CORRECTED

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

INQUIRY INTO REPARATIONS FOR THE STOLEN GENERATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

———

At Wagga Wagga on Friday 6 November 2015

———

The Committee met at 2.45 p.m.

———

PRESENT

The Hon. J. Barham (Chair)
The Hon. B. Franklin
The Hon. C. Houssos
The Hon. S. Mitchell (Deputy Chair)
Reverend The Hon. Fred Nile
The Hon. S. Moselmane

CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the second hearing of the General Standing Committee No. 3, Inquiry into Reparation for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales. Before I commence I would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people present today. The inquiry is examining a number of important issues for members of the stolen generations, including implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the "Bringing them home" report and potential policies and legislation to help make reparations to members of the stolen generation. Today is the second of a number of hearings that we plan to hold for this inquiry. We will have more hearings early next year and hopefully before the end of this year we will be travelling to Kempsey to visit the Kinchela Boys Home. This morning we had the great honour of visiting the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home with three aunties.

Given the importance of this inquiry we have encouraged people to come forward to share their stories. We wish to hear from as many people as possible and appreciate any assistance that can be offered to spread the word far and wide. It would be fantastic for us to hear as many stories as possible. The submissions were originally due by 18 October, but we have extended that time and we will accept submissions from anyone, as long as the inquiry is still open. Today we will be hearing from a number of witnesses. We have members of the Coota Girls Corporation, Uncle Bob Glanville, and representatives from the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation, and Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Services.

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

There might be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand, or Committee members may wish to ask more questions. Witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Witnesses are advised that any messages should be delivered to Committee members through Committee staff. Finally, could everyone please turn off their mobile phones or put them on silent for the duration of the hearing.

It is a great honour to have the Coota girls with us today.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER, Member, Coota Girls Corporation, and

AUNTY ISABEL REID, Chair, Coota Girls Corporation, and

AUNTY SHIRLEY MCGEE, Director, Coota Girls Corporation, and

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE, Cultural Elder, Cootamundra, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you for allowing us to visit the site of the Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home with you. I invite you to tell us whatever you would like us to record for this inquiry—your recollections, your wishes and your stories. Could you tell us what your experiences were and what your feelings are now?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: I would like to tell a short story about my life. I was one of the stolen generations, along with my sister Betty and my brother Jack. Betty is not with me at the moment because she passed away in 1977. I am sure she would be going through the trauma that I am going through now if she was here today. I have not seen my brother since the time I was taken away. My story starts in a town called Dubbo. We said goodbye to mum and dad one morning and went to school. It is not that far away from here—about 400 kilometres. Mum had to go to work. Dad had already gone to work. So we said goodbye to Mum that morning. I was seven, Betty was five and Jack was ten. We were children.

About half past three that afternoon the bell rang and we came out. We were not dawdling too much. A truck pulled up beside us when we were about half way home. A gentleman got out and said that he would give us a ride home. As children always do, we got into the truck. But we were not taken home; we were taken to the police station in Dubbo and we were put in the jail cells for the night. There was a lot of wailing going on that night. It was really terrifying. We did not know what was going on. We clung to each other. My little sister was only five, and I was always protective of her. It was really terrifying, even today as a grown women when I think back to that time and talk about it I think of how we were—we were little children. Jack was a bit older, and I think he comforted us a bit as well.

The next morning a lady by the name of Mrs Healey picked us up and took us to the railway station. We had no idea where we were going. They did not tell us anything. We were just to get dressed and go with her, which we did. We got on the train. We did not know where we were going. We ended up in Sydney, in Glebe. That is where I met a lady by the name of Mrs English. I found out she was one of the inspectors of the State. That was the last time I saw Jack. I have not seen him from that day to this. I have tried everything. I have put ads in the papers, including in the *Koori Mail*. All to no avail. I have had lots of phone calls from different people who said they were Jack Hampton. They said, "I'd love to be your brother," but when they told me where they came from I said, "Thank you very much." Even them ringing me gave me a bit of comfort. As I always say, I only hope that he is happy. I said in my ad, "Jack, if you're out there, even if you don't want to come home, I know the trauma you went through, because I went through it too, brother, and as long as you're happy then I'm happy." But it never happened.

Maybe down the track I might hear of his family—maybe he had a family. Maybe he died young; I do not know. It is the not knowing that is really heartbreaking. I hear of many families who go through the same trauma—not quite as significant as what we went through. We were just kids, and I often say that. How long have we got to come to terms with what happened to us? We have come to terms with it with each other; we have worked with our sisters who went through the homes. We had no personal counselling, which would have been there for us. I really do not think that we needed that. We needed one another—the girls we were in the home with and the girls we knew as our sisters. We did not have a lady to call mum; we did not have a dad to call to dad. And that was really heartbreaking because in any family you have to have a mum and dad. I always thought, "Where's mum and dad? Why didn't they come and get us." I would say that was blocked by the Government. They probably said that mum and dad did not want us.

You can read our files. I have not got mine—I do not want to read it because I know it is all lies. I can tell the story because I know what went on. I was only a child, but I know what went on from the day I was picked up by that truck. Unfortunately I am only here to tell that story. Time is running out for me. I am 83 years of age. For goodness sake, do I have to grovel for the rest of my life for something to happen? Yes, we have the stolen wages; but that was not enough and that was not compensation—those were stolen wages that

belonged to us. What is going to happen about that? They write these letters and say they are going to do this or that, and I mean the Government when I say "they".

What can we do? The "Bringing them home" report did nothing for us. It was there and we knew it was there. The only way to know how we feel is to walk in our shoes, and that will never happen because I am me and you are you. It is the Government that has to take notice of what we are saying. We cannot do this any longer. We have talked and talked and told our stories. Now we want action. That is what I would like to say about that.

CHAIR: Did anyone else want to make a comment?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: My name is Doreen Webster. I was taken from Wilcannia. I remember happy times with my parents before I was taken. I was eight years of age. My dad worked on a station. I loved it. I had a younger sister. She was a baby when she was taken. We were taken to Cootamundra together. My brothers were taken to Kinchela Boys Home. When I got up to Cootamundra I seen all these girls there and they looked real sad. I was thinking, "What's going on here? Where am I?" I had no idea where I was or what was happening to me. I was screaming for my mum and dad. When we got there we were treated so cruelly—so cruelly.

I remember once I was down the bottom near the swings—I was only about 11, I think; 10 or 11—and the matron rang this policeman on me, this big policeman. I was sitting down on the ground and he got me by the hair of the head and just pulled me up, straight up to my feet—lifted me off the ground and stood me on my feet—and then he stood on my foot. I had no shoes on. I was screaming out in agony, I was. But not only that, being locked in the box room and caned all the time. It was just horrifying. I used to run away all the time. But we have been through so much and we have told our stories, like Isabel said, over and over again, and we are getting nowhere fast. Nothing is happening for us. We are still going down the same old road, still going round and round the mulberry bush again.

When is the Government going to do something—step up? They have done this to us. We never asked to be taken from our parents. We did not want any of it. They put us through so much misery. And now is the time. We want things, you know. We want the home back. We want all the land that is on it. We want everything there. I believe it is our right. We suffered there but I believe we own that place. Our memories are all there—not good memories; bad memories, but we had happy times there too when we were young girls just being together. We were happy just being together, playing together. We had our good times—left alone, it was good. But now is the time for us. Now is the appointed time, I believe. We need so much. We have missed out on so much. It is unbelievable. It is like someone else's story—it is not yours; it is someone else's story.

