

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 3

INQUIRY INTO POLICE RESOURCES IN CABRAMATTA

¾¾¾

At Cabramatta R. S. L. Club Ltd, Canley Vale, on Monday 7 May 2001

¾¾¾

The Committee met at 2.15 p.m.

¾¾¾

PRESENT

The Hon. Helen Sham-Ho (Chair)

The Hon. R. H. Colless

The Hon. R. D. Dyer

The Hon. G. S. Pearce

Ms Lee Rhiannon

The Hon. I. W. West

RICHARD DEKKER

VINCENT DOAN

MARIA LENA HEGGIE

DEAN NEWBOLD

THANG NGO

FRANCESCO ANTONIO (FRANK) REITANO

ALI SARFRAZ

PETER STARR

SEANG TAING

JENNY TEW

JACKIE THAI

ROSS TREYVAUD

ROBERT WATKINS

JANET WEISMANTEL

CHAIR: I would like to welcome all of you to this consultation. Before we commence, I would like to briefly outline the purpose and process of this afternoon's consultation. After today's proceedings the Committee will be receiving evidence from some senior representatives of the New South Wales Police Service, over two days, Friday 11 May and Monday 14 May. The officers to give evidence will be Assistant Commissioner Small, Commander Hansen and Crime Manager Wallace, on 11 May, and Deputy Commissioner Jarratt, on 14 May. The Committee will then commence deliberations in advance of reporting to Parliament.

Prior to commencing those deliberations, however, I wanted to ensure that members of the Cabramatta community had another opportunity to address the Committee or to make submissions. That is the main reason for today's consultation. Secondly, though, I am particularly anxious to make sure the Committee has heard the views of the community about the initiatives for Cabramatta announced by the Premier on 27 March. It is important that we know what the community thinks about those initiatives, as we will no doubt be discussing those initiatives in our forthcoming report to Parliament.

In terms of the process for the consultation, I should emphasise that this is not a formal Committee hearing. Those addressing the Committee will not be giving sworn evidence. It will be a little less formal than our ordinary committee hearings. That should ensure that everyone who wants to address the Committee is able to do so. At the same time, however, as this is not a formal hearing, I would caution those who speak not to say anything that could possibly be construed as defamatory. In other words, you do not have privilege.

I would ask that those addressing the Committee begin by clearly stating your name and, if you are representing an organisation, the name of that organisation as well. In view of the number of people here, I would ask that you limit your statements to about five minutes. If you are more than five minutes, I will give you a gong and you will then finish within two minutes. Feel quite free to tell the Committee your view. Committee members will ask questions anyway. There are familiar faces and a few unfamiliar faces. Those who are coming here for the first time I would like to go first, because we already know the views of the people we have already heard.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: My name is Frank Reitano. I am a Detective Senior Constable from Green Valley police station. I come here today as a concerned citizen and also as a police officer. I lived and grew up in the Cabramatta area. My mother and other members of my family still live here in Cabramatta. We have been here since 1972 and have seen the area go through a vast transformation. Also, I come here as a police officer. I am greatly concerned by a number of organisational factors which I see as being the direct cause of the problems which have occurred in Cabramatta. I would like to briefly discuss each of those factors. But, prior to that, I have forwarded a submission to the inquiry. I did so last week. Has that submission been received?

CHAIR: Is that the submission that I am showing you?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: That is correct, that is my submission. Can I indicate that this stage that within that submission are a number of confidential matters that I would like to be kept that way. Also, there is one section which I would like to amend. Is it appropriate to do that now, or at some other time?

CHAIR: You might do that now. I have only the one copy. The other members of the Committee do not have a copy.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Is the amendment a significant one or a simple one?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: There are three sections that I would like to keep confidential. The amendment is on page 75, the last paragraph. That is the only thing I want to amend.

CHAIR: To clarify the situation: the Committee will move that the submission will be received now. But, as to your amendment, we would like you to write to us telling us which part is to be amended and which parts are to be kept confidential. I would not like you to talk to this omission thoroughly at this point of time, because unfortunately we do not have the time.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Madam Chair, from what he is saying, I think he has only one amendment.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: There is only one amendment, and there are three sections that I would like to keep confidential.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: You might nominate those sections.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: The sections are: page 25, paragraph 2—

CHAIR: I am sorry, but because we do not have five copies of the amendment, I cannot do that.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: He can tell us what they are.

CHAIR: You can say what it is. That would be easier.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Page 25, paragraph 2?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: Page 25, paragraph 2, the first sentence; page 26, paragraph 2, the first sentence; page 80, paragraph 2, from line 2, the words from "local" to "heroin". If they could be kept confidential. The section that I wish to amend is at page 75, the last paragraph: amend from "they have been transferred" to "they will be transferred shortly".

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Could you read out the whole paragraph as amended?

CHAIR: No. This is confidential.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: No, this is not confidential. This is the amendment.

CHAIR: Okay.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I do not have it in front of me, I am sorry. If I might briefly discuss the five factors—

CHAIR: Could you hold for a minute. Frank, the problem is you have submitted this document now to make it public, except for the sections that you want to be kept confidential. Is that correct?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: That is correct.

CHAIR: Unless the Committee members each have a copy, we cannot do that.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I understand that. I thought that would have been done last week.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: He can still make a statement, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: You can make a statement, and we will solve it later. You are making the statement as a submission, and we will decide what we will do later.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Madam Chair, I have some concerns, if the officer is going to speak at some length or in detail, about material that we have not seen.

CHAIR: He can make a statement. Whether it is related to the submission or not is up to him. But I think we will just table this for the time being. What the Committee wants to do with it, we will decide ourselves later.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: But he can make the statement now?

CHAIR: You can make your statement now.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: This is a very brief overview of the material that is contained in there. The five factors that have directly led to—

CHAIR: Frank, I just want to caution you again: this hearing is a very informal hearing, so there is no privilege and you cannot make a statement that is defamatory.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I understand that. These are not defamatory. These are organisational, structural matters that I am addressing, not individuals. The five factors are the crime agencies concept. Since 1997 this model has not performed effectively against the standards of world's best practice. It is an inferior response to the centralised specialist model of policing. Basically, the crime agencies model is a flawed concept. The second factor is the informant management plan. The current plan is cumbersome, and operational police are discouraged from using informants, thus ignoring a valuable resource to combat serious crime.

This Act is hindering the effective investigation of drug-related crime at a local level because of the stringent bureaucracy. The fourth factor is the promotion system. Since the police royal commission this system has divided and alienated police. It has provided a brittle honeycomb structure of management without the ability to focus on our core business of crime reduction. It is literally tearing police stations apart. The fifth factor is policing systems that ignore the drug problem. The commissioner's operations and crime review, the OCR process, totally ignores the figures in relation to drug crime. This has had a flow-on effect reaching down to the LAC via regional commands. To downplay drug crime ignores the fact that drugs are a catalyst for other types of crime. The Greater Hume region management's consequent failure to recognise the importance of drug-related crime has also been a factor. Each of these issues I discussed in detail in my submission. At this stage I would like to leave it at that, unless there are any questions.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: It is difficult to ask questions arising out of material we have not seen, but taking the police promotion system as an example, in a nutshell what is your grievance regarding that?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: The system is wide open to corruption. We spent \$80 million, \$120 million on the royal commission exposing corrupt police, yet we did absolutely nothing with the promotion system, or very little with the promotion system. It is wide open to favouritism. It is a subjective system of assessment: the relative worth of individuals is judged against each other. It does not positively measure merit. That is where the problems are coming in. We are having a totally inept and inadequate management; people promoted to those positions are well out of the depth. The way the system encourages people to rot the system. As very recently as last Sunday week there was an article in the paper about the way the promotion system is being rorted. I go into detail in my submission about the problems with the promotion system. I really emphasise what I said at the end of the section, that Parliament really need to consider conducting some sort of inquiry to get to the bottom of the promotion system because there are so many problems there. As I said before, it is literally ripping police stations apart.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Taking the assessment centre system as an example for the selection of executive level police, do I take it that you regard that process as unduly subjective, and you oppose it?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I have not been through the assessment centre myself. However, I obviously speak to a lot of people who have, and there are a lot of complaints at my level, at LAC level about the process.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: You are not arguing, though, I take it that we go back to promotion on mere seniority, are you?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: No. Merit is here to stay, but how many different ways are there of measuring merit? We need to try to put a quantitative figure on merit, and you can consider as many different factors as are appropriate to measure merit, but at the end of the day we need to be able to come up with scores for individuals so that they know exactly where they stand. You have only to look at what is happening with the Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal [GREAT]. There is that much antagonism about the system that it is absolutely inundated with appeals because not many people in the Police Service are satisfied with the present system

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Is that any different, though, from what would have happened over the years? GREAT has always had a large number of appeals awaiting hearing.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: Not as many as what we have now. It can take up to 12 months to fill the job from the time it is advertised, interviews and appeals to GREAT. That is just choking the Police Service.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: It is very difficult to intelligently pursue the matter in the absence of seeing what the officer is actually saying in his submission.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I am sorry about that. I sent that last Tuesday. It was there. I do not know why it has not been copied. If I had known, I would have made seven copies and sent seven copies. I apologise for that.

