

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

**INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN-
WATERLOO**

At Redfern on Wednesday 26 May 2004

The Committee met at 10.15 a.m.

PRESENT

Ms J. C. Burnswoods (Chair)

The Hon. Dr A. Chesterfield-Evans
The Hon. K. F. Griffin
The Hon. R. M. Parker
The Hon. G. S. Pearce
The Hon. I. W. West

CHAIR: I will begin by doing two important things. First, I acknowledge that we are having our hearing today on the traditional country of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Second, I note that today is Sorry Day and tomorrow begins Reconciliation Week. Both of those things are very important for Aboriginal people. Unfortunately for the Committee, when we set today as a date to be in Redfern we had not realised that, because of all the events on today, a number of witnesses who might otherwise have appeared cannot do so. I simply reiterate the words of Premier Carr that in New South Wales we became the first government and the first Parliament to place on the record our profound apologies to the stolen generations in particular and to the Aboriginal people in general for the laws and actions in New South Wales since 1788.

After we finished our hearing yesterday the Committee made a decision to delete from the transcript the names of two people who were mentioned in the hearing yesterday. We are aware that by the time we made that decision some media had already used those names. I just make it clear to those media here today that we have done that and that we have a policy in accordance with all upper House committees in relation to the use of individual names, particularly when accusations are made against them.

WILLIAM DAVID CREWS, Chairman, Exodus Foundation, PO Box 1595, Ashfield, and

RICHARD LAWRENCE BOYD, Treasurer, Exodus Foundation, 180 Liverpool Road, Ashfield, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: In what capacity that you appearing before the Committee today?

Reverend CREWS: As the Chairman of the Exodus Foundation.

Mr BOYD: I am and have been Treasurer of the Exodus Foundation for about five years.

CHAIR: You were not on our initial list of witnesses but you have come along, I gather, as largely the author of the submission.

Mr BOYD: It was a joint effort. I am here to help Bill. He might ask me to say something; he might not.

CHAIR: Can you tell us something about the Exodus Foundation and its role, specifically as it relates to the Redfern-Waterloo area?

Reverend CREWS: With Exodus at Ashfield we have established, in many ways, a one-stop shop where people can come and get the welfare assistance they need, and that is everything from a meal to clothes and counselling, medical support. We have people from government agencies working with us and we also run two schools, one for children who are in danger of falling away from school and from home and ending up on the street, and one for kids who are homeless. We feel that the experience we have gained in Ashfield would, together with the experts that we have picked up along the way, enable us to establish a program in Redfern that would help the people here. The reason for that is that at this moment a lot of people are being brought from Redfern to Ashfield for assistance. We feel that if we were established here we would be able to do a lot of these things here.

Mr BOYD: What we are finding is that because we are offering all of these services under one roof it is much more user friendly. So many of the very wonderful, generous agencies that are offering services live in high-rise buildings and some of our clients—and I am sure a typical Redfern client—find it hard to go there. They find it unfriendly. We have developed so many services in-house plus, most importantly, we network with the agencies and a lot of the agencies come to us so we have legal aid on Thursday, we have unemployment on Tuesdays and we have a lot of the agencies come to us so that people feel very comfortable and safe and actually loved because everything is being done under one roof.

CHAIR: Some of those issues will clearly be relevant to our questions about the comments that have been made about the large number of government and non-government services in this area. Can you give us a little bit more information about your organisation—how many employees you have and how you fund it?

Reverend CREWS: We have 24 employees and about 400 volunteers. We have a budget of about \$2 million a year and I think something like 0.1 per cent of that comes from the Government. Most of the money we get is from pensioner couples who will give us \$130 a time and we have a mailing list of about 8,000 people who we write to. So most of our money comes from donations from people who support the work we do. In fact, something like 99 per cent of it does.

Mr BOYD: In terms of numbers, we feed and counsel up to 300 people every day, apart from Sundays when we have reduced services. Apart from the people we feed, there are probably another 50 to 100 people every week who receive some kind of service from us. So in terms of the efficiency of our funds, we are talking about many, many people who are being helped on a very minimalist budget of \$2 million.

CHAIR: Do you seek more government funding or do you feel more comfortable having a higher percentage of donations, with perhaps the decision-making freedom that that provides?

Reverend CREWS: I have tried for years to get government funding. To be honest, we are a bit too independent for that and we would much rather raise our own funding. Now I have found it is a blessing that we do not have it because we can criticise. What you find is that it does not matter which government funds you, if you criticise it there is always the threat that the money will go. I have also found that lots of times government money comes with strings on it and they like it spent the way that bureaucrats want it spent and it is not exactly the way it would be necessarily spent to help the people.

CHAIR: Here speaks the Treasurer who might have a slightly different view

Mr BOYD: No. It is very clear what Bill has said but there is a case in point. Our tutorial centre is designed to help 36 kids every semester to improve their literacy. That has been tremendously successful. We have been adding two to three years of literacy in less than six months. We were receiving money from the New South Wales Government. The terms of that was that we had to have so many transition pupils. Our research and our acts have shown that the younger we actually get children, the very younger we can get hold of them, the easier it is to fix problems. Because we are now dropping year 7 and going down to years 4, 5 and 6, we have lost all of our government funding, which was a decision we did not take lightly but it was a decision that was black and white. Were we interested in helping children at the earlier stage of intervention or were we interested in getting money? It was a lay down misère.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We have heard from many people about the number of government and non-government organisations in Redfern—in fact, we are not sure how many there are—and about the lack of co-ordination between levels of government. Would that be your view?

Reverend CREWS: It is appalling. We had a meeting a while ago with one of the magistrates and some of the police, and the police were picking up all these kids and were saying to us, "Where can we take them to get some help?" And you think, "My God, what is going on here?" So I just find it appalling.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How do you think you could improve those services?

Reverend CREWS: First of all we should find out how many there are and what they are doing. My suspicion is that a lot of the people in them are just lazy. To have so many people doing so many things or so many organisations and yet we still have to bus people to Ashfield to get some sort of help makes you wonder whether those institutions are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The Redfern-Waterloo partnership project was partly established, I understand, to take some sort of co-ordination role. Do you think that project has been effective?

Reverend CREWS: I think it has the potential to be. I think one of the problems with Redfern is that everybody has an agenda and it is very hard to break through a lot of the preconceived ideas. I think the Redfern-Waterloo project basically has come in with ideas that they feel need to be implemented and are trying to get those ideas implemented through getting the public involved but they are a bit suspicious of the public so they are trying to manipulate and then everybody starts getting suspicious of everybody. So I think it is a good idea that needs a lot of community involvement to actually grow out of the ground.

Mr BOYD: We think we have got a pretty unique model at Ashfield. But not for one moment am I or is Bill suggesting that we replicate Ashfield in Redfern. Obviously it must be tailored to meet the demands of Redfern, which are different. The first thing that needs to be done is to take an audit of what is actually needed and what the problems are. From there would be built a model appropriate to Redfern, modelled on Ashfield but done in conjunction with the agencies that we work with at Ashfield, and under one roof—either physically or metaphorically—and under one management, so that we do not have different agendas tearing each other up.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: At Ashfield you conduct an education program. Your submission talks about education in an appropriate manner. Can you expand on that and how that is applied?

Reverend CREWS: The thing I have found in working with young people, for a long time I was one of those people who thought put an arm around their shoulder and talk to them, talk and talk and talk and listen and listen and listen. I still basically believe that, but the thing I found is that as kids learn their self-esteem goes up anyway. Then they want to start talking about the issues that affect them. So I have found the best way to get through to troubled young people is through education. Not by saying "Here is the system, you come and fit to it", but "Let's look at you and your needs and what you are interested in. Let's provide an avenue for you to learn about what you are interested in and learn all the other things that have to go on so that you can actually follow your interest." What I found with that is that kids' self-esteem goes up and up and up, their behaviour improves and you get through to where they are at.

The more you hold onto them like that, the more their parents and significant adults in their lives start to come in because they want to get some of the goodies too. Then you can begin to work through some of the issues that are there. But it has to be tailored to the needs of the kids. In Redfern where you have people who are highly mobile, you need to have these intensive sorts of programs and offer them while they are there. Maybe around food as well, because maybe they are hungry, or give them somewhere to sleep. If they are hungry give them something to eat; if they are tired give them somewhere to sleep, but in the spaces in between offer programs where they can learn about what they are interested in.

I have never met a kid who is not interested in something and wants to go from there. I learnt that a lot. For example, taking in homeless kids one year the kids wanted to make some money and they decided they would run a hotdog stand. They found that none of them could add up. To run it they had to learn to add up, and they learnt to add up like that. They are the sorts of programs they need. Take the kids and offer them what they want, then they have to learn what they need to learn to do that. Focus on them and I think you get somewhere.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Truancy is a massive problem in Redfern. Do you believe you would be able to adequately address that problem by providing that type of service?

Reverend CREWS: If kids are interested in things you cannot keep them away. We have trouble keeping the kids away. They do not like the holidays. They would tell you it is the best. We have kids, the most they have been to school in a year is 23 days. Yet they turn up early to our place.

Mr BOYD: A clear example is Exodus House, which caters for refuge-based kids. We get them up to hopefully their school certificate level. They came to us and said, "We want to remain here and do our HSC." There was no way our resources could let them do that, but that is an indication of the fact that they liked what we were doing. We must have been doing something right. The truancy rate was as low as they had ever had.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said you had lowered the age of the kids in your literacy program, despite losing funding for those kids. You are not funded per place, you are funded for places in certain years. Is that the way the system works?

Mr BOYD: The DET [Department of Education and Training] in their wisdom—and everybody has got their rights to their views—believe that the transition year was the most important year, or one of the most important years. They had made the decision some years previously.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Transition from what?

Mr BOYD: Years 6 to 7, from primary to secondary education. Their funding was based on us having a proportion of year 7 kids. We rapidly began to realise that the earlier we could get kids and intervene with their literacy problems the more effective it really was. That is for two reasons: one, it obviously makes sense to help someone as early as possible, whatever the problem.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: They can go to other schools then?

Mr BOYD: Yes. The second reason is if you have a year 7 with a year 5 it is a mismatch of kids in the same classroom.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Presumably when you said you are going to take the younger kids you had to let some go who would have been in year 7?

Mr BOYD: No, it was a gradual process. Once we had finished one term we gradually began to concentrate on it. In fact, it is only happening now. It is happening in the next semester where we probably will not have any year 7 kids.

Reverend CREWS: The year 7 kids will be able to go to the Exodus House school, which is for homeless kids. We are not giving them up, we are just transferring them from one of our schools to another.

Mr BOYD: We are hoping that there will not be any year 7 kids who will have that problem because we are going to catch them early.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have exchanged a funded place for an unfunded place?

Mr BOYD: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is your bottom line?

Mr BOYD: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is DEET [Department of Education, Employment and Training] federal funding?

Reverend CREWS: No, New South Wales.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have you produced any research that shows the effectiveness of targeting lower-aged kids so that you could go to the department say "This may be your dogma, but here are some new facts"?

Reverend CREWS: We can show that four years after coming to the programs we run that 90 per cent of the kids who attend are still at school, whereas you would not expect them to be at school one or two years later without this sort of intervention.

Mr BOYD: We have just begun a research project with Macquarie University, half funded by us and half funded by them, which is concentrating on that very matter. It was a choice of using our funds to produce more tutorial centres—which was beyond our funding, both in capital and recurrent costs—or to produce a research document that showed what we were doing was right and trying to shame governments, both federal and New South Wales, into saying "What Exodus is doing in the tutorial centre should be integrated with the education system and not be funded by private mums and dads."

Reverend CREWS: The modus operandi that we use is to go into a place, then muddle around with everybody and try to work out the best way for us to be of assistance. What we find is that that often comes into conflict with people who have ideological stances. It does not matter whether they are right or left. I think one of the reasons governments have difficulty in dealing with social issues is because they come at them from an ideological stance instead of just going in there, muddling around and trying to work out the best way to do things. I often find that people say, "That does not quite fit with the way I think about the world". Particularly educators go for that stuff: they think of either this side or that side. To go in and work out a program that maybe involves a bit of both creates tensions in people with ideological stances.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you have a control group to be able to say that 90 per cent are still at school?

Reverend CREWS: We get kids who at sixth class in school will say as the penny drops, "Oh, it is the black stuff you read". We get kids like that. We get kids with reading ages of zero,

corrected

absolute zero. They leave our place being able to read novels appropriate to their age. We can say that four years later 90 per cent of those kids will still be at school.

Mr BOYD: This all began with Bill identifying when he first began dealing with troubled kids that a large proportion of the problem was they could not read. It was literacy that was creating many of the other problems.

Reverend CREWS: You have kids who have troubled family lives that affect their school life. So they are troubled in both lives. If you begin to fix one bit up both sides start to improve. What I am trying to say is, in looking at Redfern particularly, it cannot work with kids without working with the parents, but you cannot really work with the adults without having provisions for kids as well because the family structures or the communal structures of those groups are very tight. You basically need a welfare and an education orientation right from the start in what you do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You did not answer the question about having a control group. Presumably there is other data as to the outcomes of kids who cannot read in sixth class?

Mr BOYD: We are doing some of those tests now, except the kids we got were failing at school anyway.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You say that your model could work in Redfern but you might have to come here yourself and set up yet another organisation?

Reverend CREWS: Yes, we would have to model it to reflect the community here because you have kids who might be in Balranald tomorrow or Dubbo a couple of weeks later. So you would need intensive models which you could use with the kids while they are here.

Mr BOYD: As I said, we are not pushing the Exodus model on Redfern in its present form. We realise that it must be adapted to suit Redfern, both our education and welfare.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Looking at the figures it might not be a bad idea to take it across, or something more radical.

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

CHAIR: Are you familiar with the education programs that have been operating in Redfern—originally under the Schools as Community Centres banner, but some of the umbrella names have changed since—which have involved literacy programs: breakfast before school, buses to collect kids and their families?

Reverend CREWS: We ran a breakfast program for several years down here for kids before they went to school.

CHAIR: Did you say "down here"?

Reverend CREWS: In the Block we ran a program.

CHAIR: The breakfast before school program, using the school as the centre, has been operating as one of half a dozen originally introduced in New South Wales. Are you familiar with its role and success rate?

Reverend CREWS: I am to a point but, to be honest, I am not really interested in the kids who go to school, I am more interested in the ones who do not. There is ample evidence there are heaps of them who do not. They would be the ones we would be targeting.

CHAIR: The bus program was designed to collect kids to make sure they got to school.

Reverend CREWS: We did some of those things. We had a bus and we gave them breakfast, but our interest has always been to pick up the ones that are falling out of the system. If the

system is working for some kids that is fine. We do not see ourselves as in competition. We really see ourselves as picking up the kids that the system does not quite relate to.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Reverend Crews, I am extremely interested especially in the kind of work that the Exodus Foundation has done. I am interested to know how, when you are looking at some sort of audit and one-stop shop—an organisation where the kids learn about themselves and get dignity and respect—you are able to work in with the local community, and the Elders, et cetera, in the community? I am getting the impression that your organisation is a bit of a loner.