CHAIR: Thank you—

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: It is hard to move on. We try but we come so far then we go back again. It is like it is calling us back: "Don't go away. You're not allowed there. You know you are not allowed there." I am going to ask for a block of land; I am going to ask for a new house to be built on it; I am going to ask for a car for all of us—each and every one of us. Why not? We deserve it.

CHAIR: —that you shared with us.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: And also the nursing home thing—the home for when we get older—where we can be there. We are family; we are our family here. All the girls are family. We are sisters to the Kinchela boys. They are brothers to us. And there is a closeness. That is our family. We never had a mum and dad, but that is our family.

CHAIR: And you were saying that you want to be able to be together?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: We want to be together. We want funding for our corporation so that we can meet up and come together. All the trauma and everything we have been through, counsellors would never heal us of it. No—we heal ourselves. When one hurts, we all hurt. We come together and we talk about stuff. So we are healing unto ourselves; we are there for one another. It has always been like that. And I will

never, ever speak to a counsellor because the counsellor does not know what I have been through. She got no idea.

CHAIR: But your sisters do. You mentioned about the facility being changed from how it was.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: It has definitely changed. It should not have ever happened. What I would like to see happen—I am sure the girls are with me now—is get that all back to the original state of the home, I would think. I know there are bad memories there, but there are good memories there as well, with all our sisters that went through there. The fact is no-one can really see through our eyes how the home was. We can tell it and we can see it in our memories, but no-one else can do that, because we are the only ones that can do that. But you really cannot see with the box room where Shirley was always a naughty girl and was put in the box room and all that. But I mean to say there are more things happened there than can meet the eye.

I was there in 1938. That is going back a long time. But it was very isolated for me. I felt that there was nothing there for a child of about seven. My sister was only five. She was a quiet girl, Betty, and I always looked after Betty. I often used to think about running away, but what would happen to her? No-one is going to look after her. So what would I run away for? And leave her? No. I could not do that, and that is why I stayed with my sister there. We looked after one another. And she looked after me too, as well, because I was the only mother that she could cling to while she was there in the homes.

So it is a lot of heartbreak and that within us. We were not adults. Like I told you, we were all kids. And it is very sad. You have only got to close your eyes and think of your own children, if you have got children, going to school one morning and not coming home—how would you feel? I know you might not feel the way we do, unfortunately, because we are all different. But if a white child did that or a white mother did that, closed their eyes for a while and think of Johnny or Susie going to school and not getting home that day and they did not get to know where they went, what would they be doing? They would be running to the police. But it was no good my mum and dad going to the police—they would not take any notice of them because they reckon they are only black and drunkards. And they did not drink at all, my mum and dad. But unfortunately they were that way when I came out. Why wouldn't they be? Their children were taken away from them. What mother or father that had any heart at all, you know? Because we were black kids, that is why it happened to us. What did they want to get rid of us for? We own this country—our ancestors did, anyway. And then we had to put up with that.

All our life we have grovelled for everything and, now it is time, they give it to others—why not us? Why have we got to be the last in line? I think we should be on the top of the list. And the government that took us away—Aboriginal Affairs; I have done a little bit of homework—they were the ones that took us away in the first place. Why? Because we were black and they wanted to make us white? Well, that is how we did. They put the whites out to work so they could turn white and the black girls stayed home in the homes. And they did all these things. But they did not do it in our best interest; they did it in their best interest. Most of the stuff was swept under the carpet. They did not want to hear about it. We have told our stories millions of time—millions and millions of times. We have put it in books. We have talked to the schools and that, but we have not talked to the right people that we hope are listening. You are all listening here. I hope you take it all in and do the best you can with it. Would you like to say something, Shirl?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Aunty Shirley, can you tell us a little about your experience, particularly being a naughty girl, how you were treated?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: I were treated terrible. I was too straight out. I do not know what age I went in. I think about 11 I started to get very cheeky to the matron. Matron was very hard on us. She used to lock us in the rooms and not feed us or anything, then I started to get worse, playing up all the time. To be honest, I ended up in Parramatta Home—that is how bad I was—because nobody showed me love; nobody said goodnight or tucked the girls in or kissed us and said, "Goodnight. Have a good sleep." We had none of that. Nobody showed us love. All they did was be cruel to us. And I cried—and I still cry. I am 70; I cannot handle it much anymore. They told me my mum died and when I got off the station to go to Sydney when I was 16, my mother was waiting for me at the train, and she said, "I'm your mother." I said, "No, my mother passed away, and my dad." It was in my file. I used to not believe it, what they did to me.

I'm sorry I'm crying.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Don't forget we were innocent children too.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, that's right.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: We were innocent. We didn't know what was going on. We didn't know what was going to happen to us. My mother was in Cootamundra, my dad was in Boys town, my Auntie Tibby was in Cootamundra, my brothers were in Kinchela—it's a generational thing, it goes down to the second, third and fourth generation. It's happening in everything but I think it's time it was stopped. We need stuff now. We are getting on in age, you know, we've lost girls who've got their compensation money but never had a chance to spend it. Some of the Kinchela boys have died. They had their money; they never got a chance to spend it, you know, and this compensation has taken so long, are they waiting for us to die too, or what, so they don't have to pay us? Because it won't go to our children, it'll just die with us.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: They keep the money.

CHAIR: You have referred to some of the things that you feel that you deserve to have support to have your meetings, to have access to support to be able to tell your stories and make them available so everyone knows about them.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Yes, we have our stories out. We have them out. We have them on DVD.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: I wouldn't do that.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: But most of the things that are in that paper is every confidential. Maybe we can talk about that after this is all over. I'm quite willing—I'm sure the girls are too—but some of it is confidential. There is some there that we can have out and that, but there is a lot of things there, I think, is very damaging to us as Coota girls. I mean it is the truth but I think that's left for us to decide what we want to do with it, and that. That's all right?

CHAIR: Absolutely.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You said that you had formed a corporation?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, we have.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: With about 60 girls in it?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: No, there's not 60, about 60 in the home, no. What have we got now?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Seven.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: No, we've got more than that.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Ten.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: We formed the corporation for the simple reason of being together because they say when you're trying to do something, you need to do it in numbers—one person won't do it. It's like building a house, you know, you've got to have more than one, so that is the idea. Not only that for our own self-worth too as well because we're worthy of more than what we're getting and we haven't had anything.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You have said you want action, in that corporation have you written out and listed what each of those things are?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, we have, it's in the document, yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Is that this document here, "All One Statement by Coota Girls Corporation September 2015" ?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, we have. It's in that, yes, and other things like I said is very confidential and the other things, yes, they can be talked about.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: But the action you want is in that document?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Are you happy with that?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: We've also got our families on board to be members so that when we go it will keep running, you know. Because they get upset and traumatised over our actions too, you know, because we can't hold back what's in our heart, how hurt we were, you know, and they hurt with us too. We want them to carry on with this Coota Girls Corporation, sort of to keep it running so they can sort of have support to. They can come to understand because I haven't told my family what happened, you know. Some I have, some I haven't, but the really bad parts—

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: We keep to ourself.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Has anyone spoken to you so that you can relieve some of that tension? Have you had rehabilitation or any sense of support? Has anyone come?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: No-one.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: No.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: They left us in the dirt—what do you call that word? They just left us.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: In the lurch?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Yes, they left us in the lurch. They didn't care.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Like when I went out to work, I got sent down to Sydney, they took me to this place, it was a boarding house. And the guy that was running it was an alcoholic. The first time I'd seen a drunk and he was going crazy and I was so scared, you know, I wanted to get out of there. I had to go down and catch the bus, get the number of the bus. Some of them were prejudiced towards me. One guy sang out, "No blacks allowed on this bus." We just had to feel our own way and I was terrified of the city. I wanted to go back to the homes because I was so scared, you know, of the city. They just put me there and left me: that was it.