CHAIR: Because it is not a formal consultation in terms of the police alone, perhaps we should open it up a bit more. I am concerned about the operation and crime review. Can you explain to the Committee what your concern is with the OCR?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: Drug crime is not one of the focus points of the OCR process.

CHAIR: It is still not, at the moment?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I do not believe it is so at the moment, but it has been recognised now, especially at Greater Hume, that drug crime underpins most other crime that is occurring. For a long time it was not included as part of the OCR process, but at LAC level I can assure you that drug-related crime is regarded as the catalyst for armed robberies, break and enters,

motor vehicle theft and a large number of matters. At the time the management of the Greater Hume region did not appreciate the seriousness of drug crime. I have a copy of a report from 1988 in which we requested that a specialist regional drug unit be formed to tackle drug crime.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Is that 1998 or 1999?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: 1998. I have it here, if it is required.

CHAIR: Do you want to table that report?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I have it here.

CHAIR: It is an operational police report?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: It is a police report, yes.

CHAIR: Is it confidential?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I would rather that was treated that way, yes.

CHAIR: Do you want to table that report on a confidential basis?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I would like to, yes.

CHAIR: Perhaps this confidential report can be an addendum to your submission?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: Fine. I refer to it in the submission.

CHAIR: We will accept it on a confidential basis as an addendum to your submission.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: How confidential is this material? Does it name offenders, for example?

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: This particular report does not name offenders. It names the groups and there are also figures, statistics in there.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: I have a general concern regarding the form in which these proceedings are taking place. This, as I understand it, was intended to be a generalised informal community consultation. We have, in the past, as everyone knows, perhaps on eight or nine occasions, taken formal, sworn evidence from Deputy Commissioner Jarratt down to serving police officers in this area. However, they have been at formal hearings where we have taken sworn evidence and documents have been formally tendered. At the outset of these proceedings this afternoon you said, Madam Chair, that ideally witnesses should speak informally for about five minutes each. Anyone, including Officer Reitano, has the right to submit material to the Committee. However, we have the right to consider it in due and proper form. I am concerned that we are not really doing that at the moment.

CHAIR: Perhaps it is a little unusual that we would have submissions and the tabling of documents in an informal hearing. I make this exception in terms of the fact that you already have it here and you have already spoken to it. I will close that path because we do not have the time for you to present your submission. I will stop it at the point where you are talking about police matters specifically. I would prefer that you speak about community-related issues. If we have any more questions about your submission we might have further hearings. That is up to the Committee to decide.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I would also like to raise the fact that 11 other people are here. We should move on to allow others to speak.

CHAIR: We would take your confidential addendum to the submission. Unless you have a very important statement now we will have to move on.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I realise that I have left my submission too late in the day.

CHAIR: No, I accept it.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I would really welcome the opportunity to be able to give sworn evidence. There are a number of matters that I would love to bring up.

CHAIR: I will leave that up to the Committee to decide later. Perhaps we can move on. The purpose of today's hearing is for the community specifically. I will deal with police matters another day.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I understand that. I am also here as part of the community. As I explained, I grew up in the area.

CHAIR: That is why I allowed you to do that.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: As I said, my elderly mother still lives here. I can talk from the community point of view so far as taking her to Cabramatta to the bank.

CHAIR: I will give you a couple of minutes to speak about the last part of what you want to say, then we will move on.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: From the community point of view what has happened to my own family is that my elderly mother has to go to the bank, obviously in Cabramatta, once a fortnight. It is an absolute nightmare. I used to get the goosebumps just thinking of her going up there. My young niece could not get off the train here at Cabramatta without being approached by half a dozen heroin dealers asking her, "Do you want to score?" My mum lives a little bit out of Cabramatta, she is probably half a kilometre out, but that still did not stop syringes from being discarded in the gutter. A number of times I have gone to mow the lawn and I have had to be careful to watch out for syringes. As I said, she is on the outskirts, but it still does not stop people from pulling up in cars and doing their business out the front of her house. It is absolutely crazy. I really fear for people like my mother who are elderly, with bag snatchers and different types of offences that go on. That is pretty much all I wanted to say.

CHAIR: The Committee will inform you of our decisions about your submission after this consultation.

Mrs HEGGIE: My name is Maria Heggie. I live in Cabramatta Road, Cabramatta. I have been an elected councillor on Fairfield council since 1980. I am here to speak as a local resident. I have lived in Cabramatta for more than 50 years, at my current address with my husband and family for 31 years. In the last six years we have been robbed four times. Yes, we now have bars on the windows and doors, security and panic buttons if we are out doing the gardening. We are living in fear. In August 1999 at 4 o'clock in the morning I was half awake-half asleep, my husband was on his way to work, and I heard several shots being fired. A few minutes later a vehicle sped round again and fired more shots. One of the shots ricocheted and either hit the roof of our house or the house next door. I had called the police. I was initially told they might have been shooting rabbits on the golf course. I had never really heard shots before and the first time I heard them I thought "Maybe I am wrong. Maybe it is a car backfiring and now speeding off very quickly." The second time the vehicle came round and I heard the noise again—some 10 shots and, as I say, the ricocheting shots—I knew then that it was a gun being fired. In fact, it was a machine gun that was fired at the house opposite.

I was petrified. I spoke to my next-door neighbour, a young woman who lived in the house next door with her brother. She too was frightened. I heard people running. In fact, what they had done was run and hid behind my next-door neighbour's garage. It took 10 days for the police to come. The police did not come and knock on our doors and ask what did we see, what did we hear, what did we know. It took 10 days before the detectives at Cabramatta took my and my husband's statements. It seems that my husband may have even seen the vehicle and the person because as he was opening the front door to leave for work to go to the garage, there was a vehicle travelling very slowly. At that

time of the morning there is not much traffic on Cabramatta Road. It appears that that may have been the person involved. When I called and asked why no-one was interested in our statements, I was told "But there's nobody dead". As I have mentioned before, this is not a regular occurrence. This has never happened before since I have lived in that home. No-one has ever shot at anybody ever since I have been in that home, and it really has changed our lives.

Just as Frank was talking about his elderly mother, my elderly mother also lives in Cabramatta. Recently I had to take her to Cabramatta, as I often do. This particular day we had to wait at the taxi rank, as I do not drive. We waited 20 minutes. My mother is elderly and she was not well. When the taxi pulled up we were next in queue. Four drug-affected young people jumped in front of me and said, "I am going first." My initial reaction was, "Get lost. My mother is not well, I am next. We are now going." And that is in fact what I did. My mother became very distressed because she realised there were four of them and one of me. Thankfully they got a shock that I actually challenged them and they jumped back and I was able to get into the taxi. The taxi driver said to me, "I didn't really want to take them, you know", but he did not get out of the taxi to help us.

I also attend a local hairdresser right on Freedom Plaza. It does not take long. You can sit there for five minutes and see what is going on outside—open drug deals. I am not there to watch what they are doing but, unfortunately, that is a fact of life. We are in the salon and a drug-affected person comes in, opens up his jacket and inside are stolen goods. He tries to sell these goods cheaply to us. We are people simply going about our daily lives. All we want is to be able to go to the hair salon or the bank and to catch a taxi in safety without having this type of harassment occurring.

My children are adults now but that they too had to run the gauntlet at Cabramatta Station, hopping off the train being offered drugs, and also on the overhead pedestrian path, tiptoeing through the vomit. I did not raise my children to have to be subjected to that. Cabramatta is a good place and I really dislike what is happening to my community. I can let you know that since the shooting my two neighbours have now left, they have gone. They put the for sale sign up and they went. This saddens me greatly because they were good, decent people, but they just do not want to take the risk. I can tell you that a week ago I was coming home—I use public transport—and I got off at Cabramatta station. I had called my husband who was going to pick me up from the station. I was there before him, just a minute or so. What confronts me? People calling out. You do not even have to go looking for the drug pusher. Do you know that they even call out the type of drugs they have for sale—rohies, ice, whatever?