Reverend CREWS: How can I answer that? I have been involved with Aboriginal people since 1970, starting with Charlie Perkins and Gary Foley and a lot of the very early people in the early seventies. I have been involved with breakfast programs. At this moment we assist a lot, particularly at St Vincent's Church at Redfern. I know a lot of the Aboriginal Elder people personally. Some of them come to our church in Ashfield so I think over a long time we have built up a good rapport because we are good at dealing with larrikins, you know. We are good at that sort of stuff. So it is already known that we have been involved. The Aboriginal people come to us, anyway.

The Hon. IAN WEST: So there would be no problem in including that with whatever you come up with in Aboriginal terms of ownership?

Reverend CREWS: We would do it with great sensitivity. I get the feeling nowadays, particularly working with indigenous people, that we went through an era where the missions and the whites and all of that thought they knew everything, and that failed. Then we went through an era where the Aboriginal people said, "Well, we will do it. Keep out. We will do it", and that kind of failed. I think we are into an era now where people are realising that they need each other. I think that if we can exploit that, if we can build on each other's strengths, I think we can do some good things. I think there is a sense—my reading since the problems that have been in Redfern since the last riot is that a lot of people are really thinking and saying, "Look, we have got to do things to fix this up." They might be coming from different directions, but the general thrust is let us do something together.

The Hon. IAN WEST: However, you have to have some leadership.

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: There would have to be some level of local, State and Federal Government involvement.

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: You are saying that you have difficulty working in that environment?

Reverend CREWS: I am saying that what we would tend to do—the people we would work with would be willing to work with us, and we have tested this out.

Mr BOYD: It is an interesting point and it is a delicate issue for us to answer. But I have to say that what has been happening so far is a bureaucratisation of the management of the Redfern problem. We could not continue to be part of that. We would not like to be sitting on a committee putting our oar in when we were allowed to do so. We do not work very well like that. We would want to be leading from the very front in consultation with everybody else. I hope that is not too heavy, but you can see my point. We either help in a total sense, or not.

The Hon. IAN WEST: The concepts of having an audit and a one-stop shop in partnership with Macquarie University in terms of learning, et cetera, are not new ideas.

Reverend CREWS: No. It is as old as the hills.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Can you give me some idea as to why the old is new again, and how this time maybe it will work?

Mr BOYD: Because it has not been actually tried yet. It has not been tried in an integrated holistic manner, which is what we are proposing. Would you agree with that, Bill?

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: What is new about what you are suggesting?

Reverend CREWS: Not much. My question to you would be, like people come up to me and say, "Why the hell isn't something done? What is holding it all back?" It has got to be some of these organisations that are up here that have a vested interest in holding things as they are.

CHAIR: Do you include the non-government organisations in that as well as the government agencies?

Reverend CREWS: Well, you would have to. You would have to. Like, you come up here and you see someone and you think, "Why the hell isn't somebody doing something?" It is easy; you just grab their hand and take them up. I was at a dinner with Noel Pearson last night. He was saying that often the people who he works with up in the north who are the most helpful are the ones who know nothing about the situation. They just come in and do something. My feeling is that a lot of the organisations around Redfern were born in the seventies and they are old and tired. They have got outdated philosophies to work with the world today. I think the other part of the problem I have found a lot of times is that you have huge divisions within the Aboriginal communities themselves which you need to bridge to get through, so you have blockages everywhere.

The Hon. IAN WEST: We heard some very important evidence from Joyce at Redfern, and she was telling us that it is that the 14, 15 and 16-year-olds who are the ones most at risk as opposed to the younger ones. You appear to be saying the opposite.

Reverend CREWS: No, we are not saying the opposite. We are saying that you need two approaches because in that age the hormones have started to kick him with kids as well, so you are dealing with different issues to the younger ones. I think if you can get the younger ones involved in learning and school and all of that at the earlier age, that prevents it. But the ones that are now 14 and 15 who are a real problem now, the issues you have to deal with that we deal with through our Exodus House school, which is for homeless kids, they are different issues. But the two issues—I am just trying to work out how to answer what you are saying.

Mr BOYD: We use the three safety nets principle here. We realised after a while at Exodus that what we have got is three safety nets. We get the kids at five or six and prevent them falling through the safety net. If they fall through the safety net, then we pick them up again when they end up in refuges at the age of 14 or 15. If they fall through that safety net, then they end up as one of our clients, our adult clients, and hopefully we can fix them. We cannot fix them all. We are not a 100 per cent outcome-based organisation. But those are the three safety nets. It comes back to what we were saying earlier. The earlier we can get people in the first safety net, the best chance they will have of not getting into the next one or the one after that.

Reverend CREWS: The thing I would say to what you are saying is that for the 14 and 15-year-olds, Redfern must be abound with youth workers. What are they doing? What we do is set up this school for them and try to work with them through that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: People talk about the 14 and 15-year-olds, but it seems that the problem is that they are big enough to cause adults inconvenience. They are not any more upset or more disturbed than they were when they were 10 years old. Is it not the case that the reason that everyone concentrates on kids who are 14 or 15 years old is that they are big enough to cause more trouble to adults?

Reverend CREWS: But also the hormones have kicked in, and so there is a different vibration that comes out from adolescence to 10-year-olds. They start to develop an attitude at that age.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes. But if you fix them at 10, they would not be disturbed at 14.

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Effectively, as you say, if you got them younger, the 14-year-old or 15-year-old would not be a problem because you have fixed the 10-year-old.

Reverend CREWS: Yes, but I think we do need to think in terms of generations rather than in terms of fixing people up quickly. But I think from what I can see, so many of the young people we see have come from such disadvantage and such damaged homes and parents that goes back a long way that we are not going to solve all of it within one generation. We are actually looking at working slowly through several generations to tackle a lot of these problems. Like, you are not going to take 15-year-old kids who are in real trouble and fix them up forever because there has been too much damage along the way.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I just want to ask you about the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project. We have had mixed commentary about it. It is supposed to be there to co-ordinate government and non-government services, but it does not. It seems to be well received by councils and property interests but most people in the community think it has not consulted properly and has not done anything. Do you have some comments on that?

Reverend CREWS: I think it really needs more community consultation. I think that most people think that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project has its own agenda and wants to get everybody to agree to it, but they are not taking enough time to work through so that it becomes a genuine grassroots project. I think most people also are really interested in their own area, and Redfern-Waterloo is a huge area compared to, say, the Block or bits where certain people live. So it has not been taken down into the community enough for enough consultation.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know what the project is actually supposed to do?

Reverend CREWS: Do I know what it is meant to do?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes.

Reverend CREWS: Solve all problems.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thought your comments were quite refreshing. What has been interesting about it is to see the warfare with all the government departments all sizing up each other.

Reverend CREWS: I know.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You say we need people who are thinking less about the cars, salaries and reports: Not too many people are actually doing anything.

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

Mr BOYD: That is not the fault of the individual people. They are good, qualified people. We are not knocking them. It is purely a matter of the management of them.

Reverend CREWS: There is also in a way a blindness to the suffering that a lot of people have got. I was just coming up here and I was driving across the Block. There were all these police at the top of the Block. I was talking to one of the Aboriginal people from the stolen generation and he and his friends, as young kids, used to swim in a river. On the hill overlooking the river were the welfare. Every now and then the welfare would come down and pluck out a kid and put him in Kinchela or somewhere like that. Now you have these people who are in their forties and fifties now. When they see the welfare or the authorities on the top of a hill, their minds go back to when they were kids. So there is a lot more sensitivity needed in dealing with that. Like that will just cause more riots. Doing that just causes more riots because it brings back all the pain that these people suffer.

During the Redfern riot, one of the people I know, who is a really strong Christian Aboriginal person, was saying, "I've got to go home and pray. I've got to go home and pray, because if I don't, I will join them." And he is not one of those sorts of people. We have to realise that there is a lot of suffering among people that needs to be looked at and understood, and so the policing needs to be very sensitive in the way it deals with these issues.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: One Aboriginal witness made comments to the effect that a lot of them were grandparents and children and that the middle generation were missing, and there was a feeling that the grandparents were having to look after the children.

Reverend CREWS: I know one 75-year-old lady who is looking after dozens of grandchildren because some of her kids have been dying from drug overdoses or are in gaol. We have seen that the treatments that these people get from authorities when they go on their own, or when someone like us goes with them, is totally different. Imagine giving a hard time to an old lady when she is trying to bring up her grandchildren. Whereas, if some of us came along, it is totally different: How can we help? How can we do this, and how can we do that? We have seen this, and we know these people need advocates who know the system, and who can go with them; so that, when they go to DOCS or to the courts, there is someone there with them who will not let the authorities get away with the rough treatment that they hand out.

CHAIR: So racism is alive and well?

Reverend CREWS: I do not know whether it is racism or classism.

CHAIR: Perhaps it is both.

Reverend CREWS: I do not know, because I have known a lot of white people who have been treated the same way. One thing we find is that Aboriginal people, or people who do not understand the system, get punished for not knowing the system, when the people who administer the system should be helping them to understand it. We find that over and over again. If there is a need of anything up here, it is a need for volunteer people to go to court with Aboriginal people and just hold their hands, or go to DOCS with them—just to go with them to the various agencies and be an advocate; not to help them get through if they are badly treated, but to be there and slugging it out with them. I have been amazed in the difference in attitude.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What are your perceptions of the way in which policing occurs in Redfern?

Reverend CREWS: I have seen some of the best social work I have ever seen from the police—some of the best—and I have heard some of the most ridiculous statements. The police hierarchy and police unions have different agendas and are fighting with each other. But, really, every police person in Redfern needs to be hand-picked, and I think they need to be incredibly culturally and socially aware. I think what happens is that the drug dealers have realised that they can hide behind a really sensitive and bruised community and do all their dealings and get away with that. So there becomes in the police mind confusion between the bruised community and the people dealing drugs, and they tend to treat them the same.

Mr BOYD: On that question, my view—which is not generally accepted—is that there are two drug problems in Redfern, not one. The first one is that Redfern is a centre for drug dealing, serving southern Sydney and the eastern suburbs, like Cabramatta used to be for the western suburbs. The second one is that drug dealing goes hand in hand with disadvantaged people. We have the same problem in Ashfield. The two problems are separate. The first one can be got rid of, and it must be got rid of essentially by moving it somewhere else. That is about all we really have. The second one—dealing with the existing drug users of Redfern—is just part of the social welfare program that we are dealing with every day at Ashfield.

Reverend CREWS: I have got to say that I have seen drug dealing going on in one lane, the police driving down the other lane, and they never think to drive up the lane where all the drug dealing is going on. I have seen that myself.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: At Cabramatta, of course, it was worse than that. You could see police standing on the corner and two shops down were the dealers. But, once the heat came on and the police felt that they had community and government support to deal with it, Cabramatta changed markedly.

Mr BOYD: It has just been moved up the train line, though.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Reverend Crews, you made comments about the number of services in the Redfern-Waterloo area. One of your comments was that it makes you wonder what people in those services are doing. You also mentioned, in terms of the people who are providing those services, that the problems you see are the bureaucratic problems in the services. Given that you are working in this area and, to use my word, are aloof from some of the State and Federal funding and so on, how do you think the Exodus Foundation could work with those other services and perhaps improve the whole system? Also, what do you look at in terms of your financial viability in also working in this area, given that you tend to shy away from funding from other areas?

Reverend CREWS: We are probably doing that here. That is the way we try to get money: we appeal for the money. But we work with other services every day anyway. I think part of it is just trying to get in there and do something, and be seen to be doing something, and stay there for the long term. You just work with whoever you have to work with.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So you feel you would be able to wend your way through all the other issues about services. As so many services have been identified in this area, do you think there would be a better way for those services to work together than they are doing at present?

Reverend CREWS: Probably not.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I think that probably comes under the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project.

Reverend CREWS: Probably not, because if they were going to work together they would have been doing that by now. The Government has to take a serious look at which ones are doing what they are supposed to be doing and which ones are not.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Given that there is State, Federal and local government funding, how would you see the three areas of government working together?

Reverend CREWS: We need to get them working together first. If you cannot do that, what chance have you got? A lot of people are suffering because of that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You spoke about literacy and young children. Given the evidence about some of the problems that young people in their early teens have, would you see the Exodus Foundation working and assisting in relation to apprenticeships, traineeships and all those sorts of things?

Reverend CREWS: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: How would you do that?

Reverend CREWS: At the Exodus House school we run for homeless kids we have moved to what is called the CGVE—the certificate of general vocational education—whereby, through the TAFE system, children in that school can get a school certificate that is broadly based. It enables them to learn in modules of learning, so that they can do personal development and education programs and occupational programs as well. It is so that we can set a good base from which they can move into other sorts of occupations if they want to.

Mr BOYD: We have three avenues that we look at: when they have finished with us, we want them to either enter conventional education—which they have been dropping out of for years; two, to go to TAFE; or, three, to have a job.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: If there are not many jobs around for young people, how would the Exodus Foundation deal with that issue and find more jobs?

Mr BOYD: That is our first objective. If there are no jobs for young people, it means they have not got any further in education, so we would try to get them back into conventional education or into TAFE.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: There has been a lot of evidence and discussion about drug problems in the area. One question that keeps coming up is in relation to the needle van. I am not sure if you are aware of the issues related to that. Have you got any views or comments on how the needle van is operating at the moment?

Reverend CREWS: You have got to realise that Redfern station is like the hub for people from all over Sydney. You will get a lot of public servants in their suits who get off the train at Redfern, come up, buy their heroin, use it and go back, and all of this sort of stuff. So we are not dealing with just people in this area. We are dealing with a whole range of people who head to Redfern to buy their heroin. We have to look at bigger problems, like hepatitis C, AIDS and all of those sorts of issues. If the van is not being managed properly, then it is a real problem. For general community health, we have to do things like have a van or something like that, because otherwise your daughter could end up with hepatitis C by being caught up with some guy who got heroin and used a needle, or something like that. So, while being sympathetic to the van, I realise it has got to be managed properly so that there are not the dangers associated with all these needles being discarded. That seems to be a big problem with all these discarded needles.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think heroin should be decriminalised to lessen the problems it is causing?

Reverend CREWS: I think it is obvious the Government is not going to do that. I feel that we are wasting so much money playing cops and robbers with people. There are lots of other ways. I think, for those who are intractable, probably the only way is to start to work towards getting some help for them, and stopping old ladies being bashed on the head and their bags being stolen. In the light of the way people feel at this moment, I think it is a hopeless approach to take to say: Let's decriminalise it. Maybe we can do some minimal sorts of things which will work, like getting some of the tractable ones out of the criminal system and into the health system.