CHAIR: No support?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: They never come back to check on me to see how I was going or anything, no, no. I had to fend for myself. I had to do what I thought was right.

CHAIR: Uncle Bob, you have a close association with the home, do you want to tell us anything?

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: Yes, I have. I was born in Cootamundra and I went to school with the girls from the Cootamundra Girls Home. I had a lot of friendships, lot of girls I am still friendly with. What I really like you to remember these three ladies who have been talking, they might be well past their prime—

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: I beg your pardon.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Thank you, please take that back.

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: I do. I can only wish I was half as articulate to tell you what I want to tell you, what these three ladies have done. But just try to remember what they said, they were kids. One of the earlier things that really affected me and made me wonder what was happening and why it was happening was I was at school one day and if anyone seen Cootamundra primary school, it is so different now to what it used to

be. It used to have a high paling fence right around it. There was three adults calling out to two of the girls, and the girls went over to them. I found out later that the mother and father and grandmother were calling out to the girls to come over to them. Now the principal of the school at the time, whether under instruction or on his own initiative, he hunted them away.

Sorry I got it wrong—they didn't go away, they walked across the road and stood on the opposite side of the road and was yelling out messages to the kids across the thing. I couldn't help wondering why? What's happening? What's going on? I was only pretty young myself—I didn't understand what the stolen generation was, all I knew was there was a lot of girls there from the homes. I wasn't really sure what they were doing there. But I soon found out through experiences like that and how differently they were treated at school by the education department and not only the girls, but Aboriginal boys like myself who were largely ignored at school. You put up your hand to answer a question and the teachers would just ignore you. Education wasn't for us, it was for someone else; the girls were only good enough to be housemaids, the boys were only good enough to be farmhands et cetera.

Wednesday afternoon in the summertime the girls could go to the local pool. They would be marched over in a group and they would have to stand alongside—first of all the other girls would have to be hunted out of the girls' dressing room, the girls from the home would go in, they would be changed, they go out, they stand alongside the pool and wait for a whistle to blow and then they would all dive in. After a certain amount of time, another whistle blow, and they would all have to get out.

I think that is called segregation now. Someone mentioned this morning the local picture theatre. If everybody had been goody-goody they used to go to the pictures on Saturday afternoon. They sat in a roped off section. They would wave to their school mates who were not allowed to go any closer to them.

We had one girl who was very quiet; she hardly said a word to anyone. If she was asked a question she would nod or shake her head and smile. There was a sort of flirtatious relationship between her and I. We would pass one another notes across the desk. She would write, "Did you win the football Wednesday?" I would think for a while and pass a note back saying, "No." The teacher was aware there was some sort of association going on with us. One day she went right off her head. She screamed and yelled, cried and threw things at the teacher. The teacher was a nice lady. This girl had two sisters. One was in primary school and one was in the infants' school. At the first break she would fly down to see how her sisters were going, whether they were okay.

This day she lost it and got very angry, and the teacher went to get the principal. The principal told her to go outside. She was still kicking the door and going on. The teacher got me to go out and sit with her. I was sitting there with her and trying to be somewhere else. But I could hear the teacher and the principal talking in the hall. The principal said, "I have already rung the home and their truck is down town getting serviced. There is no-one else to call." I come from a large extended family. Half of Cootamundra would have been my rellos. But it struck me then that there was no-one to call. That is the sort of environment these girls put up with in those days at the home. When they talk about compensation, I am not sure. What compensation could be adequate? Is there another form of compensation? Is there a legacy that could be left for the girls and boys from the stolen generation that can be passed on to their grandchildren and great grandchildren in their memory? I do not know. But there needs to be something coming back, some recognition of what happened. It was a terrible time in Australian history. People do not realise just how bad it was and how much it affected us.

I have been involved in a lot of things in my life, particularly the welfare side of it—juvenile male offenders. Almost without exception, with any one of those adults or juniors, if you go back through the history there is someone from the stolen generation. Whether it was dad, mum, aunty, grandmother, someone was taken. It is an inherited impact of sadness and lack of self-esteem that is passed down from generation to generation. My family was very lucky in that none of our immediate family was taken. My grandmother was, but she made sure it did not happen to the rest of us. It was passed down from generation to generation. We were removed; we were like fringe dwellers at the edge of town. My grandmother was very lucky to get employment with one of the high-profile families in town. He became mayor of the town and led the allied forces in Benghazi during the war. The family had a big profile. I think her association with that family saved us.

Even with that, we were sworn not to talk language up the street because you will be taken. It is the same old story you have heard time and again. We were told, "If you see someone coming down the road, run and hide", "If they stop at the house, get under the bed. Do not answer the door." That is what kids grew up with. Is there some sort of compensation for that stuff? I do not know. I do know there is no compensation for

that. What compensation could there be and how would it be organised? There could be a legacy to those days. I think the Australian people—I am not talking about governments—owe something. If they are going to accept that as part of their history, they should look at what they can pay. We are people; we are Australians.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do any of the ladies want to add anything? Do you want to tell the Committee about the impact on your families as you have grown up? Uncle Bob talked about how it affected them with his grandmother being taken. Have your families also suffered?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, my mother was taken.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Yes, my mother was.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: We found that out too.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: My mother was taken and she turned into an alcoholic because of the trauma she went through. When I got out of the home, I turned into an alcoholic. But by the grace of God I have come through that. With this compensation, the Government is just looking at how many years we were in the homes. What about the trauma? What about after? A lot of us became alcoholics, drug addicts and gamblers. Different things were happening in our lives. You are only talking about the time we were in there. I do not think that is right. I had a brother there and he died because he could not deal with what happened to him in the homes. He turned into an alcoholic and died. Actually three of my brothers have died. I have only one brother left now, and he is doing time in jail. He has been in there for 28 years.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Aunty Doreen, I want to follow up on your earlier comments. You said a number of elders have passed away and have not received compensation. Do you believe that compensation should flow to their families?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Yes. It should go to their families; it should be shared out among their children. The Government is getting off scot-free once again. I do not think that is fair; it is not fair.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That should happen. Betty, my sister, was in the homes with me. I feel that her children should have the same. Betty is not here for that and I really think that should happen.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Because they suffered as well?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: They suffered as well.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Of course they did.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Goodness knows, I always said she died of a broken heart. She probably did.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: I think a lot of them did.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: I really think they should get that; their families should get that. Betty is not here, but I think they should because they suffered along with her. It is important that this happens as well. They say the buck stops with us. It does not because we have children and grandchildren. Our children suffered along with us. It is the suffering, the hurt and trauma that they have been through as well. They have suffered with us. They may not tell us, but I know they do. We do not like to dwell on that, but something has to be done. We are at this stage now that we will stop because nothing has been done. It would be devastating to all the stolen generation children who were taken.

