and then we take it to police and training is implemented—sometimes quickly; sometimes it does take time.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In relation to the February riots: do you think that the command of the riots was handled by people who were adequately trained, just following on from those training questions?

Mr PRITCHARD: This is certainly not to take anything away from our commanders, both at that incident and throughout the State: it was identified that the commanders needed training way back in October. Enough training was not provided to those commanders and, yes, there were some problems and I believe that was the lack of training provided to those commanders. They are put in a

position and they need to be able to do that properly. To do that, as I said, the training needs to be given. I think NSW Police themselves failed in that and it was identified at Redfern and again now at Macquarie Fields. It has been improved; there are a number of training courses now for our commanders. Certainly the problems that we identified at the time, most have been resolved and we are quite happy with the way it is progressing in the way that the training is being given.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Can you provide us with a summary of how the riots were actually handled and could you in that summary address concerns that have been raised about the length of time it took before a command post was established, lack of communication and difficulties in terms of the amount of time it took before the RSG were employed?

Mr PRITCHARD: I think most of the issues you have just raised were in our submission and they were identified as problems as to the time it took to set up commands, where the police officers were positioned, their stand-down locations, communications. Particular problems were identified, and in the main most of them were identified earlier at Redfern and again at Macquarie Fields. I do not think it serves a purpose in blaming any one person or any group of people. Problems occurred and we need to go forward from there and educate and fix any problems that were identified. In the main, I think the police at this time have started to rectify the problems and again that is training, supply of equipment and upgrading of the same equipment. I do not think the commanders had enough training prior to that incident. I do not think they should be held out to dry. I think the whole operation had to be looked at in its entirety and the problems that came out of it were rectified. So I think we are on the right track.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Are your members comfortable, then, with the comments the commanders have made about their views of the disturbances?

Mr PRITCHARD: Everyone had their view of the riot, as to their involvement or not. As I said in the submission, we saw and identified a number of command and control problems and we found that that in the main was due to the lack of training provided to those commanders. They may have a different view of the world but we will stick to our submission.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In terms of support staff, such as youth liaison officers and domestic violence liaison officers at Macquarie Fields, are those positions filled?

Mr HANNON: The answer to that is yes. They have been filled for quite some time. For domestic violence, they have a team out there that works with the domestic violence officer who looks after domestic violence.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: They provide an outreach service, do they not, those particular workers?

Mr HANNON: At the moment they are running a whole-of-government approach and you are well aware of the programs running out there at this stage. They seem to be running quite well at the moment in looking at domestic violence and handling it a lot better. They have support out there with a lot of reference groups.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Has the level of domestic violence dropped, if it is running well?

Mr HANNON: I do not think the level of domestic violence ever drops. It depends who is willing to report it. I think everyone knows in Australia that people do not report domestic violence so do we ever look at it dropping or do we look at the increase in reporting domestic violence and having faith in the law being able to address those problems?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The youth liaison officer would go out to talk to young people, I assume. Does that youth liaison officer have a vehicle to do that?

Mr HANNON: The youth liaison officer would work within the crime management unit. A vehicle is made available to him out there. I have been there on numerous occasions. They run numerous programs out there. I think it is still one of the few commands in the State that runs a blue

light disco, running with the schools. The programs have increased twofold in recent months again, since the Macquarie Fields riots. One of the programs they have going at the moment, they are going on a camping trip with a lot of the people involved in the riots, they are going on a camping trip with other police officers. That is just one of the programs and there are a lot more community programs that police are involved in out there.

CHAIR: Would Macquarie Fields be something of a model as a local area command in relation to its work for young people?

Mr HANNON: I do not put any command down as a model. Every command has its place for improvement, because they are all totally different. Environmentally they go that way. You cannot compare the command at Macquarie Fields to the command at Dee Why. So long as they address the problems and have the awareness to address those problems and work with the communities to liaise, they will find a solution for all those issues.

CHAIR: Do you think relationships between young people and police in the Macquarie Fields area could be improved, or perhaps local police in all sorts of areas?

Mr HANNON: I think everywhere can be improved. The main thing is they are working to address all the issues, and not just the issues that have been coming up since Macquarie Fields. I think the issues are always being looked at and there is always room for improvement no matter what program you have running. If one dies down you have to start another one to keep the initiative going and to get the people to support it. I think that is the whole of community support. So long as the police are there to liaise with them. It is not for the police to run, it is to liaise with the community to get people back on track and make it a peaceful community again.

CHAIR: From the association's point of view do you think NSW Police take the issue of relationships with young people sufficiently seriously, put sufficient effort into it?

Mr HANNON: It is difficult for me to comment for the association. I see programs that are running. They are out there in all the commands. It depends on what the community issues are within each individual command as to what programs they are running. From what I have seen at Macquarie Fields they seem to be very aware of what programs they need out there. They have the Father Chris Riley programs running. We have camping groups going. They have footy competitions. They have general meetings with the community in relation to crime prevention officers who work with the youth liaison officers. I think there are plenty of programs running. It is a matter of making sure they get their attendances. The blue light discos are always well attended. I think they are on the right track and I think a lot of other commands are going the same way. They have to work with the community and they work with those youth liaison officers quite well within the community.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: A point of clarification on an earlier question in regard to my question of Dr Gellatly. I was reported as saying to Dr Gellatly, "Have you read the police report?" He said, "No." I said, "You have not read it?" He said, "No." I then asked Ms Boyden, "Have you read the report?" She replied, "I have not read the entire report, no." Can I just move on? We have had three definitions of what happened at Macquarie Fields. Some people called it an incident—

CHAIR: Mr Lynn, if we are going to have an argument that we should not be having in front of witnesses, could I point out that you have just misquoted the transcript.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I just read the transcript.