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

Reverend CREWS: Probably, but not—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Not unqualified?

Reverend CREWS: Not unqualified.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We have heard and seen over the years lots of sad cases of children wandering around in gangs at night, turning up to the needle van with their parents, and those sorts of issues leading to horrendous situations of physical and sexual abuse. How effective do you think DOCS has been in this area?

Reverend CREWS: I think they have been caught by their own regulations. One question I would have is: Why isn't there a 24-hour crisis centre up here? At the moment, I would imagine the only crisis centre there is the police. That, to me, is just insane.

Most of those kids are wandering around and getting lost, or whatever. If there were a 24-hour crisis centre they could wander in there. You could make that place attractive enough so that those kids would have somewhere to go. My whole approach would be to look at the situation as it is and to try to do something now. Then maybe along the track we can improve conditions so that these

kids will not come. But unless you have a pied piper thing and you collect them now, it is just a waste of time. That is obvious, is it not? If there are kids wandering around at night you set up a crisis centre to which they can go.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Have we lost another generation in Redfern?

Reverend CREWS: Six months before I knew that something like that was going to happen. The demoralisation amongst the Aboriginal leadership in this area is really sad. I had to go to a dinner where there were a whole lot of leaders. I felt really despondent because it looked like they had been abandoned. They had come from homes where many of them had been abandoned as children. Here they were trying to help their people and the Government had abandoned them. I think we have wasted so much time. It is appalling and sinful that we have wasted so much time.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Has that happened because too many people have treaded too softly or tiptoed around the problem for fear of being called racist?

Reverend CREWS: No. I think what has happened is that a lot of people with some authority have used the confusion here to enhance their own ends—to push their own barrows and their own ideological stances. I think that includes Aboriginal people as well as government people. I think too many people have come in to try to make Redfern fit their agenda when it is just its own place. A lot of people have suffered as a result.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The buck must stop somewhere though. Where do you believe that the buck should stop?

Reverend CREWS: Probably with each and every one of us. We allow awful things to go on in relation to other people as long as it does not make our lives painful. Sometimes I just sit and watch. Probably a lot of those young university students are doing social work, welfare work, ethics, medicine and all that. They all wrapped up in their own lives and worlds. They work in the most disadvantaged area of Australia and they do not even notice. I think that impinges on all of us. Until each of one of us feels that every person, whether they are black or white, is worth caring for, it will just go on.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The Government funds many of the organisations that deliver services in Redfern. Do you think there is a responsibility that is not being met? I am referring in particular to accountability?

Reverend CREWS: There has to be. I think even the Government has to realise that.

CHAIR: Two of the questions that we sent to you have not been addressed. In your submission you referred in the main to Redfern being symbolic for Aboriginal people. You said that symbolism is problematic and illusory. Can you tell us what you meant?

Reverend CREWS: I would say that Redfern is a state of mind for Aboriginal people.

Mr BOYD: I think it has become a simple and a very important place for Aboriginal people, ever since the exodus from the rural communities began in the 1930s. I do not think we can ignore that. As I have said before, the problem is that the Aboriginal and social problems are centralised in one area, as opposed to the rest of Sydney where gentrification has tended to push all the disadvantaged people elsewhere. That has not happened in Redfern. It probably would have been easier if it had.

CHAIR: Easier for whom?

Mr BOYD: It would be easier in this way. If you concentrate all the problems in one area you have a very volatile cocktail and you end up with the kind of riots that we saw earlier this year.

CHAIR: Is that what you meant when you said it was problematic?

Mr BOYD: Yes, it is.

CHAIR: What do you mean when you say it is illusory?

Mr BOYD: Redfern is an icon. Redfern is not a place; it is a condition.

CHAIR: So the point that you made relates to symbolism?

Mr BOYD: Yes.

CHAIR: The last question that we try to ask all our witnesses is: What would both of you like to see come out of our inquiry?

Reverend CREWS: To get better and more appropriate services in Redfern. I think some of the services run by the Aboriginal people and some of the services run by the Government are out of date. They have philosophies that do not really apply now. So there has to be a lot of change.

Mr BOYD: I think what we want to achieve—and it will not be done overnight but it is in your hands—is to ensure at some time in the medium term that we have a proud, socially integrated, healthy community in Redfern of which they are proud and of which Sydney can be proud.

(The witnesses withdrew)

SHARNE DUNSMORE, Executive Officer, Fact Tree Youth Service, 703 Elizabeth Street, Waterloo, and

STUART ROSEWARNE, Chairperson, Fact Tree Youth Service, 703 Elizabeth Street, Waterloo, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: We have received your submission. You have seen some questions that we have prepared for you. I think we have added a few more questions, and inevitably Committee members will have their own questions to ask. Would you tell us a bit about the role of your organisation, particularly in relation to Redfern and Waterloo? Would you also tell us a bit about you and your funding so that we have a picture of who you are and how you operate?

Ms DUNSMORE: Fact Tree Youth Services is a community-based generalist youth service. We cater for the recreational and developmental needs of children aged 11 to 24. We are based in Waterloo, so the community that we service is predominantly located in Waterloo and not in Redfern. I can expand on that issue later. We have six staff members. I am the executive officer and we have a program co-ordinator's position, an adolescent and family counsellor, a drug and alcohol counsellor, a youth employment officer and an indigenous worker.

I have been at the Fact Tree Youth Service for just over 10 years. We offer a range of services to young people. We have a drop-in facility that is open five days a week and on three nights. Unfortunately, we can no longer open on weekends. We provide adolescent and family counselling and drug and alcohol counselling. We provide group work, we have a young mothers' program, a young men's and a young women's program; we run learn to drive courses; offer computer training; and we help with employment and further education. Last year we got 87 young people into employment and further education. We provide counselling. We do a lot of court and juvenile justice work and we provide cooking classes, barbecues and school holiday programs.

CHAIR: What do you do in your spare time?

Ms DUNSMORE: Not a great deal.

CHAIR: From where do you get your funding?

Ms DUNSMORE: We have six positions. Two are funded by the New South Wales Department of Health and four are funded by the Department of Community Services.

CHAIR: You referred earlier to how you used to operate on weekends but you said that you are no longer able to do that. Is that because of a lack of funding, or a reduction in funding?

Ms DUNSMORE: Basically it is because funding has gone down in real terms. For example, our insurance bills have risen from \$2,000 to \$10,000. Our funding has not increased as a result. We also received some funding from the youth enhancement funds from the partnership program to directly meet the needs of opening on the weekend, because that was one of the problems that was highlighted. Regrettably, we did not receive that funding in the second round. We were not aware of any tender process going out and nor was it evaluated. So we had to close living expenses on the weekends, which is highly regrettable.

CHAIR: We have a number of questions about the provision of services and programs for youth. We have already heard evidence from a number of people about the lack of such services.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In your submission you state—and you are not alone—that people believe there is a level of consultation but that there are no outcomes. You are at the coalface providing those services, so it must be hard. You also said that people are disillusioned. Can you expand on that?

Ms DUNSMORE: In the last four years there have been a number of reviews and consultations. Let us go back to the first riot, if that is what you would like to call it, in Waterloo in

2001. There were a number of reviews and consultants were called in. I can name at least six people from the Premier's Department that have turned over in the past four years. They came to our service and ran focus groups with young people. We were promised a relocation of the service. They promised the young people that there would be such a relocation as our facilities were inadequate. The young people gave of their time freely and so did their parents and everybody else involved, and so did we.

The end result was that we achieved nothing. Nothing came out of that. We were informed that we had to move by June 2003, that the money would expire before that, but we have had no contact with the partnership program since then. We have not been informed about any relocation move. Basically, it seems to be a response to crisis. People tend to come in—people that we have never seen, and I have to add that we never see again—and they run groups, promise the world, tell us what is needed to repair things, and then nothing comes through. The community needs very practical and real responses. If even a small proportion of the money that has been spent on consultants and reviews was put back into the community in a practical way we might be in a better situation than we are in today.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In your view we have had a riot, we have had consultation but we have had no action?

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Is the consultation coming from the Government?

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes. We have conducted our own. The youth organisations have got together and tried to address those issues by themselves. They have formed various committees. But again we are restricted by the fact that we have to do our face-to-face work as well and we cannot be at meetings indefinitely. But also the funds basically are not there. People are calling for 24-hour crisis accommodation. They are calling for adolescent drug rehabilitation units. Those things cost money. We do not even have money to put our sporting teams into local competitions. With the increase in public liability, the cost of uniforms and all that we do not have the funds to put our teams into competition any more. So we are talking at a very basic level here—we are talking about bricks and mortar. It is just not happening.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: One reaction by government to the crisis was the establishment of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project at \$7.9 million over three years. Now, two years down the track, what is your view of its progress?

Dr ROSEWARNE: We have spelt that out in our submission. We felt it was a frustrating process. There was a lot of input on our part and we made a considerable effort to try to negotiate something constructive, particularly with the Waterloo area. Today, nothing concrete has come from that process.

Ms DUNSMORE: Out of that \$7 million, \$140,000 was made available for youth enhancement funds to try to address a wide range of issues. We were the ones that picked up on the need for services on weekends. We received \$38,000 to do that over a 12-month period, and we opened on Saturdays and Sundays. The prime example of the lack of partnership in this project is that we were never told, prior to 30 June—after we had employed a person—that those funds would not be renewed, that they would not go out to tender. As of today, more than 12 months later, there has been no call for any evaluation, no statistics, and they have not produced any results.

And \$140,000 for every single youth organisation is not a great deal of funds. I know other services provide camps and put in housing officers. Waterloo was affected by the lack of funds. The fact is we were not consulted and were not told that it would not go out to tender, and it never did. That is a prime example of what is going on.

CHAIR: That was in early 2003?

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes, we were funded for 2002-03 financial year and we do not have those funds anymore.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In consultation you offer services to youth. Did you discuss amongst yourselves perhaps bringing some young people in to talk to the Committee?

Ms DUNSMORE: Here, today?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Yes,

Ms DUNSMORE: No.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Why not?

Ms DUNSMORE: To be honest, I am quite intimidated so I think possibly young people would be as well. Again, it gets back to our active participation in the human services review that is happening at the moment. There are focus groups as part of that process and they have been quite overly consulted. It is frustrating for them to come forward and tell their stories yet again and to no result. To a certain degree it is a protection of themselves and also from a worker's point of view, we are the ones that receive flak on a day-to-day basis when kids ask us when are we moving, when is this project going to start. I do not think it is an appropriate environment to bring them to.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Who is responsible for the lack of action? Who should the Committee take to task?

Ms DUNSMORE: I think probably everyone. It really is a whole-of-government issue. It is a whole-of-community issue. We need to have a look at the social issues that are facing the community. We need to acknowledge that it is one of the most disadvantaged communities in New South Wales and how to respond. I think basically it would need to fall to a large part on government and those handing out the funds, because it needs to be put into very direct and real responses. To a certain degree, we are all responsible, but I know for a fact that our organisation works to capacity. If we had the availability of having more workers and better facilities we could do a lot more.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You seem to do a lot of different things. If you simply offer a drop-in centre, to what extent can you intervene?

Ms DUNSMORE: I think the notion that a lot of people think about, if you do a lot of things that is bad. I would like to highlight that the basic core or crux of the Fact Tree Youth Services is the drop-in. By its very nature young people do not tend to seek assistance when they need assistance. They are not very forthright in coming in saying, "I have a drug addiction problem", or "I have problems at home. I will go to the service where I do not know anybody, I do not trust anybody, and I will not be back." Although the drop-in centre is the core function of the Fact Tree Youth Services we have specialist positions. They are all qualified and trained as counsellors. All young people need a place to socialise and have recreation together in a safe environment.

The drop-in centre allows them to come in, in a non-threatening environment. They can participate in classes and programs, play pool or the Playstation. During that process, that is where we as workers—and the Fact Tree has a two-worker safety policy, always two on duty at all times—we highly interact with young people. It is through drop-in that we see kids have been sleeping well, or if they suddenly have bruises on their faces, if they have not been fed, and we can provide those services without the kids saying they need things.

The workers are known to the kids: even with adults, the stigma associated with going to a counsellor and seeking help is extremely high, for a young person it is even more intense. We need to have workers that young people see and know and trust. But we do not want them to say, "You are a counsellor; something has to be wrong with me to come and see you". They are more willing to go to the drop-in and see our counsellors, who are qualified. They are specialists in the field and can deal with issues that they have. I have been a youth worker for more than 17 years. I find that drop-in is a core function. Basically it allows us to spread out to other services. The core of that is that young people, unless they are in dire straits and have hit a crisis or are referred by the courts or have been found to be long-term homeless, do not necessarily seek assistance. We are trying to do early intervention work and prevention work all the way through to intensive therapy.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Bill Crews said that what is needed is a 24-hour drop-in centre in the area. Of course, he has done a lot of work in formal education programs. How far are you from doing things like that? Do you think programs like that would be a good model for the Redfern area?

Ms DUNSMORE: I would say that we already provide a vast array of education programs. We have the drop-in facilities that are open after 3 o'clock in the afternoon, to discourage truancy—so kids do not jig school and hang out and play pool. We have found that to be highly successful. Of course, we know the kids and if they are of school age and come to the service before 3.00 p.m. we ask them why they are not at school. We encourage them to go back to school. The only services they can use during that time are our specialist services, if they need to see a counsellor, or an indigenous worker or get housing assistance.

I agree that there is definitely a need for a 24-hour service in this area. We have spoken to police about young children wandering around in the very early hours of the morning. Sometimes they attend because of a domestic situation; they have nowhere safe to put young people. So there is a need for respite care. A 24-hour service of some type is needed, whether it is a drop-in centre as such in the way we function I am not 100 per cent sure. But there is definitely a need for 24-hour respite care.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How does your system vary to that of Bill Crews in delivering education to kids who are at risk of not having it, or truancy?

Ms DUNSMORE: I am not familiar with Bill Crews or any of his programs in the 10 years that I have been in Waterloo. I could not comment on his programs. We run a homework centre and a computer room with limited facilities. We run learn-to-drive programs and liaise heavily with the local schools. We also go to schools and run workshops. Given our time restraints, I say we already do that. If we are open 24 hours or perhaps longer, we could do that longer.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You spoke about the whole-of-family philosophy. At paragraph 4.6 in your submission you commented that there was little substance in the whole-of-government philosophy. Do you think that a whole-of-government approach would work for the area if it were the right type of program and model?

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes, given that you have a variety of departments including education, juvenile justice, community services and health, there is a need for those to be talking together at a higher level so that they understand, and that their programs are co-operative and cohesive. For example, we have two different funding bodies, provide different funding reports and have different funding requirements to give to those two departments. Other organisations have funding by six departments. It makes it a cumbersome process in fulfilling those requirements and in meeting objectives. For example, from my experience in working the Department of Community Services and the Department of Health there have been climate changes. When I first came to the drug and alcohol field it was an abstinence model. It moved towards harm reduction and is now called harm minimisation.