All I am doing is minding my own business like everyone else, wanting to lead my life safely in a good community, and this is going on. If I can hear and see what is happening in my community, can someone tell me why the police cannot? I do not understand. I really do not understand how it is. I do not know what it takes, but please come and do something in our community so that we can lead our lives as we ought to be able to. I am not suggesting that we go back to the rural hamlet days that I had as a young person growing up here. But I would like to say to you that we in our community in Cabramatta deserve better. We deserve better. We should be able to go to the shops or the bank and travel on public transport in safety and not always be looking over our shoulders concerned whether we are going to be the next victim. That is all I want to say, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your detailed narration of the problems. There seems to be consensus on the problems that Frank and you have spoken of. The Committee is clear that there is a great drug problem in Cabramatta. There is no doubt about that. I do not direct you, but I would like to hear about some solutions, if you have any, that you might suggest to the Committee. We know of the problems. I ask that you think about the solutions as well.

Mrs HEGGIE: One of the things that I would like to see happen is that I want it to be uncomfortable for drug pushers to be in my town. I want the police to go out there, I want the police to hassle them, I want the police to arrest them. I want the streets to be safe. I also recognise that if it were my child I would also like to see an opportunity for a young person to rehabilitate. I would like to see some sort of compulsory rehabilitation, not "If you think that you want to dry out we will let you." We really have to be serious about it and say, "You are not a competent person to make a decision in this area. We are going to make a decision for your protection." I am very conscious that we need to assist addicts. However, I think at the moment the drug dealer reigns supreme. You just have to walk down there and have a look at what we have to put up with day after day. Whatever it

takes. It is not just about law enforcement, but that is a pretty good start. What about some decent rehabilitation? What about some fair dinkum rehabilitation? Not 11 beds out the back somewhere that you can only access nine to five Monday to Friday. Drug addicts have a problem 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We need services where young people have an opportunity. If today they decide at 10.00 p.m. that they want to get off drugs and want to make something of their lives, the service should be there to cope with that. That is what I want to see.

Mr NEWBOLD: My name is Dean Newbold. I am the New South Wales Teachers Federation representative at Cabramatta High School. I come before the Committee today to draw your attention to some errors of fact which have gained wide currency. On 23 February 2000 Detective Sergeant Tim Priest alleged that there had been an incident at Cabramatta High School on the previous Tuesday in which car loads of gang members turned up at the school, set upon the principal and other teachers, chased them back into the school and rocked and smashed their cars. This incident did not occur. Mr Priest also alleged that there was recruitment of gang members from Cabramatta High School. On 23 April four Cabramatta police officers appeared before the Committee. One of them was the acting duty officer or acting inspector on that day. If I may quote from the transcript of their submission, the question was: "What Sergeant Priest said did occur?" Policeman "C" replied: "There was an incident which involved a stolen car and a couple of Asian male kids. There was an incident certainly." The next question: "Was there recruitment of drug members to the gang with displays of jewellery, easy women, rolls of cash and were teachers' cars rocked and smashed? Was all that part of what took place on that day or any other day?" The response was: "Not to my knowledge."

In setting the record straight I do not wish to make any judgment about Tim Priest or any other matters that he has put before the Committee. I have no knowledge of any other matters he raised. I note that on 23 February in his original submission he expressed some regret at having brought the name of the school into the matter. I also wish to distance myself from those who have used their defence of Cabramatta High School as an opportunity to attack Tim Priest. I would like to thank Ms Sham-Ho and the Committee for the care they have taken regarding issues surrounding the school and for their support of and communications with the school over the past few months. Cabramatta High School is a great school with one for students. Our staff and students are justifiably proud of their school. Every allegation and media report is a blow to that pride. We will be happy when we can stop defending ourselves and get back to teaching and learning and caring for each other, as we have always done.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Since we were at the school, the evidence was given by Mr Priest and the publicity, how is the situation at the school? Is there anything else you would like to recommend that the Committee needs to do in terms of tidying up. We are conscious when we go into a community things can play out in unexpected ways. Do you have any suggestions?

Mr NEWBOLD: The Committee has been very supportive of the school, as I said. Your correspondence with the school and your questioning of those who raised allegations about the school to ensure they backed up what they said with some evidence has been noted at the school. We are very thankful for that. I do not know that the Committee could do much more for us. It is a very hard thing when an organisation—and that is a very formal term for a group of people, it is like a family at the school—has this constant attack and the word "drugs" and Cabramatta High School are linked again and again and again without any evidence.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Mr Newbold, you have said that the incidents referred to in evidence by Detective Sergeant Priest never happened, if I understand you correctly. How are you in a position to say that? Can you say why, in your view, such an allegation might have been made if it is in your view false?

Mr NEWBOLD: The day the allegations came to light there was a meeting at the school in which the deputy principal, who was out the front of the school at the other incident which is mentioned, described in detail what happened. While I do not want to really get into conjecture as to what happened, it appears as if the report that was written was, not inaccurate but could be interpreted perhaps in a number of ways. Tim Priest took what he read on the COPS system, I think it is called, and developed a picture of what happened which did not really reflect what happened. The incidents were wrong, the people who were there were wrong, and the date was wrong. I don't wish it to be

interpreted that there was any ill will towards the school, or to say that he is doing this on purpose, but it looks to the outside observer that there is simply a lapse of memory perhaps, or a misreading of the facts.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Are you suggesting that some sort of incident happened in the vicinity of the school but that it did not involve school students?

Mr NEWBOLD: We have been open about that incident since the start, and it is the incident mentioned by officer C. It involved a stolen car and a couple of Asian male kids. I don't think any of those were students, and I think there was a subsequent arrest over something to do with a stolen vehicle.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Madam Chair, if I make comment on that. Mr Newbold, the way I recall what Tim Priest said in his evidence, when he was talking about the jewellery, the women and so on as being the lure for young people to get into the drug trade, I do not think he was inferring that that was occurring outside the gates of Cabramatta High School. The way I recall it—and I do not have his evidence in front of me—is that he was using that in general terms to say how the drug dealers attracted young people into the industry, not necessarily inferring that it was happening on that occasion outside the school.

I have also visited the school, and I was really impressed with the calibre of the staff and the teachers there, and the caring that was going on in that school. I think all on the Committee were absolutely impressed with what was happening at Cabramatta High School. I do not think there has ever been any derogatory thought—certainly not from me—about the dealings at Cabramatta High School and the drug industry, and any links that might be there. I was quite convinced that the staff and the students there were actively working against the drug industry. There is no doubt in my mind that the incident that Tim Priest referred to did occur—and it occurred in the vein that you just mentioned: that there was an incident with a car and a couple of young people in the car. That was reported on the COPS computer printout. So, please do not think that we have anything derogatory to say about Cabramatta High School. In fact, it is quite the reverse.

Mr NEWBOLD: Your care for the school and everything you have done regarding the school has been obvious, and I thank the Committee for that. Yes, it has been noted, and we are thankful. I am not, in this, questioning everything Detective Sergeant Tim Priest has said, or saying that all of these things came directly from him. What I am questioning is the view of events that has gained wide currency. While Tim Priest may not have put certain things together, they certainly have been put together in the media and, unfortunately, in the public mind as well.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Yes, I think that is the case. I think it is something that has been driven by the media. It certainly was not driven by this Committee.

Mr NEWBOLD: Certainly not.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Because, as I said, the Committee has the highest regard for what we saw at Cabramatta High School.

CHAIR: Has anyone got any comment to make?

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Mr Newbold, just picking up those comments: as I understand it, no-one has criticised the school, and there has been a beat-up. There has been no criticism of the school or of the kids at the school. But my recollection of when we were at the school is that we were told that there had been a number of incidents over the years where teachers and students had been harassed by gangs, that gangs had invaded the school. Is that true or not?

Mr NEWBOLD: No, that is not true at all. I direct you to the transcripts of what was said. I have been through them in some detail in recent days. That is not the case.

CHAIR: Does anybody else want to make any comment?

Mr TAING: I thank you, the Hon. Helen Sham-Ho and other members of the upper House, for giving me, and probably the rest of us here, the opportunity to speak about what we know of the town where we live, the town that we love, the town where we do business, the town in which we make money to make ourselves comfortable, without interference from all the illegal activities.

CHAIR: Can I ask you your name?

Mr TAING: My name is Seang Taing. I am an accountant on the eastern side of Cabramatta. I make private citizen. I represent myself here. The problems that I have faced for really the past five or six years—that is when I started a business—are common, as Maria has already mentioned, and probably Frank has mentioned, and probably many others. I am not here to go against those drug sellers or drug users as such. I am here just to make sure that my staff and myself are safe to live in the town of Cabramatta and to do our business and our work as usual, Monday to Friday, 9 to 5.