CHAIR: No, you did not. You read part of it and you left part of it out. Could I suggest that you get on with your question instead of trying to score points—

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I read directly from the transcript.

CHAIR: You read part of it.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: She said, "No." What part of no do you not understand?

CHAIR: That phrase is more often used in the context of domestic violence. Would you like to get on to your question and stop trying to fight internal committee battles to get a head line.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I am not trying to get a head line, I just quoted—

CHAIR: Just ask your question.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: We have had three definitions of what happened at Macquarie Fields. Some in the Government referred to it as an incident, some a disturbance and some as a riot. Would you like to give us your view of what each one of those is and your view of what happened at Macquarie Fields?

Mr PRITCHARD: Our definition of what happened at Macquarie Fields, in our submission and ever since, it has been a riot. We continue to say it was a riot. Anywhere where there are large numbers of people gathered, causing injury, causing damage and being completely out of order is a riot. I must admit over years of policing I have seen a couple of riots, and from what I saw from the media that was a riot.

CHAIR: So, was Cronulla and Maroubra, and so on, a riot?

Mr PRITCHARD: Well, it is still continuing. The problem being you can call it a disturbance, you can call it anything you like, it does not matter. It is public disorder and it has to be policed by our members. I do not particularly care what people end up calling it.

The Hon. IAN WEST: What lessons have been learnt from Redfern, from the Coburn report, in regard to implementation of the recommendations in regard to Macquarie Fields?

Mr PRITCHARD: I think the unfortunate circumstance is that a number of recommendations were made by this association in relation to Coburn, the Redfern riots. They were either not implemented at the time or were not sufficiently introduced to be able to combat the Macquarie Fields riot. It was identified again. The same problems arose where the commanders had not been trained sufficiently. It was shown that communications broke down. It was shown that the welfare of officers certainly was not maintained throughout the Macquarie Fields incident. I find it difficult that 12 months have passed without a number of those measures being implemented sufficiently enough for the police to go out there and feel safe enough to deal with the problem that had the whole community hostage.

As I said earlier, there have been major improvements since Macquarie Fields. Police have involved themselves and taken notice of most of our recommendations, and have implemented them to a major extent. We are happy to give them credit for that. It certainly has to continue. These types of incidents—riots, disturbances, whatever they may be called—are going to continue. To say they are never going to happen again or that we can sufficiently police them so they never happen again is a falsehood. When they do occur we have to be able to handle them in a proper manner.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: If they are going to continue, are you confident that NSW Police can handle them, given that they have accepted only half of your recommendations? You recommended 105 and they have given you 50.

Mr PRITCHARD: To handle situations like this, it is not only on the night, it is what you do beforehand. When these incidents arise we have to have the people trained. We are not happy they have reduced numbers but we have to ensure not only the riot squad is trained but the front-line police who are out there looking after the community are fully resourced and they have the equipment that can deal initially with the problem, and then when the riot squad or the OSG or whoever may be brought in from other commands arrive, the command structures are there, the communication structures are there, the welfare structures are there so they are unable to maintain a presence and control any public disorder.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Is the association satisfied that the majority of recommendations made after Redfern have now been met or are in the process of being met?

Mr PRITCHARD: Yes, we are. We are reasonably happy with the way it has progressed and the majority of our recommendations have been addressed—some more than others, obviously. A lot more needs to be done. I think it is a continuing process and we are working with police and the government of the day to deal with it.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Could you summarise the status of the association's recommendations made to NSW Police after the Macquarie Fields disturbance?

Mr PRITCHARD: Sorry, what has and what has not been implemented?

The Hon. IAN WEST: The status of the recommendations?

CHAIR: In other words, the ones after Macquarie Fields as distinct from the ones after Redfern?

Mr PRITCHARD: As I said, most of the recommendations that came out of Macquarie Fields were the same as Redfern. As I said, the majority of them have been addressed, some more than others. I would not be able to single out anything where there has not been an attempt to implement that recommendation.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What are the association's views on conferencing processes—that is for young offenders—and does the association support this sort of restorative justice?

Mr PRITCHARD: We support conferencing for non-violent offences; for people with a first offence and, in particular, juveniles. I certainly do not believe that conferencing is the way to go for people who come out in these riots. It should not be dealt with under that system. They should be placed before a proper court and dealt with.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But the process of restorative justice includes both policing, I understand, and the way courts handle things, does it not?

Mr PRITCHARD: It does. We believe there should not be the option given to conferencing. They should be dealt with through the courts.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Does that mean putting them in gaol?

Mr PRITCHARD: Depending on the offences committed. I take it this is a generalisation, this is not in particular to Macquarie Fields. For serious offences there are penalties, which include gaol. If the offence is serious enough, they should be.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think gaol works better than other things that cost the same amount?

Mr PRITCHARD: I think there are arguments for and against and I do not think we have enough time this afternoon to answer that. I have heard plenty on both sides, but people should not be allowed to continue to commit serious offences and walk away from it. It only serves the purpose for other people to think that they can get away with it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But is not the essence to make sure that it does not happen again, whatever else transpires?

Mr PRITCHARD: That is right, it should be a deterrent. If people continue to be brought before the courts or any other thing such as conferencing and they do not see the penalty as a deterrent, it is going to continue.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If there were something other than punishment, which changed their attitude and got a good result, would you be happy with that?

Mr PRITCHARD: If we were able to look after the community as well as we probably should, perhaps it would certainly lessen the number of offences committed and the number of problems that we have to deal with, but that is well before the offence. It is a whole-of-government approach. A number of services have to be involved.

CHAIR: What it be true to say, in relation to those charged with a violent offence at Macquarie Fields, that the association's view would be to see a custodial sentence?

Mr PRITCHARD: We would.