The Department of Community Services used to have an early intervention model. Because of the need to produce reports and measurable outcomes they moved to a more substantive qualified quantity approach. That is very difficult when doing prevention work. How could you say when dealing with 40 kids that through the work you did, five of those did not get arrested, five did not end up homeless? You can only follow the 40 kids through the process and see how they get through. With the whole-of-government approach, if we are actually working together for the same objective, perhaps we can pool some of the resources together—and that also means money, we may be able to get some more effective programs.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I take it from your comments that the issues that services such as yours have problems with is the amount of feedback, whether good or bad, funding issues, and the amount of paperwork and administrative work that has to go back to the funding body. I assume that when you are talking about the whole-of-government approach you would like to see as part of that model a different way to approach the accountability processes, given that you might receive funding from several bodies in that process?

Ms DUNSMORE: Definitely, and I think there are moves towards that; with the SAC reforms for example. They seem to be ever changing, they seem to come out with a format and might use that for one year. Supposedly we are to use that for the next five years and then it is shuffled again next year and we find we are reporting a different set of variables. Organisations that have a bigger pool of different funding sources are definitely overwhelmed. I can only speak for myself but I have been in this game for quite some time and am fairly efficient at producing reports on time. It becomes time consuming. If there is some way to pull that together, if there could be some computer-based program in which we could easily plug in our statistics as we go, so they do not need to be evaluated towards the end of the year, we could have a good idea of what exactly we are reporting against.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You said it is very hard to report that you have had X successes out of the number of young people you are dealing with. If someone asked you how you judge your success at the moment in the work that you do, what would be your answer? How do you see successes in that process?

Ms DUNSMORE: Mainly on a day-to-day basis it is the survival of the young people and whether they have stayed at school and whether they have managed to stay out of crime and that their home situation is okay. I think on a service level it is the fact that the young people come back and that they trust us and they come back to the service when they are in periods of crisis, that they talk to their friends. I have the parents come back and say thank you for doing this and this with the kids. Given that I have been at the Fact Tree for 10 years, I am now seeing a lot of the younger siblings and some of the kids that I started working with are now parents themselves. Although we start at 11, we have kids busting at the door to get in when they are 10. We actually have some parents who write notes, because it is a requirement that they be 11, saying that their child is 11 so that they can come in and use the facilities and we know that they are only eight or nine years old. That is an indication that we are doing the work that they want and the fact that our youth committee regularly talks to us and tells us what they need. We are a very direct service. We have constant consultations with our kids and in communication, and when they have requests we follow that through. That the kids keep coming back is an indication.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What are your views on the training and employment opportunities for young people in the area?

Ms DUNSMORE: I think education is an overwhelming factor in some of the disadvantage that these young people are facing. They are not attending school regularly and without a school certificate life is very hard. So even sometimes when they are 15 or 16 and they want to work, they cannot get into the positions. Often some of the training courses are too structured. The same reasons that they have not been attending school are perhaps the same reasons that they do not attend some of the training courses. They need to be more adaptable. They need to understand the community a bit better.

If you look at the Redfern-Waterloo area, it was what could have been classically defined as working class and people were fulfilling labouring positions and apprenticeships. Today you need your HSC to get an apprenticeship as well so that really cuts a lot of the young people out of the market today. They cannot necessarily become carpenters and plumbers. They may be very physically adept but cannot get through the educational process. So I think there is a need to address schooling at a very young age and that is at primary school, and to have a look at where the education system is failing. We do have young people who we cater for who are 16 years old who have been technically given their school certificate as in their attendance but they still cannot read and write. That is an appalling situation. So obviously their ability to get a job is virtually non-existent.

Dr ROSEWARNE: It should also be added that we are seeking to liaise with the University of Sydney to try to get some employment positions at the university. The University of Sydney has developed an indigenous employment strategy and promoting the idea of traineeships and cadetships, and we have been linking in with the university and the university supports union to open up opportunities for kids in the Waterloo area.

Ms DUNSMORE: That is why we run in-house programs, a computer program. Our learn to drive program was a program that I developed and have been doing over a number of years. For

example, they often need to have a drivers license so we are trying to offer practical ways while also giving literacy. Because of this area as well, I do not know whether you are aware, most of you it has probably been quite some time since you got your drivers license, it is a very expensive process. It can cost you around \$400 to go through; you have to pay for the manual, you have to pay for the sitting of the test, you have to have professional driving lessons. That is beyond the reach of most people in this community and most kids do not have access to a vehicle that their parents might have because their parents often do not have drivers licenses either. So it is a very practical component that we are trying to offer as well as the computer programs. They are real, and we are looking at getting software programs to try to address the literacy issues in a language that is appropriate for young people and particularly indigenous young people.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Dr Rosewarne, do you work full time at all on the service?

Dr ROSEWARNE: No, I am chairperson of the board of management.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Ms Dunsmore, you obviously work there full time.

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes I do.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What is the total budget for the service?

Ms DUNSMORE: Approximately, inclusive of GST, about \$380,000 per annum.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Does most of that go on salaries?

Ms DUNSMORE: Ninety per cent of that goes on salaries.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I was a bit confused about what you were saying about moving. Are you still at the corner of Elizabeth and Wellington streets?

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes we are and the problem with that site has been addressed by a number of reviews and consultancies. It is a hot spot. It is what is known as a hot spot. We have the George Hotel directly opposite us. We used to have the Commonwealth Bank until they built a block of units where that was. We are at a set of lights, and you may be aware that lights are an assisting aid in doing bag snatches and things because people have to stop at the lights. There used to be a back alley at our place. There used to be a spot where people would dump there. Also, the entry and exit point to our service is directly in front of a bus stop. The 355 stops right in front which is very difficult if kids are coming in and out and you have the elderly or anybody getting on and off the buses. There are no outdoor facilities, not to mention that the place is falling down. There is no outdoor space where we can supervise young people kicking a football, playing cricket. I know for a fact that the police have been called on a number of occasions to young people in the area and what they are doing is kicking a football across the road. That is dangerous, it can be a nuisance and the police are called. But if we had a space that was attached to our centre we could supervise that space as well as offering them activities.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So that is what the Government, in its submission, was referring to when it said that the location of the Fact Tree was a significant contributing factor to the antisocial behaviour of young people within the locality.

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It sounds fairly damning that a government facility is said by the Government to be a contributing factor to the antisocial behaviour of young people.

Ms DUNSMORE: My answer to that would be, and through all my experience, is that people consider youth services to be a good idea but nobody wants them near them. If you are doing your job, and you are doing your job well, your job is to attract young people to your facilities. I hasten to say that the activity that is happening in that area is not necessarily clients of the Fact Tree. They are to a larger degree older than the client group that we deal with and we are not directly responsible for all the behaviour that goes on in the area. Because we are in a very visible location we

are often the first person to get the finger pointed at us for any activity that happens by any young people in the area.

Under no circumstances do we condone any antisocial behaviour. The young people sign a rights and responsibilities contract with us when they become members of the Fact Tree. We are very staunch on the behaviour that is displayed by the young people in the facilities. We also liaise with the shopkeepers in the area to develop strategies. If something goes wrong they come and converse with us. As I have put in the response, we have had kids who we know that if they have been responsible for writing graffiti we have provided the materials and the supervision to watch them remove it. If there has been some petty theft in the shops—normally drinks and chips—the shopkeepers inform us and we go back and deal with that issue. The young people know that their behaviour within the vicinity of the Fact Tree has a direct effect on their ability to use the services of the Fact Tree, and that is probably one of the only tools that we have available to us.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What about the Government reference to young people stoning buses from the Fact Tree premises?

Ms DUNSMORE: I would say that that is not happening from the Fact Tree premises. In the time that I have been there there was one incident and it was actually eggs that they had got from the shop, and we dealt with that immediately. On occasions we have been the ones to call the police to deal with this. As you can well imagine, we do not have the right to restrain young people. We do not have the right to physically interact with them. We only have the availability, as most normal citizens do, to try to address that with them in language. If they refuse to participate or to correct their behaviour we are only open to the same responses as the rest of the community.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So the need to relocate is quite important.

Ms DUNSMORE: It is extremely important and it has been on the agenda for almost four years now.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What do you say to some of the comments I have had from police that the Fact Tree is being used as a haven for young offenders and that you have been involved in impeding police in chasing young offenders and so on?

Ms DUNSMORE: I would say no, most definitely not. I think it needs to be acknowledged that we are all working on the same side. We are working on the same side as the police. We are all community partners. We do not condone criminal behaviour or antisocial behaviour under any circumstances. I think that sometimes with the new move-on laws and the availability of laws that are available to the police, I have seen some excellent work done by the police. But I hasten to say also that I have seen some not so good work performed. That is the reality of it.

With the new move-on laws, a congregation of three young people waiting outside to get their chips outside the fish and chip shop does not constitute any antisocial behaviour, nor the need to actually tell them to move on, to take their names and addresses, to strip search them. We are aware of the law and sometimes all we simply do to make sure that the procedures are done correctly is that we will stand with the young person and stand with the police officer while the interaction is going on. That is not hindrance. We do not interfere. We know what our responsibilities are and how far we can go.

We are one of the few youth services in the area that co-operate with the police. You need an independent adult witness to be present to interview an under 18-year-old. We attend those interviews because often the parents or somebody may not be available. We do not want to see that young person detained for six hours while they are waiting to fine. We are one of the few youth services that participates in that. We have had Redfern police ring us up and say, "We have a 15 year old, could you come and attend?"

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Just remind me, you were promised initially that you would be moved when?

Ms DUNSMORE: The deadline was 30 June 2003.

Dr ROSEWARNE: Can I correct that? We were not promised; we were told that we had to.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The Redfern-Waterloo antidrug strategy—

Dr ROSEWARNE: We were told that we would be moving by June 2003. We entered into discussions with the Premier's Department and sought to define the sorts of facilities that we would be requiring. We were repeatedly told that we would be moving by 30 June, that that might be extended a little bit, and we undertook a memorandum of understanding with the Premier's Department and nothing ever came of that.

CHAIR: Were premises actually found?

Dr ROSEWARNE: No, nothing was found.

CHAIR: You were not looking for premises, suitable places, yourself?

Dr ROSEWARNE: We were looking for premises to facilitate the process.

Ms DUNSMORE: We were both, and they did have an organisation that apparently was out looking for premises. The idea originally was that they would relocate us temporarily with a view to building a purpose built youth centre.

CHAIR: Who owns the premises?

Ms DUNSMORE: It is Department of Housing.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Clearly it is something that needs priority because when you have the Government making a submission to us saying that your location contributes to antisocial behaviour by young people and talks about the stoning of buses and so on, that is absolutely unsatisfactory.

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes, and I hasten to add—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is unsatisfactory to me anyway.

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes and I would say it is unsatisfactory but I deny that we have contributed to that. If you see that it was along Elizabeth Street, which is an extremely long street, and we are on one small corner of that. It was actually going all the way down. You could also, and I am not doing this by any stretch of the imagination, combine the Redfern PCYC which is only one block down from us as well, and stoning also happened at the front of that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: There is clearly a miscommunication if the Premier's Department makes a submission alleging those things and you deny it. Clearly, you need to clear up with the Premier's Department what the real position is with your facility.

Ms DUNSMORE: If we could get an audience with the Premier's Department we would be happy to.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If you rejected all kids with antisocial behaviour you would not be much use, would you?

Ms DUNSMORE: No. I hasten to add, we do not reject young people with antisocial behaviour. We monitor and make sure that their behaviour is correct while they are on our premises. We are not their parents, we are not their 24-hour carers. We cannot be held responsible for the behaviour that they do outside. Our object on a daily basis is to instil some values, to help them nurture and grow their community values and to understand. What we tend to do is say, "Did you realise the adverse effects of doing this? If you steal a person's bag not only do they have to replace things but their prescription glasses were in there and they had medication in there. You frightened the

elderly lady when you dragged her across the road trying to get her bag." They are the type of things we do on a daily basis.

Since I took over the Fact Tree Youth Service—and I have run other youth organisations—the behaviour is exemplary when they are inside. They know the behaviour that is allowed and acceptable, and they instil that into the younger siblings. That is the long-term process. We need to get out of crisis mode and look at the long-term objectives. These kids will be having kids and the very fact that 10 years later I am still having discussions that I was having 10 years ago is frustrating. But I am very proud of the work that the Fact Tree does and the professionalism displayed by the staff. We are an integral part of the community and I hope to remain that way.

CHAIR: We have only a few minutes left and our next witness has a limited timeslot. There are two issues we have not raised with you. One, some submissions have stressed the need for an Aboriginal youth service. We would very much like your views on that suggestion. Two, we have asked a series of questions about the relations between youth and police in the Redfern and Waterloo areas. There may be other questions but I am conscious of the time. They are the two particular questions we must address.

Ms DUNSMORE: In relation to the call for an Aboriginal youth service I cannot speak. I am not an indigenous person and I cannot speak for the indigenous community. If they think that is a valid claim, that is fine. What I have found though in providing the general service is that young people do not necessarily socialise around racial definitions. I would hate to see that the young people they attend school with and play football with cannot also have those services available to them in a drop-in centre. I think that the AMS [Aboriginal Medical Service] and the ALS [Aboriginal Legal Service] do good work and they are specialist units which we refer clients to.

Some of the young people in the service have said that it would be good, but they have also said that they would not be willing to participate in it if all their friends could not be part of it. If it is going to be an Aboriginal service, you also need to look at whether that it would be a strictly Aboriginal board of management, strictly Aboriginal staff and strictly for Aboriginal kids. Those questions would need to be answered before I would say it would be a good or bad point. From our point of view we run a community organisation. Close to 85 per cent of the client group we deal with are indigenous, but I would hate to say that we would not be able to service those 15 to 20 per cent of other people.

CHAIR: A lot has been said about the relations between young people and the police? What is your opinion?

Ms DUNSMORE: It would be wrong for me not to say that they are strained. It has been an ongoing factor of tensions between police and young people. If we go back to the first Waterloo riots in 2001, I think that there needs to be a little bit more transparency and there needs to be answerability on both ends. The young people need to be able to answer for their behaviour and take responsibility for their behaviour. That also needs to happen in regards to the police service. They do a very, very difficult job. The police these days have to wear so many hats. They have to be social workers, community workers and law enforcers. They have to be a variety of things and that is not an easy job. I think the difficulty for them is when they come in and try to interact, perhaps say hello, and then they have to turn around and possibly arrest someone for some sort of behaviour. That is very, very difficult.