If I have a problem, or my staff have a problem, I should call the police, because I believe the police are the ones that we trust to safeguard our lives. If they fail to do so, I believe that the solution will be to set up another body to help us when we face these problems. For the past five years, the first few times when I called they did react, they did come. But, when I called too many times, they stopped. Many times when I called they said, "We don't have enough staff, enough police to attend." So I let it go. I thought, "What can I do if the police are thinking things like that?"

Recently I called, and the same thing happened, "Look, we don't have enough staff, we don't have enough police." It is not because the drug dealers or drug users are on the street, but they are in my private premises. If they are in my private premises, I am entitled to that help, to that call. But most of the time the call has never been met. They even forced me to call the Parliament a few times. I rang a few parliamentarians, and then they ring the police, and then the police send some senior police people to come and see me, comforting me that they will do everything they can, then disappear.

After that, I call again, and nothing happens. I was forced to call 000. I called the 000 number because I can't call the local police station any more. So I called there once or twice. Then they ask me why can't I call the local police station. I did, but nobody comes, so what can I do? So, from then on, they are trying to get my name, et cetera, et cetera, rather than dealing with those illegal people. Thankfully, I got Ross, who is the president of the chamber of commerce at Cabramatta. He is really very supportive, trying to help his members. I am a member of the Cabramatta chamber of commerce. So, really, rather than me turning to the police every time I have got a problem, I call Ross.

Since they have had this big operation in Cabramatta recently, I found that there was really some improvement. But, usually, I work late, until 8 o'clock. When I come down there are still plenty of fellows around there, so I don't know what is happening. In daytime, yes, it is very quiet. But, from time to time, I am coming downstairs to have a look, to see whether they are still trading on my stairwell, because every day there were about 20 traffickers at least in my own stairwell. In saying that, I do not mean to offend the drug dealers, because they are just kids who need to make money to support their habit or some other living standard that they have, I don't know. But I want to see that my life, my staff and other people, including my clients, are safe, when they come to see me. That is all it is.

I hope that we can set up a different body, that is, when the police force is no longer effective to help us in the town of Cabramatta. So my question is: Can we have a separate body to deal with this unique problem in Cabramatta?

CHAIR: You mean a body separate from the police?

Mr TAING: No, outside the police altogether, so that when people have got problems we call them, so that they respond within a certain time, so that we can get help—because we know that when we call the police, most of the time they don't answer. So what can we do?

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Why do you think it is that the police do not answer? Are there no police at the station, or are they simply not answering calls?

Mr TAING: Always the police answer me, but they simply answer that they do not have enough police to attend.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: So they answer your telephone call?

Mr TAING: That is right. They answer politely, I have to admit. They are very polite.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: But they do not send anyone out to help you?

Mr TAING: They say they can't. But the last time I did call they did come very quickly. That was the very last time when I had another row with a drug dealer downstairs.

CHAIR: Coming back to my question. I do not think I heard you very clearly. Are you saying that you want another authority, institution or organisation to deal with the problems in Parramatta, and not the police?

Mr TAING: That is right.

CHAIR: Why is that? I want you to say it.

Mr TAING: If the police can really deal with our problem, that is okay. But so far it has proved that they are not effective. If they are, I do not have to call for a separate body to deal with it. That is only my own suggestion. Remember, I am not an expert in the law enforcement area. That is all I can say as a common person, as a private citizen. Probably, the second problem, where we come from, the South-East Asian authorities had the power to suppress us. When we come here and we see things like that we thought, "Well, it's no different." If the police approach us, and we had it different from the way we used to be under oppression, then probably we would change our way. But when we call they do not respond, so what can we do?

CHAIR: You did say things had improved recently.

Mr TAING: That is right.

CHAIR: Can you describe how matters have improved?

Mr TAING: When they come, you don't see as much drug trafficking in the area as before. You don't see those kids trying to sell drugs and things like that.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr STARR: I would like to pick up on a couple of things in relation to that. It is true that what is happening now with the drug problem is that we have fortified houses and there are still ongoing problems in Hughes, McBurnie and Bridge streets. The drug sellers have moved their times when they come out. They come out of an evening now. I know that last week when I came back with the President of the Chamber of Commerce from the last police customer council meeting that we were at, we must have counted some 12 or 15 dealers in Arthur Street. We could not understand why the CT cameras had not arrived. The police had not arrived because they were still there when we went to the meeting, and when we came back some two hours later they were still there. There are certain questions there. We feel that information is getting passed on to the police.

We have heard the Premier give a whole lot of announcements about fixing the problem. We have all seen his award-winning video with nobody in the place. He made sure that it was all nice and clean. But that is not the real world, Mr Premier. I suggest that he needs to come here and live here and deal with the issues, like we have to, day in and day out. We have heard about all the reforms. No legislation has been drawn up or even read in the Parliament yet. He has trumpeted City Watch, and the police customer council meeting will now fold. This so-called super thing, Super Watch, we have been told that all the businesspeople and concerned people will have an input. But there are concerns there. We are already hearing on the grapevine that secret meetings are planned, they do not want to inform us and tell us things because they think it will be turned into a circus if certain businesspeople attend these meetings.

It is true to say that certainly Ross Treyvaud, Thang Ngo, myself and others here push the issue in relation to the problems. We personally received threats and things, but what else can be done? The problem had to be cleaned up. It is interesting to note that the Stardust Hotel has been closed now for a week in relation to the drug raid that took place there. But it is funny that when I was in charge of the police customer council meetings—and there is another person there who was the chairman who took on after I did, Richard Dekker is here—many times I raised issues about the Stardust and the drug dealing and the impropriety that was going on, but nothing happened by the licensing person at Cabramatta, Rudi Chanazie, and still he never had anything to do with the closing of it. It had to come from Greater Hume. Hopefully, it will not reopen, and that will be a good thing. There still needs to be more police.

We heard the figure of 200, but you can forget that, because that is utter nonsense. Another nine police have arrived at Cabramatta, but still of a night only two car crews operate as part of the station. Thursday, Friday and Saturday we need at least three car crews. We put these submissions to Mr Small and Mr Hansen when they attended the chamber meeting in February. One of the shopkeepers sitting next to me, Jackie Thai, will speak in a moment. We have witnessed knives being taken out. Machete-type knives have been found on people in Arthur Street but those people have not been charged. The weapons have been removed, but no-one has been charged. There are certainly a lot of inconsistencies and reports about what is going on. If there are shootings there seems to be some sort of attempt to suppress that being brought out into the public. It has been a generally positive result.

Everybody seems to be happy that, finally, something was done about the Stardust and the drugs that were being sold in and out of the hotel. That has been a positive issue. I believe that one of the television stations will run the actual footage of the raid tonight at 6.30. The other thing I want to inform the Committee, and I have informed David Blunt today and I have also had a conversation with him, is that I am expecting a witness who is due here shortly. He would like to talk to the Committee. He was 11 years old when he was recruited into drug activity, then got into using at 12. He is now 17. I spoke to him at one o'clock. He was as Liverpool then. I am waiting for him to come. I think it would be very interesting to hear what he has to say in relation to the drug houses and his own involvement. But he would definitely like to speak to you in the Committee. Thank you very much for coming back. I can only say thank you for what you have done. It is appreciated. We look forward to the report.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: You tended to deprecate at least part of the Premier's recent announcement about the measures to reform the criminal law to deal with the so-called drug houses.

Mr STARR: Yes.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: First of all, could I explain that Parliament is not sitting and will not until 29 this month. That is why you would not have seen any legislation so far. However, could I ask you to explain, by indicating whether you think it is at least moving in the right direction? For example, without exhaustively identifying the various measures to reverse the onus of proof in regard to the person seen leaving the drug house; in other words they have to give an account of themselves, that they were there for a lawful purpose. Do you see that as moving in the right direction?

Mr STARR: We wholeheartedly put out a submission on behalf of the businesses that we welcome the reforms. I would just like to bring to the honourable member's attention that we have seen this release by the Premier back in 1997-98, the same sort of thing: we are going to clean it up; we are going to fix it up. As I said, we have great concerns. It is all right to produce an award-winning video where there is nobody on the street, and no business leaders were interviewed. Here we are and we are going to fix all the problems, but, as I said, the truth is in the pudding. The Parliament may not be sitting now but the Parliament, when this statement was released from March, I understand it on good authority that the legislation has still not been drawn up. What use is it announcing these things if you are not going to back the police with the legislation to do the job? How on earth can the police move people on from the bus shelter opposite the shops and things if the legislation is not there? It is all very well to trumpet these things and have a great media release, but we have seen all this before.

CHAIR: Are you saying that you have no confidence in the new package that has been announced?