It is time to act now. All the talking is over. It needs to be done. I know it is not going to be done right away, but it needs to be. When we were taken into the homes I said, "How long will I stay here?" They said, "You and Betty will only be here for a couple of days. Your mum and dad are coming to get you." Then it was a couple of weeks and then months and then years. We were still there. Then when we came out we made our own life. We went to work and did the best we could. Then when we came home we were determined that we would do the best we could with our families. I did not want my family going through the hurt and trauma that we went through.

As you grow older, you still feel like a young person is still there within you and it takes something like this to bring that child out again. My sister has gone but I do really think that she needs something for her family. I want something for her family

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Aunty Isabel, I will begin by saying thank you for sharing.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That's okay.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Over the course of today it was a really special experience for us and a real privilege for us to be able to be there. I know it was not an easy experience for you but I feel we really benefited from the experience. And Uncle Bob as well.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Just before we finish, this is the All One statement by the Coota girls themselves. I think you have got a copy of that. Some of those I want to be kept private. We can talk about that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is my question. Aunty Isabel, I know you do want some of that to be kept private.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We really do appreciate you sharing that with us. Can you talk about some of the things in that that you would like to be on the public record?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, certainly.

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: Can I just share with you a quick story?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Can you answer that question? She is asking would you like to tell us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Which parts of that statement would you like on the public record? Can you outline quickly for us which parts do you want in?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yeah, here, this one. All one statement. I will just read a little bit of it, if I am too long stop me. I probably will not stop:

> At this stage of our lives we need a support service rather than a counselling position. We need practical as well as social and emotional well-being support. For most of our lives our experiences have been denied by Government and we have been left to manage the best way we could, by relying on each other and using our own resources. Through the years counselling service including psychiatrists and psychologists have not been able to fully understand or comprehend our experiences. Mainstream education does not prepare counsellors to understand our human experiences. The "Bringing them home" counselling program has been of limited use in meeting our needs. In the decades since the "Bringing them home" report was released we have not been consulted in relation to what our needs are as the first generation to be recognised as being forcibly removed from our families, communities, land and culture. Because of the human rights abuses perpetrated against us by governments and their departments, forcible removal and a range of other abuses, many of us dislike having to deal with representatives and employees of the Government. For many of us our first instinct is to avoid this wherever possible. Some of us remain isolated from the families and communities we were removed from. Many of us have not been able to gain access to the information and support we need to locate our families and communities. Others have found that reunions were graveside ones, others have been returned to families and communities only to face non-acceptance. Our families have to suffer the consequences of our removal too, not only for the effect it has on us and our parenting but on their own connections to land, culture, community, language and everything else that was taken away from us when we were removed. They have lost the same things we did and they struggle in the same we do.
>
> ... For different reasons many of us remain silent about what happened to us. Some of us tried to protect our families from the knowledge of what happened to us, even though we thought we were protecting our children ... and the effects of what happened. When we remained silent our children were unable to understand us and thought we were uncaring parents. Not all of us are comfortable with having to explain our stories in order to gain verification of our Aboriginality or to gain access to Aboriginal health, housing and other services. While many of us may have found ourselves isolated within both the mainstream and Aboriginal populations we have remained connected to each other and provided each other with a powerful and effective form of support over the years. We consider ourselves to be our own community. The best and utmost support has always come from each other as Cootamundra survivors. We are a strong group of survivors who are now ready to accept support from the Government to maintain and strengthen our bonds. In 2013 former residents formed the Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation. It aims to ensure the social, emotional and spiritual well-being of former residents of the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Girls, 1912 to 1968, their families and generations.

Thank you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I notice in the newspapers today the Federal Government is setting aside hundreds of millions of dollars for children who have been sexually abused in schools and government children's homes.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes. It happened.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Should that be extended to include Aboriginal children?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Yes, it happened.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The fund is being set up where you can then put your claim into the fund. You think that may be the way to go?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Yes, that'd be good.

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: Some of you may wonder why there was no recourse for people to appeal against their kids being taken from them. I will give you an example of what used to happen in the courts. They are relatives of mine. Mother and father worked on the farm. Mum worked in the house, she done the cooking, all the housework, looked after the kids etcetera. The father worked on the farm. The farmer paid in kind with a sheep here and there and all that sort of stuff: half money and half compensation in other ways. The farmer used to go into town once a week and go to the gentleman's club. The father used to go into town with him on occasions and go to the pub and have a couple of bets on the horses with the local SP bookmaker. A schilling each way this and a schilling each way that. This particular day these two good ol' boys were giving him a hard time. He thought I'll go down to the next pub to get away from this. He got to the door and one of them is on his back. He could handle himself, the father, and he turned around and he give the two good ol' boys some nice old how do you do, give them a good hiding, both of them. Someone called the police.

The police came and they are going to take the father away. The publican said, "No, don't take him, take these other two blokes, they started it." The police ignored him and took the father away. That was on the Saturday. On the Sunday the local family welfare man was at church and he heard this story about this mad black went off his head and bashed these two poor fellas up. Who were they? Found out all about it. On the Monday the father had to go to court. The publican went with him as support. The farmer went with him as support. The mother came in to the court. The farmer's wife came into the court. The kids went to school as they normally go. The family welfare man went out to the school and lifted the two boys from the school and took them back in and they were charged with being in neglect and they were sent to Kinchela Boys' Home for five years each. The same magistrate who found the father not guilty that day on neglecting his kids sent those kids to Kinchela for five years. That is what happened in the courts. Same magistrate, Simon Bakers.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: This inquiry is looking into reparations and what more we can do. I am incredibly grateful for the honesty with which we have interacted today and with everything you have said to us privately as well as this afternoon. We are already looking at how we can progress that. I am interested in one issue, which was after the report came out, not in New South Wales, but federally, it took a little longer for a public acknowledgment and a public apology. I was wondering if you would like to say a little bit about the importance to you of the acknowledgment and the apology?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Mr Rudd cared. I was real happy when he said that. My world come together. I never heard a white person say sorry to the Aboriginal people. We were so proud.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: We were so happy to think it came from the Government. That was a start anyway but nothing came from that apology.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Not a thing.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Here we are today, 2015.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You do not just want words you want action?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Yeah, action and that.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: We have had all that, I am sick of talking. I think they know what we want and the Government needs to—well, it has been a black Government for a long time, I am sorry to say, and I think it is about time they come to the party.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Just following on from Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's question.

CHAIR: Aunty Doreen, did you have something to say?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: This all-one statement from us, that we put together, we put in what we wanted, you know.

CHAIR: You did that after a meeting in Sydney?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Yes.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Yes, we did.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: We done that.

CHAIR: That was organised by the Federal Government, which brought you altogether in 2010, is that right?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Yes, but we updated that. We updated the all-one statement, what we wanted.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yeah.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: What we wanted.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yeah, it was all documented.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: It was all documented and everything, yes.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: There is a lot of stuff in that, too.