CHAIR: No ifs or buts. As far as you are concerned for those particular offences at Macquarie Fields there should be custodial sentences?

Mr PRITCHARD: Because of the serious nature of the offence and the fear caused to the communities and the safety of our officers brought into notice—the community expects action to be taken and so do we. I believe that custodial sentences are certainly needed in this regard.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: For the hangers-on and followers as well or only for the chief perpetrators?

Mr PRITCHARD: Well, the determination of who was what would be by the court. I am not entering into who did what.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: In your submission you submit that critical errors in the management of the police operation led to an escalation rather than a de-escalation of the degree of risk to the police and members of the public and that these errors were systemic rather than particular to any person. Then, in regard to tactics you mentioned that operation support group leaders who made informed tactical decisions were directed to do the opposite by more senior officers with little or no understanding of operation support group capabilities or tactics. Then, in regard to welfare you mentioned that officers involved in the critical incident at the initial fatal crash had their mobile phones removed, which denied their families from having immediate access to them for the purpose of checking on their welfare. These officers were also prevented from making any contact with their families to let them know that they were all right and what was happening. This would indicate to me that it is systemic, that there is a lack of experience, a lack of proper operational procedures, a lack of training and a lack of leadership. Are you confident that these have been adequately addressed and that the solutions are going to be properly resourced?

Mr PRITCHARD: Firstly, it was identified by us and, as you pointed out, in our submissions it was systemic. I believe that what has been implemented at Macquarie Fields and what is being implemented—and it will not happen overnight; because we cannot train all our commanders overnight; it takes time, but I believe we are heading in the right direction and, yes, mistakes are made and nothing ever comes out 100 per cent right in these particular circumstances and we can always find fault. In fact, that is our job and when we find fault, we try and fix that problem. Yes, I think we are heading in the right direction and I think the training of our commanders and the training of our police, the supply of our equipment and once we identify again the lack of welfare given to our officers, both at the critical incident and generally during incidents such as this—they have been addressed and we will continue to ensure they are addressed. I feel that it is one particular responsibility of this union to ensure that the welfare of our officers is maintained. It has been a problem over many, many years and there has certainly been vast improvement in regard to the welfare, but there is a lot more to be done.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Has the critical incident debriefing been adequate from this incident so that there will not be any psychological sequelae or problems for police who were involved?

Mr PRITCHARD: I do not think any debrief can guarantee there will not be any psychological injury. There has been debriefing. It is probably up to both the officer and command to keep an eye on it themselves or their officers, whichever the case may be, to ensure that down the track these incidents do not cause a problem. Sometimes that does not come to the forefront immediately. It can affect officers years down the track. That has been shown many, many times, not

only from incidents such as Macquarie Fields but anything that is traumatic in nature, and police face that every day.

CHAIR: What would you like to see come out of this inquiry?

Mr PRITCHARD: I think over this inquiry and the last one, we identified a number of problems that police have to face every day. It identified a number of problems in relation to training, welfare and resources to police. They are in the process of being rectified. They are being fixed. We are being trained in a more satisfactory manner. The problem with it is that policing has changed so much over the last few years in how we go about our business, where we are needed and what happens when an incidents such as this occurs. It used to be of such an ad hoc nature. We are doing it better, but to do that, it is often the case with commands, whether it be Macquarie Fields or, as someone said earlier Dee Why, police are taken away from those commands to deal with an incident at that time where something is identified such as problems within the CBD area of Sydney. Many police are seconded away from other commands. This causes difficulty in providing policing for those communities.

We have to look at numbers and it has to be soon. What numbers that may be, we are still in the process of working out our formula, but we have to look at looking after our communities and providing the resources for police, but also for the other services that are provided to these communities. Listening as we sat here today, we heard what needs to be done in the future and it just shows what has not been done in the past. Again, all services are starting to realise that we have not been able to properly service our communities. To do that it may need funding for some services—more police. Whilst ever we keep getting dragged away or forming new groups, such as the riot squad or the proposed airport security, Vikings, high visibility policing, this drags it all out of the authorised strength that we have. Someone has to suffer out of this. In order to continue to do the job, and to do it properly, we have to be properly resourced and we have to be properly funded. The police officers that are there have to be properly trained and their welfare issues have to be addressed or we will lose them. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your evidence. I do not think you have taken anything on notice. Mr Hannon, if you can find a submission or a report that meets Dr Chesterfield-Evans' request, you might forward that?

Mr HANNON: I will forward that to him.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

ANNE CATHERINE CAMPBELL, Regional Director, Metro South West, Department of Community Services, 41-45 Rickard Road, Bankstown, sworn and examined, and

ANNETTE GALLARD, Deputy Director General Operations, Department of Community Services, 4-6 Cavill Avenue, Ashfield, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: You have received 12 questions from us. Do you want to say anything by way of an opening statement?

Ms GALLARD: Yes, I do. Madam Chair and members of the committee, I would like to thank the committee for the invitation to attend this hearing today and for giving me the opportunity to make an opening statement. My colleague Anne Campbell, who is the Regional Director of the department's Metro South West Region, has overall responsibility for the delivery of our services and work for the residents of Macquarie Fields and surrounding areas. Ms Campbell is spearheading DOCS' lead responsibilities for the family and community strategies in the Macquarie Fields Community and Government Action Plan 2005-06, which is focused on reviewing the family support model in Macquarie Fields, work to improve co-ordination of family support services, and developing the Macquarie Fields case co-ordination framework. We will talk more about DOCS' involvement when responding to the committee's question 4.

As the Director General of the Premier's Department informed the committee in his evidence on Monday 5 December, DOCS has been one of the many agencies which has contributed to the whole-of-government submission to this inquiry. DOCS has both a direct and indirect role in providing services to the residents of the Macquarie Fields area. Our direct service provision is provided through the Ingleburn Community Services Centre, which is located at Oxford Street, Ingleburn. This centre has a staffing complement of 33.7 positions. We will have the opportunity to expand further on the department's services and programs in the committee's first question.