Mr STARR: In relation to the package we welcome the package, but we have been down this road before. You have heard from the gentleman from Green Valley. I can remember when we had Chris Evans who commented a number of times—

CHAIR: I caution you not to say anything—

Mr STARR: That is fine. I understand the caution. Both private and public meetings say, what drug problem? What are we going to do? What can be done? At least Clive Small came to the chamber meeting and we got an admission from him and that "we are certainly not declaring that we have won the war by any means", was his direct quote to the chamber. That went a long way to healing some of the processes that the business people in the area have felt if we speak out on issues. By all means the package has been welcomed, but we want to see it implemented. I mentioned City Watch. We have concerns in relation to that.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: The Premier announced that there were to be an extra 90 police, is that the number?

Mr STARR: No I heard it was 200, I heard 90. I can assure you that there have been an extra nine police arrive at Cabramatta.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: How many?

Mr STARR: Nine. We hear 200 and all this. What you need to be aware of is that the local area command, or the Greater Hume as it is known, we used to have Puccini and different operations, but it has now become a TAG system out at Wetherill Park. You have heard from Frank Reitano and the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and we have called for the drug centre to be set up here, staffed by detectives, because this is where the problem is. It is no good having it at Wetherill Park or anywhere else. They need to be able to go out and do the job uninhibited to break the drug problem. It is all right to shoot the award-winning video at 11 o'clock at night and have the streets clean. The biggest headline out of that was that the Premier did not wear his seatbelt, but that does not solve the problem. We all know what the problem is, and we are trying to get it resolved.

Let us see the real thing. If we are going to have 200 police at Cabramatta, let us have 200. The station number, I believe, is about 125. I think that was quoted at the last customer council meeting. They have received nine police. They received those seven days ago. It may be if we had a station staff with 200 we could have three car crews instead of two. On Saturday two weeks ago when they attended in Vale Street in relation to an incident, one car crew was tied up at a crime scene in relation to a suspicious death, so that left one car crew. If we have two shootings, both car crews have to preserve the crime scene and then you have no police to operate Thursday, Friday and Saturday night because the two car crews are tied up.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Could I ask you something arising out of the evidence given by the four unnamed police officers to the Committee recently in a confidential session? Whatever criticisms those officers might have had regarding what might have happened in the past regarding law enforcement in this area, it is fair to say that arising out of their evidence they said that conditions here, so far as policing and law enforcement are concerned, are improving. They seemed to be expressing full confidence in the current leadership of Commander Small and Superintendent Hansen. Speaking from the standpoint of the chamber of commerce, could you indicate whether you agree with those officers, who were critical in other respects, that matters are improving?

Mr STARR: I would answer the question this way, there has definitely been some improvement in relation to targeting street dealers, but they are still about. There is still a major problem here. I also understand that those police who gave evidence, and I stand to be corrected, that two are on sick leave because they came forward to the Committee and gave evidence. There has been pressure applied by Mr Hansen and others and that disturbs me because we are back to the bad old days of not wanting to speak about the problem. For the area to move forward we need to recognise the problems that happened in the past and say, yes, we are not going to go down that road any more.

We are going to be open and up front with people. We are not going to have this divided. There seems to be a great divide, especially towards the President of the Chamber of Commerce because he speaks up on issues, or any of us who are on the committee of the chamber. We are seen as radicals or ratbags.

CHAIR: When you say there is a big divide, what do you mean by that? Can you be more specific about what happened to your chairman?

Mr STARR: Certain threats have been reported in relation to Ross and myself and also in relation to Councillor Thang Ngo. They are things that we take very seriously. The problem here is in the local media there are coverages of what goes on. There seems to be criticism because we speak out on the issues that are involved and we seem to be ostracised in certain quarters. That is very sad. Having lived and worked here and seen the problems, we just want the town back to normal as soon as possible. Bear in mind that we have had to live with and see this over the last eight years and watch it progressively get worse and worse and worse. It has not got better, it has got worse and worse. I am always hopeful and confident that things are going to change. The Premier comes out and makes a statement and shoots a video. How much more nicer it would have been for the Premier to come and meet the business leaders and make the release known showing that there is some concern.

CHAIR: I am not sure that I understand you. I will put my question another way. One of the terms of reference is for the Committee to look at the relationship between the police and the community. You just brought up the topic about a big divide. Is the division between the police and the community? How do you address that?

Mr STARR: You have heard us talk in the past about Business Watch. We still do not have a dedicated officer for Business Watch. We did have, we do not have. It was something the chamber worked very hard towards. A lot of time and effort was put in. We still do not have that. We have concerns where we do not have the police customer council meetings. At the last one it is going to be amalgamated into City Watch. We feel that there are going to be problems. Police customer council meetings were held every two months. Now we are going to have City Watch.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Has City Watch met yet?

Mr STARR: No, there has been no meeting yet. My understanding is that there will be a meeting next Tuesday where Mr Hanson, the area local member, will attend, but none of the business people were invited because, to quote a certain person, "If the members of the Chamber of Commerce were invited it would be nothing more than a circus."

Mr WATKINS: I object to what is being said. Mr Starr is referring to a private conversation I had with him. It was not to be released. He has also misquoted that private conversation. I would like it to be struck from the record.

CHAIR: I am glad you are here. Perhaps you could clarify that.

Mr WATKINS: I am Bob Watkins, Mayor of Fairfield. Mr Starr asked me a specific question as we walked in. He has misquoted my response. It was a private conversation with Mr Starr. It is not privilege to this Committee and I would ask that it be struck from the record.

CHAIR: The Committee will consider that matter in our deliberative meeting.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Mr Watkins, would you like to give an explanation? You have said that Mr Starr is not accurate. Could you elaborate on that?

Mr WATKINS: I am not prepared to elaborate on a private conversation I had with Mr Starr, suffice to say that the conversation that has been recorded here or has been related to you is inaccurate.

Mr STARR: With respect, Madam Chair, it is not.

CHAIR: I will not debate it. The Committee will decide the matter.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Mr Starr, do you see a problem with the TAG being administered from Wetherill Park and not from Cabramatta?

Mr STARR: I do see that there are problems in relation to having it set up at Wetherill Park. We have called that it should be based here in Cabramatta where the problem is. Also, we are hearing that among the people who are trying to do the job in Cabramatta, and there are quite a number of good officers there willing to do the job, there is miscommunication because one hand does not know what the other hand is doing and we are back to these sorts of problems again.

Mr THAI: My name is Jackie Thai from A1K Shop, Railway Parade, Cabramatta. There has been a lot of police patrolling around Railway Parade and Arthur Street, but still there are a lot of drug dealers hanging around in front of my shop and next door, at the pharmacy. A lot of police have been searching over drug dealer's bodies, but the thing is the police tell me they cannot search their undies. All their drugs, they used to hide sometimes in their socks and their cigarette boxes, but now they know that the police will search all those parts. So now the drug dealers hide their drugs in their undies. The police said they cannot check them in public. So that is the point that police cannot arrest them. Sometimes the police patrol on the street by bicycles and see the same drug dealers, the same faces all the time again and again, but the police cannot do anything. They just look at them and sometimes chat to them. But the drug dealers are not scared of the police. They know that the police have no evidence to arrest them. I just want to make one point: that the Committee should do something so that the police can have the power to check their undies so they may find something as evidence.

Mr DOAN: Thank you for the opportunity for me to be here again. My name is Vincent Doan. I am a co-ordinator of Open Family, which is a charity organisation working with street kids. I would like to draw attention to different issues. We are talking more about police. One of the things that myself, my colleagues and other workers are saying is that these problems that we have in Cabramatta, the police alone cannot solve the problem. That is the fact anyway. Nevertheless, I welcome the announcement from the Premier to have more police in the area. I would like to have more resources in the area looking into the problem of accommodation. As everyone just mentioned, a lot of young people are running away from home who end up on the street and there is no accommodation for them. Unfortunately, they lean towards gangs in that way to get some kind of support because there is no accommodation. We are looking at the Premier to make some law where there will be compulsory treatment where they have to go through rehabilitation and detoxification. What is going to happen after they finish rehabilitation? They are going to go back here and there is nothing for them. They go back into the circle again.

What I am trying to say is one of the biggest problems in the area, apart from drugs, is the employment opportunity. There is not any. If there is no employment opportunity, what are the people going to do? They are going to fall back again. Also, in terms of the families here, everyone knows the diversity of the community here. There are a lot of parents who cannot speak English. They would like to help their kids and certainly a lot of kids want to detox themselves as well. When the parents get into that situation they do not know how to get help. I would like to see some kind of support mechanism put in place to support these parents. Without the family involvement there is nothing we can do about it because every kid is coming from one of the families. If the family cannot help the kids, what can we do? We can sit in here for 24 hours a day. We could have hundreds of police, thousands of police. But if the family cannot support the kids or the kids cannot talk with the family there is not much we can do.