CHAIR: I am just clarifying, you said no action had happened since the "Bringing them home" report. You have informed us that there was a meeting in Sydney in 2010 when you were brought together and you had an expectation that something would come of that?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, we did.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Nothing since then.

CHAIR: You put together your position, but then nothing came after that.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That is right, yes.

CHAIR: Was that the Federal Government?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: It was the "Bringing them home" position.

CHAIR: We might ask some further questions about that. When we were at the home, Uncle Bob mentioned that there was a sign on the wall. Can someone repeat what that sign said?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: You were in the home.

CHAIR: You saw it every day. Are you able to tell us?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yes, every day.

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: There was a slab of wood on the wall in the—what they called the common room or something.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Yeah.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Yeah.

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: It was burned in with a hot iron: Act white. Think white. Be white. That was there for the girls. That was the motto for the girls to read each day.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That is what we had to read.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: And Brainwashed us. Brainwashed us.

CHAIR: So you were not allowed to be Aboriginal?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: No.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: No.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That was the idea but they failed completely, didn't they?

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: They took everything.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: They failed completely.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: They tried. They could not take away the black skin, but. That is where they—

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Failed.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: That is where they failed, and I am proud of my black skin. Black is beautiful.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: That's right.

CHAIR: Unfortunately, we have run out of time.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That's okay.

CHAIR: It has been an amazing experience to be here with you and to spend the time with you today. Unfortunately our plane was late but we have had some time and it has been important for us at the beginning of this inquiry to have time with you and to hear your stories. You have not heard the last of us.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: That's good.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Can I just read this from the all-one statement?

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Yeah.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: "The loss, grief and trauma experienced by Aboriginal people as a result of the separation laws, policies and practices can never be adequately compensated. The loss of the love and affection of children and parents cannot be compensated. The psychological, physical and sexual abuse of children, isolated among adults who viewed them as members of a 'despised race' cannot be adequately compensated. The trauma resulting from these events have produced lifelong effects, not only for the survivors, but for their children and their children's children. The loss of Aboriginal identity, culture, heritage, community and spiritual connection to our country cannot be adequately compensated."

CHAIR: Thank you all very much for sharing your stories with us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Before we go, I would like to say to Uncle Bob, I know we were going to hear from you directly, but we did not get a chance. We can ask to put things on notice or for you to come back to us. You have had limited time with us today, but if there is anything you think about when you go away, whether you want it to be confidential or not, I would really like you to feel free to let us know.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That goes for all of you. You might go way and think, "I wish I had said something else." You can write it down on paper and we will put that in as part of your evidence.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is there a time limit?

CHAIR: No, we are accepting submissions. It also means that if you are speaking to anyone else who has a story, or if anyone in the audience today has a way of getting the word out to other people, let them know that they can write to us and tell us their story.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Write to where?

CHAIR: Write to Parliament. If you send it to the stolen generations inquiry, New South Wales Parliament, Sydney, it will get there. There are phone numbers and contacts that are available if anyone wants to follow that up. You can look at the website. There is information on the table. We want to hear from people. We know that you are probably the best people who can get the message out there to let people know that we are listening. We agree, it is time to make sure that these wrongs are recognised and we can provide you with the support that you need. Thank you very much.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Thank you for listening.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: Thank you.

UNCLE BOB GLANVILLE: You have done well, ladies.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You did very well.

CHAIR: You have done very well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: If there was sexual abuse, did anyone go to the royal commission into sexual abuse?

AUNTY ISABEL REID: No.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Maybe you could send some papers to them as well.

AUNTY SHIRLEY McGEE: Okay.

AUNTY DOREEN WEBSTER: We just pray you have something for us next time we hear from you.

AUNTY ISABEL REID: Thank you very much for taking the time.

CHAIR: You will hear from us again and we are happy to hear more information from you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

JENNIFER BELL, Medical Director, Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation,

MARGARET ROBERTS, Mental Health Worker, Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation,

RAY AHMAT, Programs Manager, Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, and

JOANNE TAYLOR, Bringing them Home worker, Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: I welcome our next witnesses. It is a pleasure to be here in Wagga Wagga and to have you all appearing before us for this important inquiry. This afternoon we have representatives from the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation and the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service.

Dr BELL: Public speaking is not my forte but I do have an opening statement. I promise to stop at the dotted lines on the second page. The rest of it covers some points I would like to bring up but I thought I might get too tongue-tied in the course of this hearing so the Committee members can take a copy of this home to read. First of all, I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Wiradjuri people and pay my respects to the elders both past and present. I have been the Medical Director of the Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation [RivMed] since 2003. For the 21 years prior to that I was a partner in a medical practice which had a significant number of Aboriginal people attending. Consequently I have had the privilege of knowing many Aboriginal people and some Torres Strait Islanders, including extended families and multiple generations over this period of time.

I have been asked to speak on behalf of RivMed today. I want the Committee to know that I feel uncomfortable about doing this—I do not feel I have the right to do so as I am not Aboriginal myself. However, I have consulted with Aboriginal colleagues at the service. They have given me permission to speak and have assured me that they will be here both to support me and to contribute to the discussion if they want to. Karen Smith is the human resources manager at RivMed. Whilst her family, to her knowledge, has not been part of the stolen generations she has extensive knowledge of her community, including her experience of working at Centrelink for many years. Karen is sitting quietly in the gallery behind us. Jennifer Dredge is a substance abuse worker at RivMed. Unfortunately she was unable to attend today. Margaret Roberts, sitting beside me, is a mental health worker at RivMed. Both Margaret and Jennifer are members of the stolen generations. I did not even know this myself until I started asking questions last week in preparation for today.

One concern I had was that, as this is an inquiry, the Committee might ask me to give the facts and figures on the number of clients we have who are from the stolen generations, whether it be first, second, third or fourth generation. I am not able to give the Committee those statistics. Why have we not been keeping those statistics? Because in an Aboriginal medical service much time is spent on recording data in fields from which it can be retrieved. We certainly use it as the basis for internal quality improvement activities. Aboriginal medical services have a high burden of reporting anyway. So we need to be accountable to our funding bodies and we hope that such data can justify continued funding for service provision.

So should we have a field for routinely recording whether clients are from the stolen generations? We could ask the question of all clients upon registration or we could just tick a box in the same way as we do for Aboriginality, gender and postcode—as well as all the other questions we ask and the activities we record in fields so that we can retrieve this information. Theoretically that is easy to do. But I think not, because I think it would be insensitive and intrusive. I dislike sweeping general statements but I am about to make some. I think there are many people affected by being part of the stolen generation, referred to as gen one. Many people are not able to talk about it. They keep it to themselves. They will discuss it when they feel the time is right. It is private. There is shame attached to it and there are trust issues.

I can really only recall two persons, both of whom I had known for a number of years, on separate occasions quietly sitting down with me and telling me in detail of their experience of being removed from their family and placed in a State-run institution. I do not know why they chose to do that on the days that they did. It was not relevant to the reasons for the consultations. They must have just felt the time was right and trusted me enough to share their experience. They just wanted me to understand the trauma that they each had experienced.