I can also say—and I hate to say this—of the young people we deal with—and I do not know whether this is across the board—that the darker of the indigenous kids we deal with seem to find themselves in more difficult situations than the fairer Aboriginal kids that we work with. I am not particularly sure why that happens. But with the new move on laws, again it is getting back to the fact that we as a community need to recognise that young people exist, that they hang out together, that they wear different clothes than we do, that they have a different language than we do. Perhaps sometimes their language is not appropriate and we may be offended, but they do not necessarily mean offence. I know for a fact when I took over the Fact Tree I was quite gobstruck by the language that was floating around. I was able to deal with that. I spoke to the young people and said, "In my presence I find this offensive. Do you realise what you are actually saying?" They will say, "Oh, sorry, Shame", and they will deal with that stuff.

In relation to the trifacta, which still exists—which is arrest for offensive language, resist arrest, assault police—the police need to have access to cultural awareness training. They need more training and more support. There needs to be a bit more mutual respect on both sides. Not all kids are bad. We as adults have brought them into the world. We need to take some responsibility for who they are and how they display themselves. I think that they could be dramatically improved. We need to move away from one-off events such as one-off cops versus kids basketball matches or football matches. I do not think they are particularly productive and they centre around competition. I do not think that is a healthy environment to try to throw the two groups into. There needs to be more substantive programs.

CHAIR: Yet your submission says, for example, that it is very difficult to attract kids 11 years old up into the PCYC [police and community youth club]. Do you have any suggestions to overcome the problem you identify—perhaps more ongoing contact between police and young people?

Ms DUNSMORE: Yes. Again, it is recognition of how kids grow. Regrettably, there is a big difference as to why we are a youth centre and not a child-care facility. Example, the skills that are required in working in those two areas are vastly different. Youth work is a very difficult and specialised field. You do need to have trained people working there who understand the acting-out behaviour. Often we find by the time they get to 11 they start to have a voice of their own, they start to get more hyperactive in their dealings and they want to get out a bit more, and that is difficult. The PCYC is very limited in its staffing, so they do not have the capabilities of running and supervising programs.

CHAIR: As I said, we are very short of time. I will ask you a final question: What would you like to see come out of our inquiry?

Ms DUNSMORE: Something very practical and real. I would like to see some of the recommendations that have been floating around for a long time come to fruition. I would like to see a small percentage of the money that has been spent on consultants et cetera perhaps going into a worker in the area. I would like to see some new facilities and ongoing communication. I would hate to see this to be the last and that even after the human services review is completed that we have to wait for another crisis for something like this to happen.

CHAIR: Do you want to say anything, Dr Rosewarne?

Dr ROSEWARNE: I think it is important to also acknowledge the distinction between the Waterloo and Redfern communities. There are unique needs in Waterloo that collapsing the Redfern-Waterloo areas together does not come near to addressing.

Ms DUNSMORE: That really needs to be stressed. If you look at the demographics of Waterloo, they are very different to Redfern. There is a high percentage of housing commission and even with the gentrification process that is going on in Redfern it is going to take an awfully long time. I can also say that one of the mistakes I made when I first took over the Fact Tree was I turned to a young person and said, "Have you lived in Redfern all your life?" He got up in arms, turned around and said, "I'm not from Redfern, I'm from Waterloo." I have never made that mistake again. There are very distinct community differences between the two and I have problems with them continually being dumped together.

CHAIR: Thank you both for attending. If we need any further information from you the Committee will contact you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

JODY BROUN, Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Level 13, 280 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, affirmed and examined:

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

Ms BROUN: Director General, New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

CHAIR: We understand that you have to leave at 1.00 p.m. Perhaps, if necessary, you could take some questions on notice?

Ms BROUN: Yes, I would be happy to do that.

CHAIR: We have provided you with some written questions. Would you begin by telling us about your role and responsibilities as they relate to Aboriginal people in the area and what you understand be the major problems and major areas of social disadvantage for indigenous people in the Redfern and Waterloo areas?

Ms BROUN: Firstly, in terms of the department, it is important to understand that we are not a service delivery department. Our role is ensuring the Aboriginal voice is heard within government—there are a variety of ways that we do that—but also to lead and co-ordinate New South Wales government agencies and monitor the effectiveness of service and policy by government. We also do some work with supporting and monitoring the non-government and business sector in that activity. As I said, our main role is broader policy, high level and strategic policy development within government. We do run a couple of programs that are directed to the Aboriginal community, one being the Aboriginal Community Development Program, which is a \$240 million program delivered to priority communities across New South Wales. A lot of that goes into housing and infrastructure type programs.

A key element of that is the way we work with community themselves in a community party type structure where they determine how that program is delivered on the ground. We also run a Community Partnerships Program in three locations outside Sydney to help co-ordinate effective delivery of services to Aboriginal people and to make sure that government is responding to those needs. They are in the South Coast, on the Central Coast and one in Menindee at the moment. We have set up an Aboriginal Language Research and Resource Centre at Tranby College. The key role there is revitalisation of Aboriginal traditional language in New South Wales. We have a small grants program through the department, which we try to focus in on certain areas. The last couple of focus areas for that program has been language revitalisation programs at a community level and capacity building with organisations. Organisations put in submissions and we fund them. That is generally the sort of program delivery we are doing. The rest of our work is engaged with government at a high level.

In terms of Redfern-Waterloo, our role has been as members of a number of committees and task forces. We are on the drug and alcohol task force as well as the youth task force, and we have been involved in the redevelopment of the Block at Redfern. Our role has been more in making sure that the voices are heard. Where we fit in with that is probably policy development and advice.

In terms of social disadvantage of the Redfern-Waterloo community, I suppose, having read some of the transcript of previous witnesses, I do not think it is worth going through all the statistics to show that the disadvantage exists. In terms of the Government's response, there was a fairly detailed individual document. There was a productivity report which details the level of disadvantage across Australia. That level of disadvantage is not just unique to Redfern-Waterloo. It is right across Australia and right across New South Wales. I think that needs to be recognised. But in terms of statistics, we are actually talking about real people and we need to dig below those statistics and say what does that mean to families on the ground. It often means that in a particular family, no-one has ever finished high school, in a particular family, no-one has ever had full-time employment, and every member of the family is touched at some point by incarceration or imprisonment or going to court; that is ongoing. Death and funerals are basically daily events. People are going to funerals weekly or daily. That is the reality on the ground when it comes down to people. But to balance that, I suppose

there is the other side of it which is the very strong family connections and support that are available in the Aboriginal community and the cultural strength that the Aboriginal people have.

In terms of social disadvantage, I still think that racism as it affects Aboriginal people is critical. It actually affects their access to other programs, employment and all those sorts of things. It is one thing to talk about disadvantage but I think racism is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. It manifests itself obviously in unemployment levels but also generally in social exclusion and a whole sense of disfranchisement and disconnectedness from society, I suppose. I think, particularly in Redfern-Waterloo, there does seem to be a drug or alcohol issue but it is not related specifically or only to Aboriginal people. I am not necessarily convinced that it is worse than in other locations, either. So in terms of all of that disadvantage, perhaps one I can point to is unemployment or access to employment. That seems to be the critical issue in any level of advancement because it does seem to have an effect on so many outcomes for Aboriginal people.

CHAIR: And there are the intergenerational effects as well.

Ms BROUN: That is right. What I am saying is that in order to get employment, people need education and all those things. But they also need a place to live as well.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I am just wondering how many times you have been down to the Block yourself?

Ms BROUN: Myself? Probably only a couple of times in my time here. I have been down to the meetings down at the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project as well.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How long have you been in your role?

Ms BROUN: Eight months as director-general and prior to that about 10 months as the deputy director-general.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Who did you talk to when you went down to the Block?

Ms BROUN: I was actually with Michael Ramsey at that time.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Michael Ramsey of the partnership program?

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Have you been down to the Block with the Minister at all?

Ms BROUN: No.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Has the Minister been down to the Block?

Ms BROUN: I think you would have to ask the Minister that. I am sure he has, at some point.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Have you wandered around the Block?

Ms BROUN: Wandered around?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you know where Caroline Lane is?

Ms BROUN: Not specifically, no.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How can you comment about drugs on the Block being no more significant than in any other area?

Ms BROUN: No. What I said was that I do not think it is restricted to Aboriginal communities and I am not convinced that it is worse than at other locations in New South Wales.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: But you have not been and had a look around. You have not walked down Caroline Lane.

Ms BROUN: No.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Have you been near the needle van?

Ms BROUN: No.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You said one of the roles of your agency or your department was to co-ordinate agencies. We have had constant comment that there is a lack of co-ordination. Your department has failed, has it not?

Ms BROUN: As I said, at co-ordination is at a very high level of government. We are involved in a number of—

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: It is out of sight.

CHAIR: Let the witness answer the question.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I am sorry.

Ms BROUN: I was going to talk about that further in one of the other responses, but we are involved in a number of co-ordinating mechanisms at a fairly high level, and, as I said, we are also involved as members of a number of the groups that are set up under the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You mentioned racism and the need to address it. You also mentioned social problems and the need to address those. What you doing to address them?

Ms BROUN: As a department?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Yes.

Ms BROUN: Or specifically in relation to Redfern-Waterloo?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: In Redfern-Waterloo, what are the department and you as the director-general doing to address those problems?

Ms BROUN: As I said, we are engaged in a number of different committees and task forces through the Redfern-Waterloo project but our work has generally been at a higher policy level in government where we are involved with a number of groups —myself, I am involved with a number of chief executive officer [CEO] groups, but we also run an Aboriginal Affairs CEO group. We set up under the Aboriginal Affairs plan a number of agency cluster groups. We have got several dealing with health, education and those sorts of priority areas. Around each of those tables we have all the responsible agencies. In fact, some of those cluster groups have in excess of 20 agencies and organisations, so Aboriginal peak bodies are on those as well.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What is the budget of your department?

Ms BROUN: I would have to get back to you on the specifics but operating funding is at approximately \$7 million, and then there is a capital element that goes into the Aboriginal Community Development Program. I can get you the specifics for that.

CHAIR: Can you take that on notice?

Ms BROUN: Yes.

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CHAIR: We will get back to you with more details about what we want. There is no need for you to make notes.

Ms BROUN: Okay.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Have you discussed the hearing today with anyone?

Ms BROUN: I have a number of staff I have discussed that with, yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What about the Minister?

Ms BROUN: I did tell him I was meeting or presenting today and the sorts of questions that I had been asked, yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Did you make a contribution to the Government's submission?

Ms BROUN: Yes, I did.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You, personally?

Ms BROUN: No, the department.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Could we have a copy of that submission?

CHAIR: If I may, we have already written to your department. Also Col Gellatly last week discussed with us the provision of that. I think it is a bit unnecessary to ask for that. That is not on notice. That has already been looked after.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can you comment on the level of co-ordination between local, State and Federal programs?

Ms BROUN: I suppose it is better in different places. It actually is not as good as it should be. I think some very significant work needs to be done, particularly between the Commonwealth and State. We are involved, as I said, with a number of our community working parties in Aboriginal locations where we have engaged much better with the Commonwealth. I am not sure whether you are aware of the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] trial that is being held out at Murdi Paaki, we are engaged there on a steering committee with the Commonwealth for that site and at a regional level. There is a regional project that has the Commonwealth involved with that, and the local level. In almost every instance the local government is involved with these community working parties. Structurally it is not as good as it should be, but it does happen.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Just coming back to within the State, there have been a lot of non-government organisations [NGOs] competing for funding. Presumably some of them are funded by one department and some by another, and some by an amalgam of different programs.

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Even within New South Wales, to what extent do you recommend which groups get funded in Aboriginal areas, as opposed to the Department of Community Services [DOCS] or NSW Health or the Department of Housing, or somebody else?

Ms BROUN: As a department?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

Ms BROUN: No. We did not influence other departments' funding.

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The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you have funding yourself which you were saying had capital elements for Aboriginal projects.

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You fund things, and if other departments choose to fund them, you do not have any input into that? Is that the bottom line?

Ms BROUN: In terms of the Aboriginal Community Development Program, that is slightly different in that it is capital. It has been primarily worked with ATSIC to make sure that there is not duplication and that we have complementary funding. Obviously in that program, if we are building a sewerage system somewhere, you do need to co-ordinate with other agencies at State level as well, so that comes into it, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But if each department makes a decision that it is going to fund a project—

CHAIR: You are talking about recurrent funding.

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, recurrent funding. If each department was letting a contract for a service and decides that this is a priority, does it do so in isolation from other departments?

Ms BROUN: I think it is a bit difficult to say in terms broadly that that might happen or not happen. As we are not involved in funding, I cannot comment on how other departments do their funding, if it is recurrent funds to organisations.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But if you are not having input into what other departments fund in relatively Aboriginal areas, then it begs the question: Does anybody talk to anybody about who is funding what? If your answer is that you do not know, then that is a worry, is it not?

Ms BROUN: No. I think that there is a lot of work being done about that. There is a grants administration review being undertaken that will highlight some of those issues and come up with some solutions. In fact it already has some solutions around that, but I am not involved with that particularly. I think some of the things that are happening that are trying to work around that and improve that—I am not saying that it does not need any improvement—are things like the Families First type of program. A lot of that has been set up where a lot of government agencies do get together and talk about the services that are being funded. There are regional co-ordination management groups that get together and do that work. Through the cluster group model that we have established, there is high-level discussion about those services as well. So it is improving. I would not say that it is perfect in any sense.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If you have a grants administration group looking at different departments that are presumably getting grants in the same area, that is presumably after the departments have all individually decided that the money has to go there. Then you say, "Hang on, we are all doing the same thing". Is that not putting the cart in front of the horse?

Ms BROUN: I think that is the intention, if there is some of that as well, but you also—so that work is going on. It needs to improve and that work is going on in order to address that, but there are also the issues around grants that organisations get from the Commonwealth. That is where the level of co-ordination needs to be improved with the Commonwealth as well. As I was listening to your last witness, I was thinking that there are agencies out there getting a bit of funding from a number of different agencies, Commonwealth and State, so obviously that is an area that needs a lot of work.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But we would like to see the State squeaky clean before we then talk about the Commonwealth-State difficulties, would we not?

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The grants administration body, that is part of the Premier's Department?

Ms BROUN: Yes, that is being done by the Premier's Department.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But if the needs were identified first and then which department were to fund of them was next, you would not have the departments' grants being reviewed afterwards, would you?

Ms BROUN: No. It is more a review about the way that that is done rather than a review of grants that have already been given out. That is the aim of it—to have a better system of review so that the grants are co-ordinated across government.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Do you have any comments on the relationship between police and local Redfern-Waterloo indigenous communities?

Ms BROUN: I think you will have other witnesses who are better placed to comment, and are closer to the ground. I think the Aboriginal communities themselves need to be asked that question. In a general sense, I think community-police relationships are not always as good as they could be, and that may not necessarily be something unique to Redfern-Waterloo. So there is work that needs to be done around that, but I think others would have to answer that question specifically.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: A number of people have commented during their evidence that perhaps police need cultural awareness training. It could probably be argued that other communities across New South Wales—not indigenous communities, but people from non-English speaking backgrounds—might make similar comment. Do you have any view about the types of things that should be addressed by cultural awareness training? I know some training is given now, but do you have any comment on the extent of the training needed?