Another point I want to make is I see it has already happened because I work with the kids on the street. I see a lot of the kids are moving out of the areas, not because they are afraid of police. They know it is hard to sell drugs in the area, so they go out to Liverpool and to Fairfield to do the same thing. Another point I want to make is: How long can we sustain the number of police in Cabramatta—one year, two years, three years, 10 years, 100 years? I do not know. When we do not have enough police in the area the problems will come back because we have never solved the problem at all. We try to have a band-aid on the problem itself. I would like to see that we look deep into the problem itself and why it has happened. I have been working for 10 years in Cabramatta. In the past six years, yes, we do have a drug problem. It has never happened before that. I do not know why. That is what I am saying. We need to look at all these problems. If the Premier wants to do

something, give us more resources and look at something to help the people after the detox as well. There is no point helping them to detox and not helping them after they finish detox.

CHAIR: We have heard from other people that, as you said, accommodation and employment are two important factors in helping drug addicts. In what way can the Government address these two problems?

Mr TAING: We do have refuges and accommodation in Fairfield, but it is not enough. Let alone the workers at those accommodation places and refuges have never been trained to deal with drug issues. When we have kids who have a problem with drugs and we try to refer them to that accommodation we will be refused for sure because they will not take the drug user in their accommodation. What I want to see if it is possible is to have some more crisis accommodation in the area that will help the kids. I am seeing that a lot of kids run away from home in the first place because they are taking drugs and they blame themselves and they do not want their parents to know. That is why they run away. That is a crucial time. If we can help them right there and take them to some safe place to stay, hopefully we can turn them back to family and take them away from all the drug dealers around where they will say, "I welcome you back here". The crisis accommodation is wonderful support.

The second point is I want to see a restructure of the refuges and accommodation as well. What we were trying to do in the past and right now is we do not provide enough skill for our kids to live independently. So what happens, one kid can move from one refuge to another refuge to another refuge. When they end up at 18 years old they will be kicked out because that is the age they are not allowed to stay in refuges any more. What will happen to the kids? They are going to fall back on the street and do the same thing. I want to see some kind of restructure where we can support the kids while they live in the refuge so when they finish living in the refuge they have enough skill to live by themselves and be able to cope with all the pressure of the community and society. In terms of employment, there is no training in our areas.

One of the biggest things that I see from the past is a lot of kids dropping out of school at an early age. Those from Asian or any non-English-speaking background have English skills that are so low that they could not cope with conversations daily. Another group who drop out of school early have educational backgrounds that are very low as well. The expectation of those young boys getting back to the work force is, I guess, unrealistic. We have got to train them. We have got to work out some ways to help them.

For some reason, a lot of young people cannot cope with the normal class structure in our high school, and that is why they drop out. If we are going to help them, we have to set up something that will make them feel more comfortable to stay with, and we have to find some ways to ease the problems that they must deal with daily, such as, "How will I eat today? When will I have a shower?" Those sorts of things need to be dealt with daily. Who is going to help them out? If these problems are still with them, I do not think they will be able to do anything else.

Dr SARFRAZ: I welcome you all again to the city of Cabramatta, in other words, the drug town of Australia.

CHAIR: Can you say your name again for the inquiry?

Dr SARFRAZ: My name is Dr Ali Sarfraz. I am a general practitioner. I am not actually living in but I have been practising in Cabramatta for the last 30 years. I must tell you that things have changed. It is better, but sometimes I am surprised there are no police and there are no drug addicts, and, then again, the day comes when it looks like the whole town is owned by the drug addicts. Everywhere you see drug dealers and things go on as business, and after one day or two days it is all quiet.

While I welcome what the Premier said in his speech, at the moment our feeling is that when the baby cries the mother puts a dummy in its mouth to shut it out. We feel the attitude is like that, because if we raise voices and there is an election coming, this is used like the usual tactic to shut the people up. Obviously, my understanding is that whichever party comes, they always leave their hard

problems for the other party. Before it was Liberal, and they handed their drug problem to Labor, and Labor probably wants to hand it back to the Liberals again. So they are not solving the problem.

A couple of years ago I went to the Cabramatta police station and asked the commander-in-chief there, "Can you help me? I am a practitioner. I want to know the fate of the town, whether I should keep practising here or whether I should leave the area, because the situation is deteriorating." I was told, "Doctor, I haven't got a crystal ball that I can do for you." So you think, "Well, obviously, things get better, they get worse, but they have never gone to a stage where we can say it will get permanently better." I think at the moment the situation is like that. People think nobody wants to solve it.

The government is trying to build up crime pockets. When it comes to an area like Cabramatta or Marrickville and all the areas they have quoted, they say, "Look at this area! Why are you complaining?" So, basically, they have made use of a town where people are scared to talk. It is a very good ground for dumping rubbish, because people are not going to complain. They are scared. Everything goes back to normal. Then the people start crying out that something should be done, and after they have stopped crying that something is let go, and you see the business as usual again. I think that is the policy.

The town is already destroyed. A lot of people have left. Advertising is bad. People are not coming. Council rates are high. People are frustrated. They have not got faith in either the government or in the police. They think, probably, "Nobody wants to solve the problem. They just come and listen, then go, and that is the end of the story." We think this is probably the last chance to see that something gets done. I have got a letter from the Premier. The project officer wants to talk to me and tell me all that he has done. Well, I congratulate him on his effort, but by the same token, whether it is something done to shut us up or whether he really means business, I do not know, honestly. Time will tell. Anyhow, that is our last cry. After that, we would not cry before you, because if you can't solve it, you can't solve it.

The next thing is that I would request that all the shopkeepers should be allowed to do their business, they should be given permission to sell the drugs in their shops, and this area would be totally devoted to the drugs, and I think we will all be happy: we will pack our baggage and leave.

CHAIR: You sound so cynical, doctor. There is a tinge of pessimism there. That is why the Committee is here. I am very concerned that you are saying that people are being shut up, because the Committee's inquiry is for people to open up.

Dr SARFRAZ: We appreciate your concern, but what I mean to say is that at the moment that is how people feel. I am not only telling you my concern; I am telling you the concerns of the community that I mix with 24 hours a day. Unfortunately, the politicians cannot hear the heartbeat of the common citizens. That is what is taking them away from the people. People are not happy with the politicians because they live too far away, they live in nice areas, they have no cares, the police are at their fingertips, they can call the police. We are ordinary citizens of this country. We live here with the crimes, we breathe in the crimes. When we cry for help, the help does not come to us. This is the frustration. I left my country because things went that way, and when I come here I can see things heading the same way. That is unfortunate. It is non-political, I must tell you. Every town is baying, "Political, political." Before, yes, it was political when John Newman was calling. But now, the people are calling. Ordinary street people and shopkeeping people are saying, "We want help."

CHAIR: There are other people who have not spoken. I would like them to participate.

Mr DEKKER: Richard Dekker is my name. I live in Lovoni Street, Cabramatta. I belong to a Neighbourhood Watch group on the east side. When this hearing started the Committee said it wanted some suggestions on how to improve the area itself. I go back a matter of only four months ago. If the Government can't supply equipment for the ambulance people, how is the Government going to fix the drug dealers in Cabramatta? The drug dealers have been operating in Cabramatta. I have lived in this area all my life. The drug deals have been going on here for close to 20 years. I know you will probably get other reports to say they have not been.

I have been here all my life. As far as the drugs are concerned, the main trading post, I suppose you could call it, was in and around the Cabramatta shopping centre and CBD. When I was working, I saw drugs. I know how they come in, I know how they are packed, and I know what they are worth. These kinds of dealers four years ago were trading kilo packets of pure heroin. A kilo is worth a million dollars uncut. This is going on in the streets. I have seen it. Only a matter of three or four doors away from my place I have seen money change hands, a packet of heroin change hands, and it is just one of those things that happen. If it started back 20 years ago, it was small. A festering sore on your arm, if treated then, would not be a disease that has gone rampant through your body.

Until either the Government or you people can arrange some sort of the system where, instead of being soft with these drug dealers, it came down harder on them, we're not going to get a cure. If you go to the doctor with a sore, and if you do not do what he tells you to do, you are going to end up with a sore a lot bigger than you anticipate. If you do what he tells you to do, it is going to be cured. The same thing applies with drugs in this area. It just keeps on going.