At other times it can be brought to the surface when a person is living through a particularly stressful time. There is a ripple effect passed on through the descendants of gen one. There can be dysfunction, anger and guilt in families where some children were removed and other siblings were not, for whatever reason. This week

as part of my research I asked someone whom I have known for 30 years—I have looked after generations of her family—whether the stolen generation had affected her family. She quietly said yes—her mother. The story was that both her parents were Aboriginal. But she said they never visited her mother's family. These children are now all in their sixties and seventies. The mother never spoke of her time in the home. They only found out when one brother decided to trace the family tree on both the maternal and paternal sides after the parents had passed on. The mother was the only one taken from her family. They do not know why, but she was. So even though they have met extended family members of the mother since her death, they do not feel as though they belong. The brother was trying to find out more information from an elderly aunt and was told firmly not to dig up old bones. So it can be very difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to find out family information from living relatives. Of course when they pass on, that knowledge is lost.

It does affect mental health and it has affected educational opportunities. I remember one man who needed Centrelink papers filled out because he wanted a disability pension. For some reason he had actually been knocked back before. He was only transient to our service, but I had the documentation of his cardiac bypass surgery the year before. He was diabetic. He was a year older than I am. I was sitting there as the doctor. He was a man who had worked all his life. He had been taken from his family at the North Coast and placed with an Aboriginal family somewhere in the Central West. But, as he said, "Why did they take me away from my country? There were relatives I could have gone to."

But the thing that really struck me, because I have a passion for education, is that here was I, brought up in Sydney at that time, went through stable primary school and high school, university—I am a doctor; I can work as long as I like as long as I keep my marbles—and this man had worked hard but always manual sort of work. So I asked him the question, "If they are insisting that you retrain, how much formal education have you had?" And he said, "Oh, sixth class. At the school I went to they did not want to teach us, so we just kept repeating the work for the next two years." So two extra years of doing sixth class work until he was old enough to leave and make his way in the world—such a difference in opportunity between the two of us. Ms Roberts, do you have anything that you would like to add?

Ms ROBERTS: No.

Dr BELL: No. That is it.

Mr AHMAT: I am Ray Ahmat. Like we said before, firstly we would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are at this meeting this afternoon and show our respect to elders past and present. We would also like to acknowledge the members of the stolen generation and families that are here today. We are honoured that we have come here today to share the experience of the stolen generation. Albury-Wodonga is a settlement area. Therefore there are a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the area. They are very diverse—in particular, the stolen generation survivors who come from all States and Territories. So Ms Taylor deals with people from Alice Springs—everywhere. It is sort of a bit full on.

Ms Taylor started the program by introducing our community to family history and has developed that as a core component of her work with the clients. She sees many stolen generation survivor family members. What I noticed today was when the stolen generation elders were talking about their issues, the transgenerational families, one and two, have got just as many issues that have bounced off the stolen generation. Coming down that track there you have got another thing coming up behind the stolen generations. Again that leads to alcohol abuse, inability to settle and all that sort of stuff. We are trying our best to get it, but it needs to be recognised that there are still effects on the stolen generation families. Ms Taylor started with us in 2009 as a Bringing Them Home [BTH] counselling worker. She has been there since the day we started the BTH program. I will hand over to her and she can give you some stats and tell you how she has been going with the program.

Ms TAYLOR: I have just made notes of what I do with the clients and the activities and the projects that I do, if you want me to—

CHAIR: If you have written information that you would like to submit, that is possible.

Ms TAYLOR: Okay. So did you want me to just go through what I have got or would you like to ask questions? I am not sure how you want—

CHAIR: If you have got something written down then we can receive that.

Ms TAYLOR: Okay.

CHAIR: That would be great. Perhaps to have some interaction might be more valuable for us here today, because we have just heard from Mr Ahmat what your organisation is involved in. So if you are okay with that, we will have questions.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, that is fine.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You can summarise what you have got there, if you like.

Ms TAYLOR: I will try to read what I have got. As Mr Ahmat—Uncle Ray—mentioned, I have been there since 2009. I have been working with the stolen generation survivors and their families since 1998 in different roles, so I have been doing this quite a lot. When I came to Albury-Wodonga they told me that there were no stolen generations people here and I said, "Well, there must be, because they have gotten funding for my position." So that is why we have created the book that we have given you and our DVD, just to educate and promote stolen generations issues. It was also a healing tool for the survivors—I refer to them as survivors when I give my presentation—their story and their journey of healing. So that is what I have given you. I hope you are able to take it away and read it and view the video.

Since I started I have seen stolen generations survivors. There have been 20 females and only seven males. That has been a big part of my talking to Uncle Ray about how we can engage men and give their stories. That has been an issue in itself. We would like to develop a program that will hopefully encourage some of the uncles to come forward to share their stories. I have seen seven children of stolen generations people and 13 of their grandchildren that have come through with issues being passed down. I do a lot of family history research. There have been 58 people come through with family history—people are disassociated from their Aboriginal heritage and it is not specifically stolen generations issues; there are other reasons why.

In 2010 I started the stolen generations support group which is called the True Australian Aboriginal Survivors Group. We meet every second Friday. We do social activities, cultural activities and healing activities. For social activities we go ten-pin bowling, we do scrapbooking and jewellery making—which sound like fun, but for a member of the stolen generations just to get out of the house for those four hours is a big deal and a big step in their healing. So it is really important that we do the social activities. Cultural activities include basket weaving and cultural workshops. We talk about their identity and what it is like to be an Aboriginal person. We talk about the different tribes. We watch different Aboriginal movies. We go to the different dances when they are on, and there are lots of different cultural activities. I try to do those sorts of activities as well. In the healing component we have done the Red Dust workshops and the Marumali program that is specifically stolen generations.

Coming from my background of family history research, that was the main core component when I came to start my role as the BTH worker/counsellor. I am not a qualified counsellor yet. I am in the middle of my diploma of counselling so next year I will be qualified. I think that is the issue with the Bringing Them Home workers or counsellors—we are not qualified counsellors. That is an issue in itself. When I first came I started doing family history with a lot of the clients and the community because of belonging and identity. As the aunties were saying, they did not know where their people were from. When Aboriginal people meet we will say, "Who is your mob? Where you from, Sis?" They do not have that connection.

Doing family history research was something that I thought was vital from the get-go, so we did. I got some funding and we went up to Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and we went to places like Mitchell Library, State Records, the Archives, Koorie heritage trusts, and births, deaths and marriages to get records. That was overwhelming for me. It was empowering for the survivors to research their own family history and to find records about themselves but also, very importantly, about their people—their grandparents, their mothers and fathers. That was so successful.

~cont/EN

<10>

These are the types of programs that they want to continue on. They want me to take them to do all of this. I can do it for them but I think they have a sense of pride when they go into the library. Some of them have never been to a library before. Probably you know the Mitchell Library, they will just "Wow". How exciting that they were there and they were treated as VIP clients, customers, and they found family history documents and also other historical documents about where they were from so that was really powerful.

Another successful program that we got funding for is I have called it back to country or the institutions. Clients were able to come to me, would have yarn up of where they wanted to go, what they wanted to do, who they were going to take. We helped eight stolen generations survivors, take their family back to either their country of birth, where their people were from, where they were removed or the institution where they were placed. So sometimes they didn't know or they didn't want to go back, or they didn't feel comfortable going back home to country, but they wanted to take their children, say, back up to Cootamundra Girls Home and show them where exactly, and what they did. Once again that was a really powerful program that we ran.