Our indirect service provision relates to our partnerships both with other government agencies, such as the Departments of Education and Training, and Housing, etcetera, local government, including Campbelltown City Council, and a diverse range of non-government agencies. These partners are the recipients of government funding allocated through the numerous funding programs, which have been detailed in the Government's submission to the inquiry. DOCS' partnerships and planning team, located in the regional office at Bankstown, plays an important and valuable role in working in partnership with our community partners to support and assist them in the planning and delivery of direct services to the community. Our response to question 3 explains more fully what the team does in this area.

DOCS' approach is certainly in keeping with the Government's most recent social justice statement that the Government will keep working with communities to devise local solutions, and work with non-government organisations and community groups so that we can tackle social problems together.

Committee members will be aware that the New South Wales Government committed to a significant boost of \$1.2 billion additional funding for a program of reform and renewal for DOCS spanning a full five-year period up to 2007-08. The reform agenda is on schedule, with a quarter of the total funding package delivered by 30 June 2005. The significant reforms under way span almost every aspect of improving DOCS' services, and we are working in partnership with the non-government sector to implement these reforms. We are setting up new services to improve the support for families and children in New South Wales. DOCS is introducing new resources and initiatives to boost early intervention, child protection and out-of-home care services, including those provided directly by DOCS and by the community organisations it funds. DOCS is building a continuum of services ranging from prevention to crisis response to ongoing support for families and children. More than 250 new early intervention and high priority casework staff have been recruited to these new positions.

We are also pioneering new ways of working with families and children by expanding, location by location, our community services centres. This is called enhanced service delivery. Already 15 community service centres have received new resources, more staff, improved facilities

and new funding for non-government services. Ingleburn Community Services Centre is one of the sites targeted as part of the enhanced service delivery program to receive additional resources in 2006-07. This includes 10 extra caseworkers, which will boost child protection resources and give Ingleburn Community Services Centre the capacity to commence early intervention services.

Building safe, resilient and healthy communities is essential, and effective partnerships with the communities and non-government organisations require a genuine cross-government approach. Last year an important new direction for community development and family support in New South Wales was announced—the creation of a new communities division within DOCS. This division combines a number of important programs from across the New South Wales Government, such as Families First, Better Futures, Community Solutions, the Violence Against Women Strategy, and the Area Assistance Scheme, to name but a few. This assists with better planning and integration of services as well as giving us a broader scope to work with communities and non-government organisations to build stronger and healthier communities.

Madam Chair and members of the committee would be aware that details of the various services and support programs that the department funds in the Macquarie Fields and surrounding areas are contained in the New South Wales Government's submission. Therefore, I will not take up more of the committee's time with my opening remarks and we can respond to the committee's specific questions that we received.

CHAIR: You have probably just given us a hint that that answers question 1, because we can look for the detail on the services and support by going back to the Government's submission. To clarify a matter for us, Macquarie Fields is within the Ingleburn CSC, which means the Campbelltown CSC presumably plays no role in the Macquarie Fields area. Is that correct?

Ms GALLARD: Ingleburn CSC provides services to Macquarie Fields. Campbelltown Community Services Centre is a much larger CSC. It services the southern part of the Campbelltown LGA down to the Camden area and even a little further south.

CHAIR: So Ingleburn provides services through a community services centre and, in addition, services are provided or co-ordinated out of the Metro South West office that do not go directly through the CSC.

Ms GALLARD: In Macquarie Fields, all of the services provided directly to families on child protection matters and most of the out-of-home care matters are dealt with by the Ingleburn Community Services Centre. The partnerships and planning team, who work with non-government organisations in the Macarthur area generally, operate from the Bankstown Regional Office.

CHAIR: We will get to question 3, which is about co-ordination, or lack of it, but we are talking about relationships with NGOs being largely a matter for the Bankstown office. Obviously the community services centre is a local operator and is relevant as well.

Ms GALLARD: The community services centre has a significant role in working with other agencies that deal with child protection matters. It will work with the local school and the local health service, and those services also provide support to families in the Macquarie Fields area. When we are talking about non-government organisations, unless the community services centre is referring a client for a service, the partnerships and planning team would handle the work between DOCS and the non-government organisations.

CHAIR: We were talking earlier today about trying to get these lines of division straight. Mr West raised this issue.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Perhaps we might be able to get some written clarification as to exactly what is what. I understand that Campbelltown CSC has just changed its office and is now next door to the police, so I cannot imagine Campbelltown police ringing Bankstown when they have the Campbelltown CSC in the same building.

Ms GALLARD: We have a very close working relationship with the police on child protection and domestic violence matters. Police are mandatory notifiers to DOCS. They are required

to make a report when a child is at risk of harm. They do that to the DOCS' Helpline. In following up those reports of risk of harm, the staff at the community services centre will have a lot of contact with the police. The police are also involved in a range of broader community strategies in the Macquarie Fields community and they will work with DOCS staff and NGOs on those programs that have been developed with a broader community focus.

CHAIR: It probably would be handy if we had a chart, particularly given the recent changes. The communities division is a year old, as you said, and it has brought in those things that were under the Cabinet office, such as Community Solutions and so on. It would help us all if there was a visual presentation of these things.

Ms CAMPBELL: I think the important distinction is that the role of the Bankstown regional office is to fund and monitor funding that we allocate to non-government services, whereas the community services centre provides individual services to children and young people and their families; it has quite a different role.

CHAIR: You have at least described in outline the role of the communities division. Can you tell us more about the community solutions group, which is an important player in the Macquarie Fields area?