I am not criticising the police. I reckon they do a good job. As Mr Dyer said, the police are doing a good job. But so are the drug dealers getting bigger and bigger all the time. Anyone who tells you that it has improved in the area doesn't know what they are talking about. As I said, I see drug deals done in front of my place. And it is not just once every blue moon; it happens quite often. If you ring the police, they are either caught up with something that is more important on their agenda, or their cars are somewhere else and by the time they get to the drug dealers they are gone. Until something can be done about that, it is never going to improve. It will still be here. It will still be just as big.

You talk about children being used as drug suppliers. When I was at a Neighbourhood Watch meeting 12 months ago there were two little kids in front of Cabramatta Primary School, on the east side of Cabramatta, standing at the gate. They said, "Will you buy this off me? If you do, I make \$5." These kids would have been, at the very most, maybe 12 years of age. I have not seen them lately but, if it was going on then, it is still going on now, I don't care where you look, how you look. You might look one-way, it's going on the either side of you, or behind you. The Committee must get the Government to come down a lot heavier on drug dealing. It is no use being very tender-handed with these people. You will never solve anything if you are soft with people who are doing the wrong thing. Until they come down a lot harder on them, they just won't stop it.

As far as the cure in the area, the hands of the police are tied. They cannot do what they would like to do. You cannot blame the police for that, because they are being dictated to by, say, people higher up, in the ivory towers. Until they can get some kind of go-ahead, with no holds barred, the drugs are still going to go on in Cabramatta. When it first started in Cabramatta the papers got hold of it. Now, it does not matter what happens in Cabramatta, it is not just in the papers for one or two days, it is for the week. Take Mosman, where the two elderly women got murdered by the granny killers; that was in the papers for one day. Why was that in the papers for only one day? Aren't those two lives just as important as two lives in Cabramatta?

But, no, Cabramatta got in the limelight. It is like a bull terrier with the bone. There is no way they are going to let Cabramatta go. It will always be in the limelight. So, as far as I am concerned, until either the Committee or the Government wants to change the attitude completely, the drugs are still going to be going on in Cabramatta, it doesn't matter whether it is in the CBD or in the back streets.

I live three-quarters of a kilometre away from the station on the east side. I see it. I know what goes on. If you move it from one street, from the central business district it will crop up somewhere else, so they have to come down hard and fast and with force. As far as the police in the area are concerned, as I said, they have to take their priorities. If there is a bad accident or shooting or something, that is more important than drug dealers doing a trade. As far as I am concerned, until the Government can come down a lot harder on them the system is not going to change. It is going to remain the same. It will probably get worse.

Ms WEISMANTEL: I am Janet Weismantel from Private Protection Services, which is one of the local security companies here in Cabramatta. I have some responses that I would like to give to the police department here in Cabramatta. There is a lack of police presence here in Cabramatta at

night. I do the night-time work here. I very rarely see a patrol car out there. There is a spate of break-ins here that has increased rapidly in the last few weeks compared to what it was. We do not seem to see a police car. There are groups of dealers or undesirables hanging around now that no police are there to stop them, to ask them what they are doing and two and three o'clock in the morning. What are you doing at two, three o'clock in the morning around Cabramatta? I know that I have a job to do, but I do not know what they have to do. I also have the Cabramatta Plaza. We never see a police officer walk through there or ride a bike through there. What is happening I do not know. Another one is when we call the police for help we do not seem to get a response, and if we do we are told that no car is available. Unfortunately, we do not have a car available because it is doing whatever we do not know.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: I would like to ask a question of the businesspeople present. Communications and community consultation is a big issue that we have been aware of. We have heard that the City Watch program has not started yet. Does anyone know when it will start and what is happening with it? The Premier said that it would start immediately. I would be concerned if community consultation, the one issue mentioned by the Premier, has not even started.

Mr TREYVAUD: Probably the best person to ask about that would be the mayor, who is still here and who would have the information you require.

CHAIR: Would you like to respond to that question, Mr Watkins?

Mr WATKINS: There was scheduled a meeting between the relevant parties last Friday. However, the police local area commander and the Greater Hume regional commander could not make that meeting. That meeting is now scheduled for tomorrow.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Can I get that right? Six weeks after the Premier's announcement we still have not got a start on City Watch?

Mr WATKINS: There has been consultation with the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Stepan Kerkyasharian, the Premier's Department and Cathy Noble. Draft terms of reference have been drawn up for consideration of all the parties in my office tomorrow morning.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: You are facilitating it, are you?

Mr WATKINS: I am one of the parties in the meeting.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Just to answer the question earlier, who will represent business?

Mr WATKINS: Draft terms of reference have not been considered by the committee at this stage, but we are very cognisant of the fact that business needs to be represented. Places for the Cabramatta Business Association and Chamber of Commerce have been earmarked for that committee, as have other business people, youth and schools. The various other parties have all been considered as part of that. But it is a draft at this stage. The parties have met, so I prefer not to elaborate on it further than that.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Like many other people, I am going on what the Premier said, and he said it was designed to be representatives of local businesses and the police to exchange information, including other people such as school principals and so on. I would be rather uncomfortable if local businesses were not brought into this consultation process.

Mr WATKINS: I see nothing inconsistent with what you have read and what we are doing.

Mrs TEW: My name is Jenny Tew, business lady. I would like to ask that question. I have a business right in the middle of the town and I have never heard mention of this matter to us yet. This is the first time I have heard it.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: If you pick up a copy of the Premier's statement under "Community Relations" it says:

... will immediately begin the program 'City Watch', bringing together local businesses and the police to exchange information and develop solutions to local crime.

Mrs TEW: The local businesses have not heard about this.

Mr TAING: We are in the same position. I have not heard this before until today.

Mr WATKINS: I am one of the parties. Once the terms of reference have been established, obviously, the community would be made aware. We are very much aware that this committee also needs to hold regular forums with the community as a whole. Not everyone can be a member of a committee. Do you have a committee of 192,000, which is the population of Fairfield City? You cannot. But the things that have been discussed are holding regular community forums, so the committee goes out, like this Committee, holding regular community forums. Those are things that this group is considering at the moment. Once all those deliberations are concluded those matters will be communicated and businesspeople will be invited to participate on the committee.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Who is actually organising it?

Mr WATKINS: The committee will be chaired by the police. I will be a party to that, as the mayor of the city, but at the businesspeople will also be invited to participate in that process.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: But the Premier said it would be the Community Relations Commission. Are they organising it, or are you?

Mr WATKINS: I am certainly not organising it, no. I am part of the group that is drawing up the terms of reference.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: Who chairs that group?

Mr WATKINS: It is not a group that has a chairperson, for instance. It is about the police, the local member of Parliament, the Premier's Department, myself and council staff coming up with draft terms of reference and draft membership. But also discussions have been held with Stepan Kerkyasharian, who, obviously, needs to have interpreters and he has been consulted about ethnic groups that can participate.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Who is driving it, is it the Premier's Department

Mr WATKINS: The Premier's Department. Obviously, this has been an initiative from the Premier. The Premier's Department is driving the process.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: It is providing the secretarial support services for it at this stage?

Mr WATKINS: It is.

CHAIR: We should have a comment from the chamber of commerce.

Mr TREYVAUD: The chamber of commerce certainly welcomes the initiatives that have been put down from the Premier's press release and his statements in Parliament. As Mr Starr alluded to, we have some concerns that this is another announcement and nothing more than that, because we have had announcements in the past. When the Premier's Department first started its Cabramatta project, as it was announced by the Premier and the Deputy Premier and several Ministers and they came to Cabramatta back in 1996, we were told that we were going to have a whole-of-government approach to the problem here in Cabramatta. All the press releases that came out from then on were certainly alluding to the problem being in the process of being fixed. The chamber of commerce, even though it tried to work with the Premier's Department along the way in the fixing of Cabramatta as we were told was happening, was given no credence whatsoever, we were given no right of comment on a lot of initiatives that have been announced.

We expressed concerns at the time that a lot of things were not as they appeared to be, and that many of our core concerns as community members and businesspeople in the area were not being addressed. But that is history now, so we are prepared to move on from that and, hopefully, to a brighter future. Our concerns of whether these announcements are going to take real shape have a basis in history, but we are hoping that the emphasis of the community and the way we have aired our dirty laundry in the media and such might give a little more push to having these things finally put in place. I believe the Premier also made an announcement in late 1998 regarding drug houses. This was after the much-publicised drug houses in Marrickville at the time. But we note that no initiatives came out of those announcements made then, so, of course, we are still waiting and watching to see the draft legislation come up and put to the Parliament, and workable new laws put in place so that police can enter these drug houses and arrest the people who were involved.