All good feedback—some negative things came about that and we have been addressing those. So they got a pre, sort of, yarning counselling session, and a post yarning counselling session. So when they came back I had a yarn with them—how did it go? How did it feel? I offered a sketch pad, a journal, the disposable cameras so they can record that journey and they could share it with their family and that was really well received. Are there any questions before I go on? I have got another page.

CHAIR: Where did your funding come? How adequate is the funding received for the amount of work that you could be doing?

Ms TAYLOR: When I first came, the CEO said, "This is a new position. We don't have much money. There's your bucket of money so go and do your job." I'm like, okay, this is what I want to do, that's not enough, so I just started researching where could I get funding. Albury City has been wonderful. The Healing Foundation has been fantastic. Unfortunately a lot of them are just a one-off grant and it is not continuing. So all these programs that I am going to share, they have been, they're done, they have been successful, it's fantastic but it's happened once and it's stopped because of the funding. That is one of the issues that I will bring up later.

I can see the benefits of the stolen generations, the families can see the benefits, the change, and you will see from watching the film how coming to the group, and going and doing activities empowers them. It is fantastic and unfortunately all these things, yes, they have stopped, they are on hold because of funding, and my small budget that I get can only go so far.

CHAIR: Is that Federal Government funding?

Ms TAYLOR: Yes.

CHAIR: For a small part of your position that is then supplemented?

Mr AHMAT: We have to acknowledge the Healing Foundation in Canberra has been really, really good. Unfortunately they can't get funding. But they have been really working proactively with us.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: You mentioned a number of people who you have seen that are second and third generation survivors. Will you talk about some of the challenges and issues they are dealing with and you are working with them on?

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, I guess a lot is that they have come in and said, "I've just found out that mum is a stolen generations person. I don't know what that means because she hasn't said anything more. What does that mean?" So we have a yarn about what it means and some of the policies why they were removed. Then they have a bit more of an understanding and then they are like, "What can I do now to help mum?" And it makes sense so they will say, "Well that makes sense now that I know what actually could have happened." They are more aware and how they can help their parents now. I mean it sometimes is too late because people have passed away but they have a better understanding.

Yes, I think there just needs to be more programs or more support for those second and third generations. People sometimes don't know their tribe. They don't know how to be an Aboriginal person and their identity and their belonging because that wasn't instilled with them when they were young from their parents. So it is very hard. So I encourage them to come along to the medical service and embrace their culture, and learn and those types of things, and come to the programs. If their parents can't or don't know how, then they are looking for somebody else to give them some education. Within our group we encourage that survivors bring their children, their families, their partners. Partners are often left out in a lot of things because sometimes they haven't been told what has happened and they're, sort of, not understanding as well. That's why in what I do I encourage families to come along and learn more about the stolen generations issues and what's happened to them. They have suffered a lot of trauma as well.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Ms Taylor, as you heard earlier from the Chair you can make further submissions. If those people with whom you have had interactions or experiences have their own story, please ask them also to write to the Committee about their experience as a survivor or a victim.

Ms TAYLOR: I certainly will, yes.

CHAIR: If they want their submission kept confidential the Committee can to do that. Some people are willing to share but whatever is right for them.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes. I guess too, on their behalf, it is just like someone to talk to that understands and knows what they're talking about. Like Aunty said, they don't go and see mainstream counsellors because they don't know really about stolen generations people. We have a psychologist working at the Aboriginal Health Service with us. I want him to do some training with me and to come to the group and get to know a bit more of the effects and trauma that they have suffered so when they are able to go and talk to him, he has a bit more understanding and awareness. That is what we are trying to do where we are. That goes for every, I guess, non-indigenous staff. They do an hour with me, go through any trauma and questions. I get them to watch our video because they are going to be clients that they are going to see, and we have a bit of a yarn. So they have got a bit more understanding of what they have gone through.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As a BTH counselling, are you funded through that?

Ms TAYLOR: I am a bringing them home [BTH] worker. I cannot call myself a counsellor until I get qualified.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you know how many other people around New South Wales do your job? Do you ever speak to any other people working in that space?

Ms TAYLOR: Every three months we go up to Sydney. The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council run a regional program and get all the BTH workers there. They go to Sydney for three or four days. We meet, we have workshops.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Roughly how many?

Ms TAYLOR: I cannot give you that answer but around Australia generally there is over 200, yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are a lot of the issues that other workers raise in your meetings similar to what you experience at Albury-Wodonga?

Ms TAYLOR: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are they issues with funding and with the second and third generations?

Ms TAYLOR: It is that second and third generation, Aboriginality in general, funding, ongoing funding, support and understanding from mainstream organisations of actually what we do and how it impacts on the community, not just stolen generations survivors' families, but the whole of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Mr AHMAT: Even with the funding of the BTH, we are pretty lucky, we got three years out of the primary Cabinet stuff to 2018, some of them missed, some of them got one year. It's not really nice really.

Ms TAYLOR: I come from a family history background and I have done this for 17 or 18 years. Some of the Bringing Them Home [BTH] workers are local people in the regions who have just started. They are interested, but they do not have many qualifications or experience in this very specific emotional field. So training and support needs a bit more improvement.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Ms Taylor, you mentioned the mainstream organisations, support and so forth. I am curious about the level of knowledge about the stolen generation in the public arena.

Ms TAYLOR: I can only speak about the region I work in. There is little knowledge. I do a lot of presentations and show my video. I take a few of the aunties with me to tell their story. I go to councils, universities and TAFEs, and the Department of Human Services to give presentations about who are the stolen generations. We are here as a group to talk about what we do and the effect it has. We have a lot of nursing students and doctors come through our organisation. Everyone has an hour with me and I go through the program with them. We are trying to educate people and promote stolen generations issues. It is hard. My region is very proactive. The Albury City Council is very supportive of what we do. They have given funding and we are in talks about a memorial. They are very engaged, not only with stolen generations issues but also with the Aboriginal community itself. I cannot speak for Wagga Wagga or anyone else. That is what we are doing in our region.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What kind of memorial are they looking at doing? Can you explain a bit more about that?

Ms TAYLOR: They have the design. They have had consultations with Aboriginal artists and stolen generations groups. We have sat down five times and talked about what they would like to see and the meaning. We have gone from the first step all the way through to what they want to see and how important it is. They want it to be where everybody can see it and view it, not only at the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Medical Service. They want it to be something of significance for the community. It has a story, but it is hard to explain. They have done the design. Albury City Council is working with us to get the funding so we can erect it at the botanical gardens in Albury so everybody can enjoy it. It will have a plaque explaining it. There is a story with it. It is not a totem pole; it is like a big circular pole with different elements.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Obviously each area would need their own. It is this idea of memorialising it in close consultation with the relevant people, but having something on the public record for everybody to see.

Ms TAYLOR: People were saying it would be at the back of the Aboriginal health service. But they said, no, they wanted everybody to see it. It is an Australia-wide issue; it is not just an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issue. It is Australia's issue. Everybody in Australia needs to be aware of this and acknowledge it. They are the words coming from them; they want to share it with everybody.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You said that when you went to Albury-Wodonga they said there were no stolen children. How many have you identified in Albury-Wodonga?