Ms GALLARD: The communities division is special division within DOCS , and one of the programs it administers is community solutions. The Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy was established in 2001-02. It had a fund of \$50 million over five years to 2005-06 to assist with the development and implementation of crime prevention initiatives. The strategy covers rural and regional New South Wales as well as the metropolitan areas. Its main focus is on analysing and aligning current government activities to improve community outcomes. The strategy is currently in its fifth and final year.

The Human Services Cabinet Committee, previously the Justice Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Cabinet Subcommittee, and a working group made up of senior Government officers steers the strategy. The working group includes representatives from the Cabinet Office, the departments of Health, Education and Training, Community Services, Juvenile Justice, Local Government, Aboriginal Affairs, Sport and Recreation, NSW Police, the Attorney General's Department, and the Community Relations Commission.

Crime prevention initiatives have been developed in 28 locations determined by analysis of crime and social data, together with State agency data about high-priority locations. Projects funded under the strategy can be grouped into the following categories: youth services—

CHAIR: May I interrupt. We heard this morning that Macquarie Fields was not included in the funding for that program. Is that the case?

Ms GALLARD: That is right, it was not one of the initial 28 priority locations.

CHAIR: Is it being looked at currently? I think you said that program was in its fifth year?

Ms GALLARD: The program is in its final year, so strategies are being assessed about what happens once we get to the end of the current round of funding for community solutions.

CHAIR: I apologise for interrupting. When we prepared this question we were not as clear on that matter as we have since become. There is probably not so much point in going into the detail there, given that Macquarie Fields was not included in the 28 centres. Should you tell us more about the other programs that are in the communities division, such as Families First and the Violence Against Women Program? Some of those programs are in operation in Macquarie Fields, are they not?

Ms GALLARD: A range of programs are operating within the Macquarie Fields area. Most of those programs are included in the annexure to the whole-of-government submission.

CHAIR: In your opening statement you said you would come back to a couple of matters in relation to question 3, which is about the lack of co-ordination. How do you ensure that there is co-

ordination between your department and other government departments, both Federal and State, and how do you co-ordinate an approach in dealing with community groups and non-government organisations?

Ms GALLARD: We in DOCS operate within a number of interagency guidelines and agreements, and we also have memoranda of understanding and protocols with many of our key service and agency partners. In the Macquarie Fields area, the metropolitan south-west region is a partner in the agreement for the provision of services to children and young people, and their families. This agreement was prepared collaboratively by South Western Sydney Area Health Service, the Department of Education and Training, DOCS Metropolitan South West, and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. It outlines the common areas of work between the agencies, and processes for ensuring better outcomes for children and young people, and their families and carers in south-western Sydney.

The Government's submission has already acknowledged Campbelltown City Council's valuable and critical role in service delivery in the Macquarie Fields area. The Campbelltown Co-ordination Group meets bimonthly, involving agencies such as the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Housing, DOCS, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the Probation and Parole Service, the Premier's Department, Campbelltown City Council, TAFE, and the South Western Sydney Area Health Service. The meetings are chaired by the General Manager of Campbelltown City Council.

The purpose of this group is to work towards the integrated and strategically focused delivery of human services for the Campbelltown local government area. This forum enables and strengthens collaboration across all relevant agencies to address shared priorities and to address complex issues facing disadvantaged communities. DOCS also provides a local government salary subsidy to the council to facilitate the employment of staff for community development activities. Council is working on a youth strategic plan for 2006-08.

The Macarthur Families First Implementation Group comprises representatives from the government, local government and non-government sectors, and meets on a bimonthly basis to report on activities, and discuss work plans, shared resources, and a range of other matters relating to the program's operations in the area. DOCS is a partner agency on the Macquarie Fields Project Management Group and has lead responsibilities for implementing strategies for families and the community in the Government's Macquarie Fields Community and Government Action Plan 2005-06.

A local implementation group which will have representatives from the community, local government, State Government and non-government agencies will assist in developing and implementing the strategies outlined in the action plan. The Human Services Senior Officers Group in south-western Sydney meets on a regular basis to plan and implement collaborative work regarding specific issues, for example, the multidisciplinary assessment service in Bradbury. So we work on a range of committees.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You referred to a youth plan. How does the department consult with young people in relation to matters that I assume would impact on them, such as this proposed plan? What sort of mechanisms do you use?

Ms GALLARD: Consultation with young people happens in a range of ways, depending on the particular circumstances. I understand that in the development of the action plan for Macquarie Fields, the Premier's Department worked through a number of agencies who were working directly with young people to make sure their voices were heard. DOCS is working on its own youth policy at the moment. We have a whole-of-government youth policy, and that is currently being updated. That also is looking at ways in which the voices of young people in the community can be better heard.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Would that also relate to the Commission for Children and Young People, that there would be some input coming through from the commission?

Ms GALLARD: We work very closely with the Commission for Children and Young People on a range of matters, including the youth policy.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: With regard to the funding that DOCS gives to Campbelltown council in relation to community development, do you fund specific positions?

Ms CAMPBELL: There is a specific position that we fund from the Community Services Grants Program, to assist in doing that consultation and in developing that strategic plan.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: How many people in Campbelltown council do you fund?

Ms CAMPBELL: It would be approximately one position that we fund.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: One of a group of people working on community development or strategies for the future?

Ms CAMPBELL: That particular position is our contribution, I guess, and obviously council, as well as a range of other agencies, has significant input into the development of that plan. As you would have seen in our submission or the Government's submission, a number of interagency groups currently exist across the Macarthur area, including within Macquarie Fields. So those sorts of interagency groups would obviously feed into the overall youth plan for Macarthur.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is the funding for that position in council recurrent funding?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, it is.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: There is no specific number of years for which it is funded at the moment?