A lot of the community-based announcements in the Premier's statements we certainly very much welcomed, particularly in relation to extra support from DOCS workers, emergency housing, community education and particularly the last point in his stage three announcement that from 1 July, a \$600,000 community drug education team will be set up to work in high schools. This was also announced in 1996, that \$650,000 would be spent on a drug education team that would be set up to work in high schools and primary schools. That has never taken shape, or has not taken shape to date. We hope that this will certainly go a long way in family drug education, that the students will become more aware of the dangers of becoming involved in drugs and that finally we might start to see some slowing down of the rampant drug selling and drug using. One thing the Premier has not announced, which is also extremely important, is that there are a number of organisations working in Cabramatta now that are doing a really wonderful job with the resources they have.

I refer to organisations such as Open Family, the Salvation Army, the Cabramatta Youth Team, and Adracare, which is now set up behind Cabramatta Road. It would be really good to see the Government do something to channel more resources to these people who are virtually dedicating their lives to improving the lot of those who are the most disadvantaged by the drug trade. Unfortunately, we do not seem to see a lot of support for these organisations. Vincent Doan would openly say that he would be very glad to have seen that much help in trying to provide more home detoxification workers, councillors or even support staff. I recently had a meeting with some people from Open Family and we, as a community, are going to start to try to get some more information as to what these NGOs have achieved and what they are trying to achieve, in an attempt to raise more community awareness of what is available in the community and how we, as a community, can support these organisations.

It would be good if the Government would also support it because we are a poor community here. We are not overly wealthy. We do not have a lot of financial resources to put into the problem. Likewise, as the chamber of commerce we are against the proposed rate rise for the Fairfield City to pay for infrastructure needs because we are a poor community. We are already overburdened with the expenses of running our businesses. The residents are overburdened with their rents and such. We really need more financial assistance from government. We do not think it would be a terrible burden in the State and Federal coffers if they were to assist a little more, seeing as we have a tremendously ingrained drug problem in the area.

If we could touch also so on the idea of Business Watch, which the chamber has spoken about many times. In discussions we do not believe that another committee will address the business concerns in trying to develop a relationship with the police. We think there needs to be something done on the lower level. I believe Thomas Diepp addressed this Committee when he appeared in Parliament House regarding the need to develop relationships at all levels, both at the lower levels as well as the upper levels. A number of years ago the chamber proposed that officers be dedicated to trying to build the relationship with the shopkeepers, business people and shop assistants, to start to rebuild the confidence that it is okay to talk to the local police officer, that he is there to help them and to address the problems of crime and other concerns. We would still like to see something put in place along those lines. It was started 12 months ago but, unfortunately, it was allowed to lapse very quickly. If we can see something started up there again with police talking to shopkeepers on a regular basis, finding out their needs and concerns and showing that they are prepared to do something about those concerns, it would go a long way in repairing the relationship between the police and the community in our local area.

Mr NGO: Clearly it is obvious about the management of the drug problem. The Committee has indicated that you recognise that, so I will not labour on the point. I would like to labour on the response to the Premier's announcement. As the rest of the community has mentioned so far, the feedback of the community has been good with the Premier's announcement, simply because it is an acknowledgment that there is a problem in Cabramatta and the Premier has moved to do exactly that. That has come across in quite extensive consultation I have had with the community. So it has been quite positive. The only possibly negative comment came from some youth groups in the sense that they fear greater police powers may be used against young people. That is what I want to bring forward. From my point of view on a personal level, which does not reflect any of the consultation that I have done, I have some issues. That is the unemployment issue, which is reflected by Vincent today, and also recreational facilities in the area. What we would really like to see are more recreational facilities for young people in Cabramatta. As mentioned by Ross Treyvaud, the council is looking at a 9.5 per cent rate rise. We cannot afford infrastructure for young people. If there is anything the Government could do from that point of view it would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, I would like the Committee to remember the third term of reference, which is adequacy of police in dealing with people from non-English-speaking communities. I will not go over all the responses you have had. Clearly that is an issue that could help a lot. It is not necessary to have more resources in this case, but it may be a smarter use of resources, such as police who can speak the language or police having some understanding of the culture. We are talking about the quality of policing resources rather than quantity. We need to look at all those things. I am sure you have heard extensively from people talking about problems there. There is only one final point which I will hand over to Councillor Heggie, which she had not mentioned. It relates to young kids and their dealings with drugs.

Mrs HEGGIE: If I could add in a supplementary way, one of the things that concerns me greatly is the legislation that came out of the Drug Summit which allows juveniles to carry twice as much illicit drugs as adults. Under-18 year olds cannot purchase or consume alcohol. How is it that we have legislation where they can carry twice as much cannabis as adults and the police cannot touch them? How is it that they can carry heroin and the police cannot touch them? That piece of legislation needs to be looked at and needs to be reviewed.

CHAIR: I do not believe there is such legislation.

Mrs HEGGIE: It is a cautioning system which allows juveniles to carry twice as much cannabis as adults. I am very concerned. How can police do their job if there are some people in the community who are allowed to do that? The other thing I would ask is that drug dealing at all levels be a priority crime for police.

Mr STARR: I earlier indicated there was someone prepared to come forward. I do not want it to be seen as a surprise or anything to you. The person would like to address the Committee. It is relevant that the Committee hear him. We are in the process of putting some things together. For the benefit of the Committee and the other people here, the person is known to me and approached me and wanted to speak. He has also talked to Ross. What he has got to say is important. If there is a concern of the Committee or a fear about his face, let me assure you there will not be any coverage of who is. But it is important what he has got to say.

CHAIR: I will let him speak but I will caution him that he has to be very careful what he says. You must not say anything about anybody else. You can put your views and talk about the terms of reference of the inquiry, such as police resources and your relationship with the police.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Point of order: From my observation, the young man did not fill in the form and sign it himself. Mr Starr did it for him. It would be useful for the Committee. We welcome any points of view that anybody has to bring forward, particularly young people, under the difficult circumstances that we know often exist here. At the moment we are not being fair to the young man who is here to talk to us. He has the opportunity to write it down and we can undertake his statement in a more considered way rather than dealt with it in a rushed time frame.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: To the point of order: I support the point of order. This has happened at the very last moment. We have been sitting here for two or more hours now. Given what

Ms Rhiannon has said, given that this is a community consultation and not a meeting for the purpose of taking sworn evidence, and given that there is no privilege attaching to anything that is said here this afternoon, to go ahead under these circumstances would imperil the interests of the young person in question and probably not be in accordance with the integrity of these proceedings.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Further to the point of order: It is not fair for Mr Starr to say that he is not known. There is a camera on all of you all the time and the meeting is being taped. I am very worried about the circumstances under which this is proceeding.

CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. The young man has not spoken. I gather that he does not seem to be able to do it at the moment. It would be better if Mr Starr assists the young person to make a written submission to the Committee and the Committee can decide whether to call him. It is imperative that we have the view of the community, but at the same time we have to be cautious that the standing of the young man is not damaged.

Mr STARR: He understands that.

CHAIR: I do not think that you can speak on behalf of him.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Madam Chair has given a ruling and it is not competent for Mr Starr to canvas that ruling.

CHAIR: I have made a ruling. It is not appropriate for the young man to speak at this time. This is not a hearing, it is a consultation.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: The young man has had his photograph taken and he has been videoed and taped. I seek advice as to directions to the media. We cannot close the meeting under the present circumstances. Incorrect information has been given to the young man and he has been filmed and taped by the media. We need to seek some advice.

CHAIR: The Committee has previously passed a broadcasting resolution. I hope that the media will respect that. I call on a Committee member to propose a resolution at this time that the young man's photograph and any mention of the young man is prohibited in the media.

The Hon. R. H. COLLESS: I move that way.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: The resolution is that the image of the young man not be published by the media.

CHAIR: Nor his name. Anything about the young man is prohibited to be published in the media. I say to the community members who are present, the Committee appreciates your presence and your time. We will report to Parliament and there will be a report from the Committee. In the meantime, you are welcome to send any further submissions to the Committee as soon as possible, because the Committee will deliberate very soon.

The Hon. G. S. PEARCE: Before we adjourn, what was the outcome of Detective Reitano's request to give evidence to the Committee?

CHAIR: The Committee will have to make a decision in our deliberative meeting whether those parts of detective Reitano's submission are to be made confidential and the rest is to be made public. The Committee cannot make that decision now.

The Hon. R. D. DYER: Perhaps Mr Reitano should be advised that we are having such a deliberative meeting next Friday.

Detective Senior Constable REITANO: I was requesting that consideration be given to allow me to give formal evidence as per the submission.

CHAIR: Yes, we will consider that on Friday in our deliberative meeting.

(The Committee adjourned at 4.29 p.m.)