Ms BROUN: Again, that is something you would need to talk to the Aboriginal community about. But I think there is a level of work being done in that area. While we are talking about training as a broad-brush approach, there is also training in the specifics of a location that needs to be done. That is why the Aboriginal community needs to be more engaged with that work, rather than having it generically across the State. There are specifics that need to be taken into account in various places.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Given that this has come up in comment and in evidence on a number of occasions, what do you think would be the best way to deal with the issue? Who do you think should put together a new training package in terms of cultural awareness? How would you think should be part of a group that would put together something like that?

Ms BROUN: Do you mean in terms of the Aboriginal community?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In terms of working with the police in expanding the training that now happens. Who would you see as the appropriate people to work on that?

Ms BROUN: I think the local Aboriginal people should be involved with that group. As I said, there are probably some general things that could be included in any cultural awareness training. But then there are specifics that need to be dealt with, and that really has to come from the Aboriginal community. It might revolve around cultural issues, and the Elders perhaps should be spoken to about those types of things. But it is something that needs to be done at that location.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Would some of that training be done when police are doing their full training, with extra training to occur on the job once these officers have been attached to a local area command?

Ms BROUN: Yes. Taking that further: it might be that every time they are relocated there would need to be another layer of training specific to that area.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You spoke about a number of communities being involved in the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, such as youth, drug and alcohol and discussions about the Block. Do you have any views relating to the Aboriginal Housing Company and its management of the Block at the present time?

Ms BROUN: I think those are issues for the management of the organisation. I think that has been fairly obvious for some time. Given it is a private company, it is very difficult for government to be involved. But we need to work at building the trust involved with the Aboriginal Housing Company to see if there are levels of support and training they need as an organisation. There is work going on in that area, and that is part of the submission.

CHAIR: You have been involved in some of these discussions. Do you have a view on the particular type of housing that is needed, if the proposal goes ahead that has been discussed in evidence before?

Ms BROUN: I would not like to impose my views on a community organisation, or a company that is concerned with housing for the longer term. I think this is something that the Aboriginal community should decide and do a lot of work on designs. That is where the input needs to be. I think what needs to be considered in any design option is sustainability of that design, and how much maintenance a design might entail over the longer term. Obviously, the way you build houses can impact on later maintenance costs. You can build the houses very well in the first instance and have limited maintenance, or you can build them with high and long-term maintenance costs. If you are talking about sustainability of housing, and housing management, it is better to do the upfront thing properly.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Ms Broun, you said the budget for your department is about \$7 million. How many people do you employ?

Ms BROUN: We have about 60, but 9 of those are with the registrar's office, which is co-located with us.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Where is your office?

Ms BROUN: 280 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you have any media staff in those numbers?

Ms BROUN: One—a public relations officer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you have a deputy director-general?

Ms BROUN: Yes, I do.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How much are you paid as director-general?

CHAIR: I would suggest that is not part of our terms of reference.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is. It clearly relates to the resources that have been put into the Aboriginal area.

CHAIR: The only terms of reference that relate to resources are the resources and strategies of the Police Service.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have asked Mr Gellatly and many other departmental officers this question. It is not a secret.

CHAIR: I think that questions about Ms Broun's salary and some of the other questions that have been asked are perhaps not totally relevant.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you have something to hide in relation to your salary?

Ms BROUN: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Then, if you would like to, would you answer the question.

CHAIR: If you wish to answer it, you may. As I said, I think the tone of some of the questions is a trifle unfortunate.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Can you tell us how much your salary is?

Ms BROUN: It is a salary package of \$190,000.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And how much is your director-general's salary package—deputy director-general, I am sorry?

Ms BROUN: The deputy—. I correct that; it is \$180,000.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: \$180,000 you think?

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you get a car on top of that?

Ms BROUN: I am sorry—

CHAIR: Can we give the witness a bit more time? The second question related to the deputy director-general. I think when you said \$180,000 you were not talking about that person.

Ms BROUN: No. I was talking about mine.

CHAIR: That changed the earlier one you gave for your package. Are you taking the question about the deputy director-general on notice?

Ms BROUN: Yes, I think I should, because I am not exactly sure.

CHAIR: That is fine. I think there was a certain amount of confusion about the question.

Ms BROUN: But, as I said, that is the package.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes, I understand that. As I say, Mr Gellatly has been happy to answer what his package is, and everybody knows what we earn.

CHAIR: My comments were about the terms of reference and the relevance, Mr Pearce.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you have a car in that package, or is that additional?

Ms BROUN: As I said, that's the complete package.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You say you do high-level advice and strategic policy. What does that mean? Does that mean writing speeches for the Minister, or what?

Ms BROUN: No. We work across government, on whole-of-government policy in terms of Aboriginal affairs and the different areas across that. As I said, we have set up a number of structures to assist in that across government in terms of co-ordinating plans across government, taking on board the Productivity Commission report and those sorts of things and what is the State doing in relation to that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That sounds like a lot of Sir Humphrey gobbledygook to me. What do you do?

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, can I suggest that you exercise some common politeness.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am just asking some direct questions of the witness.

CHAIR: I think your questions are actually rude and offensive.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Well, that may be your opinion, but the witness has not objected.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That was a comment, not really a question though, in fairness.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: "What do you actually do?" is my question.

Ms BROUN: I think I have just explained that. I do run a number of structures across government. We provide advice, obviously, to the Minister. We also do a range of responses on Cabinet matters, and all of those sorts of things that government agencies do.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You "run a number of structures across government."

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Give us an example of one of the structures.

Ms BROUN: Under the Aboriginal Affairs Plan, we have an Aboriginal Affairs Plan Co-ordinating Committee. We have, as I said before, cluster groups of agencies and Aboriginal people involved in that group. They are the sorts of things.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So what is a cluster?

CHAIR: We have a number of other questions that we would like answered. Come back to question No. 7.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I think you are probably right. We are never going to get through that gobbledygook anyway.

CHAIR: We have had a submission that suggests that accountability for Aboriginal organisations is often set at a higher level than for other community-based organisations. An example given was that, while other community-based organisations are expected to report on an annual or six-monthly basis, many Aboriginal organisations are expected to report each three months. Can you comment on that suggestion made in the submission?

Ms BROUN: No, I cannot, because we do not actually fund agencies recurrently. So, no, I could not.

CHAIR: I think Ms Griffin asked you a question about the proposals the Aboriginal Housing Company has for the area known as the Block and the type of housing that would be appropriate. We also had a number of questions that mention the fact that Redfern is a place where Aboriginal people, including families, come and go, with regular visitors from all parts of the State. Particularly given the department's role in developing infrastructure in other parts of the State, can you comment on the relevance or implications of that coming and going of families for the kind of housing that needs to be in the Block or in other parts of Redfern and Waterloo?

Ms BROUN: Specifically for the type of housing, I think that would have to be referred to the Aboriginal community to come up with that. But, obviously, if you have got a mobile population that is coming and going, you do need to take that into account in planning for housing. You might well need some short-term housing options in that model, whether it is hostel-type accommodation or short-term temporary housing. But, obviously, that will impact on your overall planning.

CHAIR: The Aboriginal Housing Company has suggested to us in models that they have shown there are houses with an indoor-outdoor sort of area, including basic facilities, which are particularly suited for a family that may, perhaps suddenly, have visiting families from other parts of the State, and that those are the sorts of factors that would have to be taken into account when designing that housing.

Ms BROUN: I agree. But, again, it has to be developed in consultation with the people who are going to be in those houses. What is the best model of housing? How do you cater for a family? How do you cater for visitors? Those sorts of things. I previously worked for eight years in Aboriginal Housing and had to deal with all those sorts of issues as well, housing design and so on. I think there are ways of coping with it, but it has to be done in consultation with the community as to what is the best design to meet the needs.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have a fair bit of influence on policy, presumably, across the departments. How do you keep in touch with what is happening there to make sure services are appropriate? How do you keep yourself au fait with what is happening at the grass roots?

Ms BROUN: With other departments?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, with the people in the area.

Ms BROUN: In this specific area?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

Ms BROUN: As I said, I have attended meetings down there, but it would more likely be my staff going to those meetings with the task force and those sorts of things, and I would rely on their advice as well.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you get it through your staff, and they attend meetings down there?

Ms BROUN: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So do you go and survey the people down there, or is it just person-to-person contact at lower levels of the department?

Ms BROUN: No, it would not be surveys. But, as I said, they do attend a range of different meetings at the community level.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think there is a danger of the bureaucracy getting out of touch with what is happening at the grass roots?

Ms BROUN: Not in my department, because people are very much involved at the grass roots going out. If it is not myself, there are other people. I mean, I don't think I can be everywhere at once.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Today is national Sorry Day. I wonder whether you would like to apologise to the people of Redfern on behalf of the Government for its failure to address the social disadvantage in Redfern.

CHAIR: I began the day reiterating the attitude of the Government and the Parliament of New South Wales. I do not want you to think that we have not marked the day or Reconciliation Week.

Ms BROUN: I am happy to hear that. It is most appropriate. On behalf of the department I am quite happy to apologise.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Would you like to apologise for the failure of the Government to address the social disadvantage of the people in Redfern? As director-general are you happy to apologise?

Ms BROUN: I do not know whether that was the purpose of coming here.

CHAIR: The question is changing. But we are glad to see that the Opposition is joining the Government.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER It has been 10 years and we have not seen a lot of action.

CHAIR: It has not actually been 10 years.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: This is the tenth year.

CHAIR: There no more questions to be asked from the list that we gave you and the time that was allocated for questions has now expired.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You did not indicate to other Committee members Ms Broun's time would be limited in the way that it has been limited.

CHAIR: The time constraints are listed on the agenda.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You allowed earlier witnesses to go well over time and you did not tell us that Ms Broun would have a time limit.

CHAIR: You tend to ignore the fact that we have to break for lunch break. You either complain that we have gone over time or you complain about a lack of time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Will we have an opportunity to call Ms Broun back for further questioning?

CHAIR: That is something that the Committee will discuss, just as it discusses other issues.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I place on the record the fact that we have not had an opportunity to properly question Ms Broun. Her answers certainly were not capable of being understood by ordinary people. I would like Ms Broun to be recalled.

CHAIR: That may be partly because of your lack of common politeness, which has made it quite difficult for her. If there are any matters relating to questions or to our common practice of sending written questions, requests for information, or bringing witnesses back, members would be aware that that is done by the Committee.

(The witness withdrew)

corrected

HELEN CAMPBELL, Director, Redfern Legal Centre, 73 Pitt Street, Redfern

LYNDAL GAI GOWLAND, Co-ordinator, Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme, affirmed, and

KIRRILLIE JANE MOORE, Solicitor, Redfern Legal Centre, 71 Pitt Street, Redfern, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: As you know we have prepared some questions. We will go straight to them, unless you want to make any sort of opening statement?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, thank you. Firstly, I take this opportunity to acknowledge that we are meeting on Aboriginal and Gadigal land. The site of the Redfern Legal Centre has been here for over 25 years. I have an annual report to offer you as background information in relation to our organisation. I worked at the Aboriginal Legal Service here in Redfern in the mid-1980s, so I have had the ability to look at that community then and now. Why did the riot happen? A teenager on a bicycle died because he believed that he was being chased by the police, and the police did not provide appropriate reassurance to his grieving family and friends.

But we are not here to criticise the police. Overall, we have a good relationship and we want to build culturally appropriate and community sensitive responses, particularly in relation to family violence. As you have seen, we have asked the co-ordinator of the Women's Domestic Violence Centre to appear today to address some of those specific concerns. As we understand the situation from our own observations and from those who have spoken in confidence to us, even if the death was accidental it occurred in a context that was neither benign nor neutral, although the leadership of policing in this area is to be commended and, overall, crime rates are dropping.

However, the high turnover of young, inexperienced frontline staff makes the achievement of community relations objectives challenging, to say the least. We commend the restraint of the police shown on the night of the riot. They showed courage in very difficult circumstances. Were it not for the hysterical and biased media response they might even have been able to delay arrests until after the funeral. But anyone who attended the memorial service for TJ the following week, including my staff who can, if required, attest to this tribunal, would have observed inappropriate and disruptive behaviour shown by street police. This is part of an ongoing culture—a wider culture—of racism and disrespect for human rights.

Redfern should not be the first police job after training school, or the place that everyone wants to get out of as soon as possible. We need experienced police who take this posting with pride. It may be with enhanced pay or promotional opportunities for those who demonstrate Aboriginal cultural training and experience. It is important to recognise that there is not one Aboriginal community in Redfern or even on the Block. There are Aboriginal interests of non-residents, there are residents who are non-Aboriginal, there are landlords and tenants who have different interests, new and established residents, and conflicting demands on services. Redfern Legal Centre has a multidisciplinary approach that values the human rights of each individual, recognises the importance of family and kin, and is open to hearing from many voices.

We are cautious in our approach to all of those who claim to be speaking on behalf of others. We are not here to speak on behalf of any one person or group; we are a service provider to this community. As a service provider in the law and order area, we wish to draw attention to the situation of Redfern Local Court. While we do not represent people charged with criminal offences we do provide the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme and, in recent months, we have been running a pilot court information service to assist unrepresented litigants. Redfern Local Court has neither the social nor the physical infrastructure to meet the needs of the community or those providing services to it. We need to strengthen the authority of Aboriginal community members and elders and reduce recidivism, especially among young people.

We suggest the use of sentencing circles as they have been successfully introduced in Victoria and elsewhere in New South Wales. There is also no court users forum in Redfern, as operates in other New South Wales Local Courts, and such a forum would enhance the co-ordination

of local services. Another issue that we feel it is appropriate to bring to the attention of this inquiry is the increasing use of surveillance of local communities. Surveillance may be in non-police control and it might use advanced electronic systems. There has been no proper community consultation process. Where there has been the use of new kinds of surveillance there has not been an accompanying proper community consultation process. That would include the use of video cameras, private security guards, and police dogs.

We have successfully represented innocent victims of unwarranted breaches of human rights arising from the use of these mechanisms. That is not to say that better security is unwelcome but inappropriate use of intrusions on privacy or indeed racist assumptions by those who enforce various laws about the use of public or semi-public spaces are a cause for concern. We need a whole-of-community approach to establish how such mechanisms should be used and put in place. We have heard a lot of media reports about many services throughout Redfern as though that supposedly demonstrates the failure of those services.

It is important to recognise that this is the greatest concentration of public housing in New South Wales. We found that eligibility for that housing is now so tight that only those who actually really needed supported accommodation, mostly for mental health and disability needs, are now inhabiting grossly inappropriate tower block high-density units. It is hell for them, it is hell for their neighbours and the community sector is heroically battling to meet insurmountable service delivery obstacles as well as facing intense accountability and reporting requirements to the government bodies that fund them.