Ms CAMPBELL: I guess the funding itself is certainly until the end of 2005-06, and it obviously depends upon the normal processes in government in terms of budget allocation. But it is specifically funded at this point for a three-year period.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The Hon. Ian West referred to people's confusion about these invisible boundaries. Even though you will provide the Committee with a document explaining all this, I would have thought that given that Macquarie Fields is part of the Campbelltown City Council area, if people are trying to contact DOCS about a range of things, there would be some confusion about which office they should contact, Campbelltown or Ingleburn. It is not specific to this area; there are problems with boundaries that relate to both State and Federal and also local government areas. Given that we are looking at the specific issues at Macquarie Fields, how do people know that they have to contact Ingleburn as opposed to Campbelltown?

Ms GALLARD: Most of the work that is done by community services centres is about individual children and families, and happens as a result of a risk of harm report. The risk of harm reports go to the DOCS helpline, which provides a consistent service across the State. They take details about the matter that the community member is concerned about, and then provide that information to the appropriate community services centre so they can follow up and make further inquiries and, if required, make contact with the person who has made the report.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: When the individual rings the helpline, they would be guided in the right direction about which office they should contact, and presumably all other government agencies and non-government organisations would know exactly where the boundaries were and the appropriate office to deal with the matter?

Ms GALLARD: When we provide services to the community, we do it either directly through a community services centre, which is about child protection matters or out-of-home care matters, or through non-government agencies. In the example of a community member who was not wanting to make a risk of harm report about a child but was wanting to find out about family support services, usually they would approach other funded services within the community and ask about appropriate services that can meet their needs.

In Macquarie Fields, we fund some community services that work specifically with just Macquarie Fields residents. We also fund a range of services that operate across the broader

Campbelltown City Council area but also provide services to Macquarie Fields residents, either through going into Macquarie Fields themselves or through providing access to services that might be located in other parts of the Campbelltown local government area.

The Hon. IAN WEST: With regard to question 6, I am trying to relate what you have just said to the department's involvement in the new community centre in the public housing estate, and the Hon. Kayee Griffin's question about the connection with young people. If I am a young person living in a public housing estate in which a new community centre has opened up, and the Campbelltown DOCS centre is located in the same building as the police station, and the police are involved with youth in the community, how can I be given a phone number in Bankstown?

Ms GALLARD: If you are a young person in the Macquarie Fields area you are more likely to want to access one of the services that are already out there that work with young people in that area. We have good partnerships with non-government services and with the local high school, for example, that runs a number of programs. It is through those sorts of service outlets that young people are most likely to seek information about available services. They are less likely to want to come to a DOCS office and talk to a DOCS caseworker. Of course, if they did that, we would provide that service to them. But we generally find that they are more willing to talk to non-government service providers or their local teacher—somebody whom they are interacting with on a more regular basis.

CHAIR: Before I hand over to Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans I will bring you back to what you said about co-ordination. You have run through a number of agreements and a number of ways in which DOCS makes sure that there was co-ordination. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a number of submissions tell us that there are problems in this area. A number of witnesses have said that Macquarie Fields is probably a typical example of somewhere that needs a place-based approach rather than focusing on co-ordination between different, very large agencies, such as DOCS, Health or Education. What is your response to the suggestion that you need a place-based approach and to the complaints about the difficulty of co-ordination on the ground?

Ms GALLARD: We work very closely with a range of other agencies, and we have for a long period of time. We continue to want to strengthen those working relationships. We think that a very good start has been made by the development of the project management group and the implementation committee. If, as part of the deliberations of the project management group and the implementation committee, they come up with other strategies—some of which may be along the lines that you have suggested—of course we will look at those. But we think it is important to work with the local community to make sure that we are listening to what they say and that they are engaged in the process and that we continue to work with the other agencies—be they local government or other State Government agencies, the Commonwealth, which also has a strong role in the Campbelltown area, and non-government services. We do not want to jump into new solutions before we have worked out whether there are other things that we can do that would strengthen what we already have there.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Ms Gallard, you have talked a lot of management talk. You are pretty high up in the hierarchy. How many people have you actually got on the ground and what do they actually do?

Ms GALLARD: In terms of the community services centre at Ingleburn, which services the Macquarie Fields area, we have a staffing complement of 33.7 positions. That includes 23 caseworker positions. As part of the implementation of the Government's new funding program for DOCS there will be another 10 caseworker positions going into Ingleburn in 2006-07. We also have a team of people that work from the Bankstown regional office who provide support and funding to non-government organisations and monitor what they do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you mean they monitor what you do or monitor what other NGOs do?

Ms GALLARD: They monitor what the NGOs do that are funded by DOCS.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: There are 33 in total and 23 caseworkers at Ingleburn. Macquarie Fields is only one of the areas they service. How many people do they service and what percentage of those people are at Macquarie Fields?

Ms GALLARD: Last year the Ingleburn office received 2,227 child protection reports.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No. How many people does it service?

Ms GALLARD: About 700 cases were in relation to children and young people living in the Macquarie Fields area.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Out of a total of how many?

CHAIR: Out of 2,227—so roughly a third.

Ms GALLARD: Yes.

CHAIR: Someone referred earlier to the area that consisted of Leumeah, Glenfield, Ingleburn and Macquarie Fields. I think Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans is trying to get the geographical area covered.

Ms CAMPBELL: The Ingleburn office would cover those areas you have just mentioned.

CHAIR: Glenfield as well?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, it just borders on Macquarie Fields.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you have a third of the cases coming from Macquarie Fields. What percentage of the population comes from Macquarie Fields that the Ingleburn office is servicing?

Ms GALLARD: I know that we understand the population of Macquarie Fields but I would need to take that question on notice and get back to you with what proportion of the catchment area for the CSC lives in Macquarie Fields.