Ms TAYLOR: I have seen 27, but there are many more who have not presented themselves as being stolen generations people. A lot of people come and say, "Have you talked to uncle or aunty so and so?" I say that I cannot approach them. I do a lot of promotional activities and I am seen in the community. I think people are sick of me doing my talks everywhere and showing the video and the book and getting them to come and have a yarn. I cannot force people to come to see me. At the moment it seems like there are not very many. I have identified 27 that I have seen over the years. But there are so many more out there.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Do you feel they have a sense of being ashamed?

Ms TAYLOR: Definitely, and especially the men. As I said, I have only seen seven males in my time. I believe there are many more males out there. I have asked people whether it is because I am female and they might want to talk to a male. I am working with our mental health worker to develop some sort of program to encourage them to come and talk. I want to talk to a couple of the other BTH workers who are male to see if they can come to Albury and have some sort of day. I have been trying to nut it out and get ideas. We want to encourage people to come forward.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Committee held a public hearing in Sydney yesterday and we heard from people from various departments, including the Department of Family and Community Services and NSW Health. One of the questions related to data about how many are involved. It has been one of the ongoing issues with this inquiry and with the stolen generation for a long time. Dr Bell, you said you would not want to include a box because you would not want to be insensitive. I would imagine that if you did decide to include that box not everyone who was affected would tick it. Do you think that if you had that box you would get the information, or would it still be very difficult to work out exactly how many have been affected that use your service?

Dr BELL: I think it would still be very difficult. I have been reflecting on this. One of the issues is that we find these things out, but they tend to go in the progress notes and not in a field where they can be extracted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is what the departmental officers said.

Dr BELL: One of the things that I will take away after preparing for this experience is the need to look at formalising how we can record it. I can certainly reel off a list of names of first generation, second generation, or third generation people. However, we have not actually taken the step of putting them in a little box. I am afraid I was almost being facetious when I said, "Come in and register and tick whether you are stolen generation or not." That is totally wrong. The other issue, as always, is educating anyone who has clinical contact or who is part of the social, emotional, wellbeing and family health team to record that data. That is a real organisational cultural thing, not an Aboriginal cultural thing. We could change and get that done.

Ms ROBERTS: I was looking for my family through Link-Up (NSW). I was not taken by the welfare; I was left at the hospital. My mother knew my real name, which was Margaret Cruse. She was also taken away and put in Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Training Home. Then her nine children were taken from her. We were all put in homes, but the issue was the way they recorded how we were put there—whether she left us at the hospital or whether the welfare picked us up. It was about where we were when we were taken. Because the Link-Up statistics did not record me as a stolen generation person, I was not allowed to get my records. But despite that I am stolen. I was put in a home after the hospital and adopted out to a white family. I met my mother at Junee jail. I was a correctional officer at Junee jail and she walked in. I also met my brother. That is how I met them. She came in to visit my brother who was in B-pod. That is how I met them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You did not know before that that he was your brother?

Ms ROBERTS: No, I knew the name and I put two and two together. You just had to look at Margaret to know that she was my mother. She has now passed away. There are varying degrees of "stolen" generation.

CHAIR: That is something that is so important. It is in some of the reports and writings but getting an understanding of whether or not we are ever going to know how many people's lives have been affected and whether or not support can be offered?

Ms ROBERTS: I wanted to find my—because I just found my welfare file—I wanted to get Margaret's and I am not allowed to unless I prove—I was not allowed to get her death certificate even though I am her daughter. It is proven I have the original statement in the welfare file I have to state that I am her daughter. It was about me wanting my history and her history and where she came from.

CHAIR: Are you able to put this in some writing to send to us? That is an important issue that we could follow up on?

Dr BELL: I have also alluded to it in my submission.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What is the reason they gave you?

Ms ROBERTS: Because I am not next of kin.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: They cannot say privacy.

Ms ROBERTS: I am not her next of kin.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: She is not related in the documents.

Ms ROBERTS: Even though in my welfare file I am her daughter. I know of other people who are not stolen generation who have gone and got their relatives, their aunty's, death certificate and they have been allowed to, yet they are saying no to me.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You could send a note to the Committee and we could take that up with the privacy commission.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you have a birth certificate, or not?

Ms ROBERTS: I do but it is in Roberts, in my adopted name.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Has it got your mum's name on it? I am curious. We can talk off-line about that.

Ms ROBERTS: No, I do not. I have got in my welfare file where she is Margaret assigned me to the documents.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think it is those sorts of anomalies we can be looking at.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Absolutely. I have two questions. The first is to you Ms Taylor, about the idea of whether survivors of the stolen generations, or associated second and third generations, have feedback about whether women prefer to talk to women and men prefer to talk to men. Do you have any anecdotal evidence of that or is that something you are still pursuing?

Ms TAYLOR: When I do have a male coming with me I do ask them do they feel comfortable in talking with me or would they like to speak to a male. Generally they are, oh, no, you are right. Not necessarily from male and female but I have come across, "Oh, you are young. You don't know anything about it. Were you taken?" I am like, "No, I wasn't, but three of my grandparents were taken and I still suffer the effects." Then I tell them this is what I have done in my career as a job. But they see me as you are too young, you do not know what we have been through and you are too young to know what's going on. Once I tell them my history then they are like, "Oh, okay, you do understand, so, we will talk to you." I guess I have a lot of training behind me but for some other BTH workers that do not know they may come up with those issues. At the moment if there is a male—I have not come across a male that did not want to talk to me. If there was I guess I would see if my manager would speak to them or our mental health worker or refer them to a male BTH worker.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that a lot of what you are doing is actually about getting people to come to you. It is about making that face of who they are coming to as—attractive is the wrong word—but that is what I mean, most likely for them to come and have the conversation?

Ms TAYLOR: I have been down to our Men's Shed we have a couple of times and introduced myself and what I do. I have got talking to people generally. I am going to where they are and taking a male with me. I know there is a lot out there in our community that has not come forward and I will be happy to hear of any other ideas that people can share with me because I know there is a lot of males and I feel seven is not good enough and I know there is more out there.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I cannot tell you how much the proactive work of everyone here today is so important on the ground. We can make all the recommendations we like but the work you are doing is making a humungous difference.

Mr AHMAT: I run the whole BTH and run about nine programs but we all support BTH as one. So, Joe has a bloke or male that wants to talk to mental health or drug and alcohol, they are there. We're doing sorry day, apology day, the whole team chucks in and helps out, that's how we operate.

Ms TAYLOR: I think too how we work is that we have an intake system where we do have a form and we do ask the question and they do tick a box. It is only so we can help them further. A lot of the times I've seen clients where they have a referral from the mental health or drug and alcohol. They have those issues and when they talk further with those workers, "Oh, you are a stolen gen." Then they'll come and see me. Sometimes I am the third person they get to speak to, not the first person. It may take years to get to that point. It is a process. I am there ready when they are ready to come through. I am not the first point of call, so to speak. If you know what I mean. It is a process.

CHAIR: We are at the end of our time. Thank you all so much. We could spend a lot of time here. As I said before if anyone wishes to write to us with more information, any detail you can give us about your work or personal experiences is helpful to us. It has been a real honour to be here with all of you today and to hear from you. We want to keep the communication going, so spread the word if you can.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We might have more questions we will send to you as well.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 4.46 pm.)