Overall, we need the capacity to build long-term secure funding, respite care and support accommodation for those in need. For the community overall we need jobs, especially at entry level, low-skill jobs and a better range of affordable housing. In relation to community-based service delivery we are struggling with very tight budgets, intense accountability mechanisms and a lack of capacity to meet the needs. That is particularly so in relation to the domestic violence services we are trying to provide.

I draw your attention, in particular to Department of Community Services Redfern Legal Centre solicitor, Kirrillie Moore, who is with us today, can attest to the effect on families of sudden police removal of children, occurring suddenly now after years of pleas for family support went unheard. This has led to a learned culture of fear for all children. The need for cultural awareness training about the effect of removal is urgently required. As we have said in our submission, the situation has been described to us a fourth stolen generation. It is important to remember that all residents in this community have witnessed and experienced the trauma of the removal of children. In those circumstances it is not surprising that TJ ran from the police.

CHAIR: Can you tell the Committee a little more about the role of the Redfern Legal Centre, including the source of your funding and how many staff you have?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, the Redfern Legal Centre runs six separate programs and we have eight different major sources of funding as well as project assistance from time to time. Our general legal service focuses on providing advice, assistance and referral, and that is done by managing a roster of volunteer solicitors who chiefly operate on evenings; we operate four evenings a week. As well, we provide some services during the day. We take on casework that has particular human rights and civil liberties impacts. We have the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme, which provides services at Redfern and Downing Centre local courts. We provide a credit and debt service, a tenants service and have a service for students at the University of Sydney. We run a court information scheme, which is in a pilot phase at the moment.

We provide a range of services. We make great use of our volunteers. We have 75 volunteers a week, but not the same 75 each week. We have a core staff of approximately 13.5 full-time equivalent positions. Most of our funding comes from the Legal Aid Commission. We also receive funding from the Department of Community Services, the now Office of Fair Trading, the Federal Department of Family and Community Services and we are still finalising the last grant that we got from South Sydney Council, as it then was.

CHAIR: And you are hoping to get a grant from the new City of Sydney council?

Ms CAMPBELL: We are indeed.

CHAIR: In your submission you say you have a strong relationship with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island [ATSI] community. Can you tell us a little more about the nature of that relationship? Given the Committee's terms of reference, do you have that relationship with the Redfern-Waterloo community as well?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes, we have a significant relationship with the Aboriginal community. We have a specific ATSI access and equity policy. We have a specific ATSI subcommittee within our management structure. We have a particular relationship with significant Aboriginal service providers in the area. We provide back office governance support as well as provide collaborative work with many of our clients that we have in common. We assist at referrals. Some key agencies are Mud-gingal Aboriginal Workers Centre and Wyunga, the Aboriginal Elderly Care Agency. The Settlement is a neighbourhood centre that focuses on work with young people. We are invited guests to the ATSI inter-agency group, the regular gathering of all community service providers.

Through those networks we are able to maintain high quality relationship. The confidence that that engenders in the community is demonstrated by the number of Aboriginal people who approach us for assistance.

CHAIR: Can you give a percentage of that?

Ms CAMPBELL: We do not ask, we enable people to self-identify, so the statistics would be lower than the actual incidence. The statistics show between 5 and 10 per cent of our intake is ATSI; however, we think in relation to drop-ins are not individually recorded. It is a significantly higher proportion. We have a police of attempting as best we can to ensure that an Aboriginal person receives service on the same day that they approach. We have a reserve appointment each day for ATSI only.

CHAIR: What about the other communities that make up Redfern-Waterloo?

Ms CAMPBELL: We also have a strong relationship throughout the community. I am a secretary of what was until recently a South Sydney inter-agency. We are now in the process of turning ourselves in the central Sydney inter-agency to match changes in local government boundaries. Through that and through a lot of effort that many of the community sectors have put into working at Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and the RED strategy, we maintain key relationships throughout the sector. It is also part of our ordinary work in the sense that we have tried to provide a holistic service. Whenever someone approaches us saying, "I have a legal problem", we will investigate all the dimensions for that individual and take a collaborative approach to provide assistance that looks at all the different dimensions of the situation for the person.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Why do you not record the drop-ins to your service?

Ms CAMPBELL: They are recorded, but our database is set up by the Commonwealth Government. There is not a choice. It decides what is called information and referral. The information that is required to be recorded does not go through in that detail. If we were less busy and more bureaucratic we might take our own initiative to record the full details—name and address—and have the solicitor sign off on each occasion. Very often that assistance does not involve giving legal advice. Often we deal with people who are not necessarily feeling comfortable in providing that level of information that is to be entered onto a centralised database. Should we get on with looking after the next person knocking on the door, or should we worry about the paperwork? In a lot of ways we stray towards focusing on the next person.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: What is your role as the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer?

Ms GOWLAND: My role, or the Domestic Violence Officer's role?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Are you answering on behalf of the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer?

Ms GOWLAND: The Domestic Violence Officer is situated in the police service, the officer is a police officer.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Not attached to your service?

Ms GOWLAND: No, but that would be a recommendation that I would happily endorse. I co-ordinate the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme. The scheme provides information and support and legal representation to women seeking legal protection from domestic violence, specifically about getting apprehended violence orders. I work closely with the police domestic violence liaison officers to achieve those aims. I acknowledge the police initiatives in the area of domestic violence, especially the fantastic work that has been done by lots of general duty and DVO officers to address domestic violence. In particular, in 2002 the Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, Angela Cooke and James Parsons, received Stop Domestic Violence Day awards as a result of their nomination by the Redfern Legal Centre's Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme.

While there is acknowledgment of the police service that domestic violence is a specialist area, and that is reflected in the appointment of domestic violence liaison officers, I also congratulate the general duties and domestic violence liaison officers for doing a very difficult job, with little support and encouragement from management. Basically, the role of a domestic violence liaison officer [DVLO] is to ensure an effective response to the needs of victims of domestic violence. In addition to general duties their specific duties include providing specialist advice to other officers on specific domestic violence cases as well as providing advice about any legislation or policy development.

They are also required to supervise other officers, including those senior to themselves, who attend domestic violence incidents; and they do that by checking the computer operated police system [COPS] for entries recorded in regards to those incidents. In addition, they attend court on apprehended violence order list day to support the victim and to provide liaison between the victim and the prosecutor. Because the prosecutor does not speak with the victim it is the job of the DVLO to communicate the need of the client to the prosecutor. There is a long list of important jobs.

CHAIR: You do not need to go into great detail. The Committee can access that information from the police service. Would you focus on your comments about it.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: When talking with some of the indigenous women, they have commended that the Committee should acknowledge the fantastic work that women of the Block do in supporting the women. But there seems to be a gap in going to the next step with refuge accommodation. Is that a reality?

Ms GOWLAND: Yes, definitely. The only refuge that is specifically for Aboriginal women is at Penrith. There are not enough refuges for all women, and there is only one for Aboriginal women and it is at Penrith. It does not provide for the needs. A lot of women remain in unsafe situations because they cannot be safely housed. Safe housing is a major need; they should be safe at home.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Another perceived gap in taking a jump from when someone is prosecuted and ends up in gaol. Do you have a view about the sorts of programs that should be available in gaol to perpetrators of domestic violence before they are released?

Ms GOWLAND: Are you asking specifically about those programs?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Presumably the perpetrator goes back to the same community in which they offended. Are there programs to give them any advice and skills to help that not reoffend when they return to the community and their family?

Ms GOWLAND: There is a perpetrator program that has been piloted by the Attorney General's Department. I believe the evaluation of that has been completed, but the report has not been released yet. I understand that the only value that has been received from that program is that a small portion of victims has been able to access counselling services.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Is reoffending a problem in the Block?

Ms GOWLAND: I think there is a problem.

CHAIR: These questions are extra to those forwarded to you. You may take the question on notice and provide an answer.

Ms GOWLAND: I would be happy to follow up on that and provide specific data. Domestic violence is hard to quantify because it is all under-reported. We know that there are significant gaps, because breaches of AVOs are not charged. There is no proper recording of incidents. A lot of information goes into a police notebook, and not put on COPS. There is a lot of recidivism that is not recorded. I would be happy to provide that information.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I seem to have been reading that the amount of money being given to legal centres has been cut. Is it the case that the amount of money you get per client you have to service has gone down, particularly in relation to the CPI?

Ms CAMPBELL: I am still trying to figure out what the budget papers mean. It appears on its face that there has been a small reduction in the overall program coming from the Federal Government. I should explain that it is a complicated situation because our funding for community legal centres comes through the Legal Aid Commission, which is a combination of Federal and State inputs, and then administered through that program. Then we have various supplementary programs that come from different sources where we can add on units of different sorts of specialty services.

The core funding in the Federal budget papers does show a small decrease but nobody has been able to give us an indication at this stage of what that means for our specific funding program. We get a surprise every year as to what amount of funding we will get. This makes budgeting a very creative task. I have just been preparing papers for my board meeting, saying to our financial administrator, "Will we be able to sign off for the budget for the forthcoming financial year?" And she is still saying, "No, we still do not have the figures. We do not know at this late stage what finances we have for the first of July." That is a common experience in our sector.

It makes the task of planning with any certainty, offering permanent and real jobs to staff, a real challenge. I am proud that so many people are prepared to be selfless enough to take not very exciting career paths to come and spend their lives working in community legal centres in that sort of insecure environment. So we do not know whether there will be a decrease. We do know that Aboriginal legal services have suffered a sudden and surprising and devastating defunding and a move onto a competitive tendering model. We feel strongly for the provision of all community legal services that that is an inappropriate model and will not lead to the best service delivery outcomes.

We are under intense surveillance as to our accountability. In fact, if they added any more it would not be worth giving us the dollar because we would be spending so much time explaining how we spent it we would not have time to serve any clients. It is a fine line about how much red tape is appropriate for the sector. We are certainly hoping as a result of the Federal inquiry into civil justice that there may be some increase in long-term investment in the community legal centres sector but we shall have to wait and see.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: At a practical level does this mean that you see miscarriages of justice because of the inadequate representation of clients?

Ms CAMPBELL: We see a high level of unmet need.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is that the same thing?

Ms CAMPBELL: Because we are not in court representing people, I guess it would be inappropriate for me to take a guess as to what happens. What we do is we provide ongoing assistance to self-represented litigants and a range of matters. So they will come and describe to us what happened on their last time in court, maybe bring documents to have assistance with preparing documents for court and so on. So we get to see at least at second hand those people's progress

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through the system and we do see situations where people have not been able to present their case in the best manner and that has led to a less than ideal situation for a fair outcome.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The fact that you are sending them off self-represented—

CHAIR: I suggest that we return to our terms of reference and the questions.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am just trying to get to the bigger picture.

CHAIR: Our difficulty is that these people have some specific things to tell us that we are not asking them what we told them we would ask them.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I just wanted to know the absolute level of the problems they are dealing with. These are subdivisions of the problem in the sense. I am just trying to get a big picture. I agree that it is being a bit hard and long winded but we are working on it. If people are not represented they will get a much worse legal outcome, will they not?

Ms CAMPBELL: I would not want to cast aspersions on the ability of the judiciary to take into account that situation. However, I think overall the distortion in the available resourcing does distort the results, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: There must be statistics of the unrepresented for the same crimes as the represented, surely?

Ms CAMPBELL: I am not in possession of that information.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The Judicial Commission might be?

Ms CAMPBELL: That is a possibility.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you have any difficulty between the fact that sometimes you must represent men in a lot of cases and the fact that you represent women? Does that cause a difficulty within your organisation?

Ms CAMPBELL: There are two answers to that. First, we have a robust conflict checking database that ensures that we do not inadvertently represent both sides of the same argument. That is prohibited for lawyers So we ensure that that practice management occurs. Another thing to say is that the essence of our practice is not about representing people in court. Most of what we do is not about representing people in court so in that sense no. Because we have a broad-based open and equitable human rights based practice, everybody can come here.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What are your views on the Redfern-Waterloo partnership project?

Ms CAMPBELL: They have been here nearly three years and we sort of feel that they are just about beginning to get to know us so please do not stop now. There is certainly a sense that if we discontinued the project now we would have to invent something else to carry on that work. The redevelopment of the area will still have to be managed in some way. So as we have got an organisation set up that is beginning to get on top of the situation, we would urge that it continues.

In the getting to know us process I would admit to a reasonable degree of frustration at times. We have donated an enormous amount of time and expertise to those who appear to have sufficient budgets and wages to have office accommodation and expert staff that the likes of us could only dream of. Yet these well-resourced, well-housed experts are requiring of us the free donation of time and expertise. That is fine initially. After a couple of years of coming back again for another whole day workshop of telling them what the problem is, I must admit that on the last round of questionnaires that we were given, which was a serious amount of very detailed and difficult work, I

just sent the forms back in blank with a copy of the annual report saying, "It is in here, you have a read and fill in the forms. You are getting paid to do it. I am not."

I think that they have a lot of goodwill. As I said, I think they are just starting to get to know us. I think some of the early distribution of funding caused a great disappointment in many parts of the community and that damage to their reputation may be difficult to overcome. In that I mean that funding was offered on the basis that preferred tenderers would be those with close connections with the local community but in the event a lot of that funding was granted to organisations that did not have those community connections. What they did have was superior infrastructure and expertise at participating in the tendering process. That has not led, in my view, to the best possible distribution of the funding, although to be fair those organisations that have come in are also in a learning process so that may get there as well.

There is a strong feeling of lack of trust not so much in the partnership project but in the Premier's Department standing behind it. Information seems to vanish into some kind of black hole. We are surveyed and research and audited and measured and diagrams are drawn and maps are put up and yet we never seem to be able to retrieve any of that information. I have actually said that it would be of serious benefit to organisations like Redfern Legal Centre if we could see some of those results. If you surveyed the community and they told you what they thought of us, please let us know. I want to know. What did they say? Is there something we could be doing better? I do not have the capacity to do that research from within our own organisation. That would be of great benefit to us in terms of service delivery planning if we could get access to that feedback. We know that information has been collected; we have not been granted access to it.

So there is that kind of information is going in but nothing is going out, combined with a suspicion that people are too ready to say that the solution is bulldozers, that it would be convenient to have a new toll road through from the airport to the north side of Sydney, that certain operators of airports and toll roads would benefit from this and that there is a disadvantaged community largely occupying publicly owned space that could be removed for the purpose of accommodating this. That is sort of your worst case gossip kind of paranoia about what happens. The problem is that it is filling a space that is not filled with any other facts. We do not have anything else we can look to and say, "No. We know that could not possibly be true because here we can see the plan going forward. We know that this is what will happen."