CHAIR: So you will take that question on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said that your actions are in response to notifications from the help line, which, as we know, has compulsory reporting. I have heard the criticism of DOCS that now it is very legally oriented and responds to help line requests and court orders but has not done much prevention. If two-thirds of the people at the Ingleburn office are caseworkers what preventive programs are you running in Macquarie Fields, particularly, and Ingleburn?

Ms GALLARD: As part of the funding reform DOCS is employing a total of 350 early intervention caseworkers across the State.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is that Families First?

Ms GALLARD: No.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is a separate program again.

Ms GALLARD: That is a separate program. The early intervention program targets vulnerable families with children in the age group of nought to eight years and tries to put preventative strategies in place so that those children are not reported formally into the child protection system.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is this the old categories three and four?

Ms GALLARD: It is not specifically categories three and four but some of the early intervention families would be seen as having problems that are similar to level three cases within the child protection system.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So what do you do that is proactive as opposed to responding to reports?

Ms GALLARD: There is a range of non-government services that provide services to families and support to families to try to intervene early. Some of those are existing services but, as part of the early intervention program, the department will be providing funding of \$150 million over a period of three years.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is that statewide?

Ms GALLARD: That is statewide. We are currently out at an expression of interest for non-government organisations to provide early intervention services including agencies that are interested in providing early intervention services in the Macarthur area. So agencies are now putting together their formal proposals and will be coming back to us and we will be assessing those proposals.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the sense that you are getting proposals from people who want money as opposed to saying what is needed and asking for people to tender for it, how do you know that what is coming in is what is needed out there? Do you have any independent surveys or plans?

Ms GALLARD: The early intervention program is based on significant national and international research that provides evidence about what works with vulnerable families. So it is looking at funding and a limited range of service types that have been shown consistently in the literature to provide the sort of support that prevents child abuse and neglect.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You might have, say, a need for more trams and you might get a cross-city tunnel proposal.

CHAIR: I thought we were getting a fair way away from the terms of reference.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What would happen if you had a you-beaut submission for something in an area where you needed something else?

CHAIR: Can you tie in that question somehow to Macquarie Fields?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I sure can. We have not a planning process but an assessment of tendering process, which is quite different in that you might not get a tender for an expression of interest for something that you actually need. Is that right?

Ms GALLARD: We have provided significant planning information, including the needs of families, to all agencies interested in putting in a proposal.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So they are tendering for items within an overall plan that you have developed.

Ms GALLARD: They are putting in proposals for the provision of services that fit into specific types that we have indicated that we will fund. To do that, we have provided them with significant information about the needs of families in that area and we have encouraged them to work with other local service providers to build a robust service proposal that we can then assess.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will the tendering process be transparent at the end? Will you see the scores that people got?

Ms GALLARD: The process so far has been very transparent in that we received initially more than 300 submissions. They went through a first round of assessment. The results of that have been on the DOCS web site for people to see and agencies that were successful in getting through the first round of assessment have been invited to develop their proposals further.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will the final tender be transparent or will it be at ministerial discretion?

CHAIR: I am sorry, Arthur.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am sorry, Jan, but we had an inquiry in this place where the DOCS tender that was successful was overridden by a ministerial memo and I would like to be sure that this does not happen again. I would like to ask Ms Gallard about that tendering process.

CHAIR: I am sorry, Arthur, I am going to rule your line of questioning out of order. This is an inquiry—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is ridiculous. This Committee has actually dealt with a case like this before in terms of disability tendering.

CHAIR: You have probably just proved my point. For the past 15 minutes you have not mentioned Macquarie Fields or anything that is specific to our terms of reference. I think your questions are very general about the functioning of the department. Ms Griffin has a question.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The Committee has heard in evidence and in submissions that there are higher than average rates of various categories of assault, including domestic violence. What is the department's relationship with the local police? Do you have a good relationship with the area command?

Ms GALLARD: We have a very good relationship with the area command. We work with the local police in a number of ways. Firstly, because they are mandatory reporters, we work with them on individual cases. There are projects that we are working on in the Campbelltown area that are about prevention of violence against women that have been developed through the violence against women co-ordinator that is located in that area. Because we work together with police on joint investigations of sexual abuse and the major physical assault of children, we also work with them through the joint investigation and response team [JIRT] model. The JIRT that operates in that area is located at Liverpool but we have significant co-operative working relationships with the police on JIRT matters as well.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Could you explain what JIRT is for the record?

Ms GALLARD: Joint investigation and response teams are a joint group that comprises police officers and DOCS caseworkers that investigate physical and sexual abuse of children when it is thought that the investigation might lead to criminal charges being laid. They work separately. They have a separate office. They pursue those cases until a decision is made to take those cases through the court. The JIRT model has been in place since 1996. Currently there are nine collocated JIRTs in New South Wales, one of which is in Liverpool and it covers the Campbelltown area.

CHAIR: They would use Liverpool Hospital for medical checks and so on, if it were necessary?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, Liverpool and Campbelltown as well, but generally Liverpool hospital, particularly after hours.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You mentioned that the violence against women co-ordinator positions have been moved from the Attorney General's Department to DOCS, is that correct?

Ms GALLARD: That is right. They moved across in February 2005.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Are they still classified as temporary positions?

Ms GALLARD: The department is putting in place a major new structure for the communities division, and as part of the communities division there are positions for staff who are running violence against women programs.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: But they are temporary positions, is that correct?

Ms GALLARD: I would have to take that on notice about the current positions. Certainly the structure that is being put in place contains a number of permanent positions.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You will take that on notice?

Ms GALLARD: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you consider violence against women to be a crime?

Ms GALLARD: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Therefore you would support violence against women to be considered under criminal issues rather than being a welfare response?

Ms GALLARD: Violence against women is a very complex problem and it involves a broad range of agencies. DOCS is involved in domestic violence because domestic violence is one of the issues that can lead to children being reported to the DOCS helpline.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: But violence against women is not just domestic violence and not necessarily perpetrated against children, is it?

Ms GALLARD: No, it is not. We also fund the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, which provides a range of accommodation and crisis services for victims of domestic violence. The very positive thing about the Violence against Women Program coming to the Department of Community Services is that it can be integrated into a range of programs where we are looking at strengthening communities and providing support to families.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Are you not aware that there has been considerable concern by violence against women workers and others in terms of violence against women about that move?

Ms GALLARD: I am aware that some of the workers have been unhappy about the move to DOCS. I can assure the Committee that DOCS is very encouraged about the move because it provides us with a broader focus within the community on a very important issue.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Why do you think they are concerned?

CHAIR: Again, we are getting away from Macquarie Fields. We are over time and we have six questions to ask.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: No, domestic violence and violence against women have enormous statistics in that area. I am interested in whether the DOCS senior officers here understand why there has been concern about the move to DOCS by violence against women workers, which was mentioned by Ms Gallard in the previous answer.

CHAIR: I know it is a very high priority, but the difficulty is your line of questioning is getting a long way from Macquarie Fields. I am sorry, but you have already asked about five questions on the topic. The inquiry is into Macquarie Fields, it is not meant to be an inquiry because we have DOCS witnesses here.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: If it that concerns the Government doing something controversial it is shut down by your chairmanship.

CHAIR: I rule that line of questioning out of order again, consistently as I did with the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans. The next question on our list relates to whether you believe the department learned from Redfern and how you have applied that in an area such as Macquarie Fields?

Ms GALLARD: The key thing that we learned from Redfern was the need to make sure that we engage with local community members and listen very closely to what they say are the priorities. Pursuing the forum recently and establishing the local reference group are key vehicles for community engagement. Another key lesson from Redfern, and the Macquarie Fields Project Management Group is very conscious of this, is the need to have well thought through programs and initiatives to introduce rather than hasty or hurried solutions.

CHAIR: Can you tell us if any specific DOCS inquiries or investigations have arisen out of the Macquarie Fields disturbances? If so, what came out of those inquiries?

Ms GALLARD: DOCS has not conducted any inquiries or investigations specific to Macquarie Fields as a result of the disturbance.

CHAIR: Have you participated to any extent in any other inquiries or any investigations, or have you looked at change that has been adopted by other agencies?

Ms GALLARD: We have been involved with Premier's Department in the project management group. Premier's Department asked us to facilitate the community forum held at Macquarie Fields. We remain engaged with a range of other government and non-government providers in that location.

CHAIR: When you say you facilitate the community forum in October, does that mean that you had responsibility for inviting local residents or was it simply a matter of running the program for the day?

Ms GALLARD: We really just ran the program on the day. There was a small working group that established the form, which consisted of residents and NGO representatives. The DOCS officer then facilitated the program on the day.

CHAIR: But you did not have any particular role in working out which representatives of residents would attend?

Ms GALLARD: No.

CHAIR: Have funding and resources in Macquarie Fields increased since the disturbances?

Ms GALLARD: They have neither significantly increased nor decreased. We have provided a small amount of money to help with an initiative involving police and young people. What we have been doing since the disturbance is using the existing forums to work through the issues for Macquarie Fields to work out how we can work better with the local community.

CHAIR: What was the police and young people initiative?

Ms CAMPBELL: It was the youth camp.

CHAIR: We have heard about that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Perhaps it is a question you may have to take on notice, but I want to ask you about the project that is being run in Macquarie Fields with the local area command on domestic violence. It was mentioned by the police the other day, but I do not think the community has been given much information about the actual project.

Ms GALLARD: It depends. There are a number of projects occurring. Obviously, there is a demonstration that is occurring in terms of domestic violence. Is that the one?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Yes.

Ms CAMPBELL: I cannot remember the exact date, but it started early this year and is running for two years. DOCS is contributing \$200,000 over two years to assist in some of the supported services for women and children. There are weekly meetings between all the key providers in terms of matters that appeared before Campbelltown court, and that particular initiative includes Macquarie Fields. It covers both the Macquarie Fields Local Area Command and the Campbelltown Local Area Command as well. It is still in the fairly early stages.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Apart from what is happening with court issues and so on, nothing has come out to reveal how the project is going or anything like that?

Ms CAMPBELL: I can take that on notice. It probably would be better to give you more accurate information.

CHAIR: Perhaps this question should have been asked at the beginning rather than at the end. Some people say that social disadvantage was one of the, if not the, major contributing factor to disturbances. Do you agree with that comment? What do you think are the underlying causes and problems that contributed to disturbances?

Ms GALLARD: Social disadvantage would be one of the contributing factors, but it is likely that there is a range of social issues and many underlying reasons. This situation at Macquarie Fields is no doubt complex and crosses many portfolios.

CHAIR: What would you like to see come out of this inquiry?

Ms GALLARD: Continued co-operation and ongoing work to support and strengthen the community and build sustainable services. It is important for cross agency work to continue between New South Wales government agencies and also for there to be a strengthened partnership with the Australian Government in relation to employment issues. But it is also important that the community in Macquarie Fields not be stigmatised. In moving forward it is important to work in partnership with the community and build on their strengths. This is a well-understood and vital component in community capacity building. This should not be a situation of government pulling a community apart because that is an approach that will not work. We need to do it with them.

CHAIR: There are two or three areas that you have taken on notice. The Committee staff will be able to look at the transcript and clarify what we are getting from the so that we are all clear on that. Thank you for coming.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(The Committee concluded at 4.58 p.m.)