The single most effective and confidence inspiring thing the partnership project could do at this time is start rebuilding on the Block and to start rebuilding by using employment programs that will draw and build jobs, entry-level unskilled jobs, that would provide some sort of community development capacity building for those particular young people who are very alienated from either formal education or work.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I take it that part of your comment might have been the consultation process on the human services review?

Ms CAMPBELL: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: That would have been the last part you spoke about. What is your view—I suppose if you want to continue the view—on the strategies? Are they effective for Aboriginal people in the community? Do you think the strategies that you know about at the moment?

Ms CAMPBELL: I am not comfortable that I should comment on that. At the time we wrote the submission we did not know to what extent the inquiry would be hearing directly from Aboriginal community members and so tried to ensure that to the extent that we knew something of their views we made sure that that got aired. However, now that we are in a situation of knowing that you are in fact speaking to a wide range of those people directly, I kind of feel a bit like it would be more comfortable for me if they got asked that question.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I take it from one of your previous answers that you view the issue of education and jobs particularly perhaps for young people as being an extremely important part of what needs to happen in the future here?

Ms CAMPBELL: Jobs are essential. The education, I am not quite so sure of as these are people in the main who have largely already experienced an unsuccessful formal education experience. While further training is valuable, it again defers the start of real jobs. I think the real job is the priority and maybe the further training builds on that. The heroin situation is in many ways a symptom rather than cause. Because people are alienated and have no sense of any hope for the future and are disconnected from a world of income and self-esteem that comes from paid work, that creates a situation where things like substance abuse get to grow and run rife. It seems to me that if we are going to be doing some rebuilding that does offer some opportunities for outdoors unskilled work, working on building sites, that is an opportunity that is too good to miss.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I had a little to do with the formation of the Redfern Legal Centre, was it 25 years ago?

Ms CAMPBELL: A bit over 25 years ago.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thought it was. At that stage it was very much seen as a referral sort of centre with organising volunteers to come in. Is that still your core function?

Ms CAMPBELL: That is right. As I said, we have about 13½ full-time equivalent staff. We have 75 volunteers a week and that is rostered. In total there are more than 75 volunteers.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you have done fairly well to grow up to 13½ full-time staff from your beginnings.

Ms CAMPBELL: As I said, that includes the specific programs. For example, the tenants advice service is funded through the Department of Fair Trading. Those staff wages are paid out of that budget and they also have their own volunteer intake.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We had the head of the Department of Aboriginal affairs for half an hour. We have got a lot more out of you and we have another 15 minutes to go. Can you just expand a little more on your dealings with the mainstream government departments and how you see them delivering services at the moment?

Ms CAMPBELL: We are overwhelmed with red tape. It is astounding to me the number of matters that we are required to report on and the frequency of that reporting. I have got no problem at all with the concept that we are spending taxpayers' money here and taxpayers are completely entitled for us to be accountable for that expenditure. I do not have a problem with that at all. I find it difficult when no explanation is ever given for the purpose of the collection of the data. For example, we have to ask everyone who comes here what year they arrived in Australia. Nobody has ever been able to tell me why we need to ask them that question or, indeed, what the government does with that information when it gets it. I would like to see a system of mutual obligations where if an item is required to be reported there has to be an outcome demonstrated. We will tell you this information on your promise that when you get it you will use it to inform your allocation of interpreters, for example. Then I can understand why we are doing it.

It is frightening that on one of the funding programs during a recent consultation the manager of the program said to a participant, "This has gone on too long without having any accountability measurement." The participant said, "But we give you an annual strategic plan and we report against its quarterly." "Oh", said the manager, "Really? Fancy that", which leads us to suspect that these reports that we so carefully attend to are not actually being read or even really noticed. So, as I said, it is red tape for red tape sake. We have this incredibly inappropriate database that has a direct feedback to Canberra and requires all this information to be answered. It is extremely burdensome and we have no way of knowing why they want information or what they do with it when they get it.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: On the Redfern-Waterloo partnership project, many of the indigenous people who have appeared before us have basically commented that they did not think there had been any consultation on that project. You obviously have had much more consultation on the project. What are your views on what it is actually doing? Are you able to tell us what the project is meant to do?

Ms CAMPBELL: As I understand it, the purpose of the project is to co-ordinate the activities of a range of private developments in various government departments concerning the redevelopment of this area. I am repeating what I have heard from the consultations. There is major transport infrastructure needing upgrade. For example, Redfern station sensation is not accessible to people with disabilities. They expect the population flowing through that transport point to increase. There is some degraded housing, there is a lot of inappropriate public housing that the needs of the residents, and there is a change in the population mix. We have seen schools closed but we have not seen facilities for aged care or mental health taking place.

We are surrounded by a problem of decay in infrastructure. I thought the purpose of the project was to bring in all those departments, bring in all the planning and get a cohesive overall plan that also addresses some of the social needs. I know they set up the street team for the young people, I know they set up Barnardo's for the early childhood intervention. I am not quite clear what they are doing with the Housing Company. I know the Housing Company is a partner. Apart from that, we are not clear as to what the intended outcome is of the human services review that is currently being undertaken. We understand it is because they feel they do not know what is here.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: They have said that.

Ms CAMPBELL: We do feel we know what is here. I have a very comprehensive referral manual on the front desk downstairs. Should anybody ask we would be happy to show it to you.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Send a copy to Michael Ramsay.

Ms CAMPBELL: I feel like they are just getting to know us. Do not stop them now so that we do not have to start again with someone else.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You said you thought their role was to co-ordinate the organisations on the redevelopment. Do you see it very much as a real estate project?

Ms CAMPBELL: I accept their affirmations about looking at the quality of public open spaces and some social dimensions to that as well, yes. But I think primarily it is about the management of changing real estate and infrastructure.

Ms GOWLAND: Could I add something in relation to red tape? My program is funded by Legal Aid. It is quite bizarre that some of the government funding formulas might have been developed to deny services to Aboriginal people. For instance, Legal Aid funds the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program here in Redfern. Despite our many submissions to have a position for an Aboriginal specialist worker, we are denied funding for that on the basis that we do not apparently have an Aboriginal population in Redfern. That is because the funding formula is based on the demographics disclosed by the census. We all know that the census is no accurate reflection of the Aboriginal or core populations in particular. Apparently we do not get funding for an Aboriginal specialist worker because we do not have Aboriginal people in Redfern.

CHAIR: I am conscious of the fact that we are rapidly running out of time. I think, Ms Moore, you have particular knowledge about the Department of Community Services [DOCS]. The question is addressed to all of you but I know, Ms Moore, you are present partly because you have that knowledge. In your submission you state that in recent months the centre has noticed a sudden increase in the number of Aboriginal clients approaching you for assistance. Obviously we cannot go into detail about individual cases, but would you give us some insight as to why the increase has occurred and perhaps more broadly tell us about the community perception of DOCS? It is a question for all three of you, but I know, Ms Moore, you have a particular knowledge.

Ms MOORE: I cannot tell you why there has been a sudden increase, in terms of our clients, of children being removed by DOCS. What I can tell you is that there is a clear perception that DOCS has suddenly targeted aboriginal children in this area where they previously have not done so. It seems to me also that a common factor in a lot of removals is that the mum has been a victim of domestic violence and part of the reason for the removal is that mum is seen to be not taking proper steps to protect the child even in circumstances where she has had an AVO that precludes the father from coming to the household.

What I wanted to say about DOCS and the community is to make the obvious point, in relation to the terms of this inquiry, that when DOCS orders that a child be removed from its parents, it is the police who come to the house. Most of the residents of Redfern have witnessed a situation where police cars have rolled up out the front of a house, police have gone in, children have been removed physically screaming from their mother's arms and driven off down the street and the mother is left wailing at the front step. In terms of the community relationship with DOCS and how that relates to the community relationship with police, obviously it is the most humiliating thing that could ever happen to a family and the most destructive thing.

Most of the families around here have either from their own families or from families that they now have had had children removed in the past. Some of those children have had very successful placements, others have had unsuccessful placements and have had horrific things happen to them. That sort of information we can read in the *Bringing Them Home* report of a couple of years ago. The perception of DOCS is that they are inconsistent and unfair and our clients are afraid of DOCS. We do not represent parents with children removed by DOCS but we do provide support and ongoing referrals to legal services, especially where Legal Aid has been denied. That may well be by mistake but at the moment we have a situation where Legal Aid is being denied to parents who have had their children removed. We are assuming at this stage it is an administrative error.

One of the most popular complaints we hear from our clients is that DOCS do not remove the children that need removing and remove children very suddenly from families when they are having a minor conflict. One of the main causes of concern that I have personally is I have read affidavits that have been submitted to St James Children's Court by DOCS in a number of different matters involving a number of different families which say things like "This child was brought to the attention of DOCS. There was a report of sexual assault by the father. This report was confirmed", and then there is nothing. Then DOCS says in their affidavits "We heard from the child the next year. There was a report of sexual assault by the father. There was a report of sexual assault by a neighbour. There was a report from a hospital and this report was confirmed." I think the DOCS affidavit says "Under priority one of our policy this matter was not pursued."

So these reportings can go on for six years. Then all of a sudden, without explanation or, by my reading, without a legal reason for the DOCS workers to suddenly become interested in a family and for reasons for which the public might perceive to be political or policy-motivated, the children are removed. Everybody who is seen it happen, coming from a history of fear of DOCS and a fear of police, it adds to the frustration that the police are the arm of a government department which is incredibly powerful and which does not act consistently or predictably in the community.

CHAIR: You say on the one hand children are removed when there does not seem to be a crisis or a sound reason and on the other hand children whom people think should be removed are not?

Ms MOORE: That is very correct. Our clients also perceive themselves to be particularly vulnerable to having third parties, as they say, dob them into DOCS. I have witnessed a number of cases where there has been a malicious report to DOCS which is without basis and DOCS have pounced, immediately removed the child and then done their investigation later on as to whether the child was at risk. The cases I refer to where the children have been in danger for years and DOCS has known about it are in DOCS' affidavits that they have submitted to the court. It is not my observation because I have not been here long enough. Of course, there is rumour and gossip to that effect, but DOCS in its own records can show that it chooses not to act or for some reason does not act where children are in danger for long periods of time.

CHAIR: Is it possible to quantify the cases you are talking about?

Ms MOORE: No.

CHAIR: Are you talking about a handful of families, scores of families?

Ms MOORE: It is not possible to quantify. I think it should be. I have done my own research on this and I cannot find anyone who has done any relevant research since the *Bringing Them Home* report into how many children are in this situation.

CHAIR: We can take these matters up with DOCS, whom we have not yet talked to.

Ms MOORE: Absolutely.

CHAIR: What you say now can be the basis of questions to DOCS.

Ms MOORE: Yes. On the level of rumour and conjecture, as a practitioner I do occasionally appear in St James Children's Court and I hear other practitioner saying, "Gosh, there's a lot of East Sydney DOCS matters on at the moment, isn't there? What's going on down there?" That is one of the things I hear. I could be hypersensitive to that, of course. But because we are a drop-in service we are often people's first port of call. We have women walk in here upset, shaking hysterically and going, "They did not say they were going to take them. They told me I had to go to a meeting with them and when I was at the meeting behind my back they took my children. When I came home the children weren't there." It is highly emotive for us, but it is the very sort of highly emotive situation that the whole of Redfern is involved in because, as I come back to say, it is the police who come in and remove the child.

CHAIR: Helen or Lyndal, did you want to add anything?

Ms CAMPBELL: No.

Ms GOWLAND: No.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Have you been involved in a reviewing mechanism of any of these cases?

Ms MOORE: At the moment, it is a little frustrating in the sense that when a matter comes before the St James Children's Court, the only relevant matter for the court is what is in the best interests of the child. The court does not necessarily review whether or not DOCS acted appropriately or even within the power of DOCS in removing the child. Sometimes the removal of the child causes such upsets, damage and harm to the mother that she may become severely depressed, such that the family has been unable to be reunited. At the moment I would say that there is frustratingly little review of how DOCS is using its powers.

Ms GOWLAND: I should add that in relation to the issue of police and DOCS that it is reported to us that this fear of DOCS is used by some police as a deterrent to women making complaints about domestic violence crimes. It has been reported to us that on a number of occasions when the police have arrived, perhaps for a second, third or fourth time in response to a call of domestic violence crime, the police officer has said, "If you keep calling us, we will have to report this to DOCS." Given the level of fear that the Aboriginal community has, rightly so, about interventions from state institutions, it is a great, great deterrent to women making a report, especially given that, in very close proximity, the old children's court lurks toward the centre of Sydney. We have many members of our community who can remember being two and four and being held in the prison because they had just been taken from their parents. This is what these women, children and fathers face every day here. Not only do the police threaten DOCS but they also threaten to report to the Department of Housing and say that if they continually report this issue, they will have to tell the Department of Housing that there is this damage being done to the property.

The Hon. IAN WEST: If you were the police, what would you do? What would you say?

Ms GOWLAND: I think it is a very big question. In the short term I think the police need to be given much clearer guidelines about what to do. They need to be given training on the issues that face the Redfern-Waterloo Aboriginal community, not just generally cross-cultural training, but about issues that are faced by people here. I think there needs to be support from senior management in terms of support for the domestic violence liaison officers [DVLOs]. There is supposed to be a regional domestic violence liaison officer. There is not one in this area. There are very junior officers in this area who face these very complex and difficult situations. I think that often the officers are not aware that best practice says that they should be of assistance and support to the victim to provide

referrals to an agency. There is quite a flow of best practice models around that the officers are not aware of—that the DVLOs and the general duties officers are not aware of.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Am I correct in understanding that you are saying it may well be that it is not necessarily done in a vindictive way? It may be done because they have no other alternatives.

Ms GOWLAND: I think it is frustration a lot of the time and it is a lack of understanding of the complex nature of domestic violence. It is really complex, especially for Aboriginal people. These officers, general duties officers, are given two hours training in domestic violence. It takes up 75 per cent of the police workload, yet it is given that little bit of training. Domestic violence liaison officers do not have to have any training at all. There is not any training. There is supposed to be a DV module, but not one domestic violence officer that I know of knows where it is. There is the yellow card project or the yellow sticker project.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The yellow card project.

Ms GOWLAND: Is it? Thank you. It seems to be a fantastic idea developed by the police service, yet there is not any funding to implement it. It is about a police officer having a yellow card and providing that to the victim when they have had a domestic violence crime, yet they also sit back at the station. There is supposed to be a referring agency, but there is not the money. The police are not funded to actually provide the referral. There should be one person who is actually responsible for collating information and referring those people. There is no money for that, so those cards sit there and these women are still in very, very dangerous situations.

Ms MOORE: It is exactly the same, I think, in DOCS with the exercise of their powers. The caseworkers are extremely junior. There is a very high turnover of staff. Every time we call DOCS on behalf of our client, there is a different caseworker on the case. They seem to be ill-informed as to the statutory framework in which they are working and there is inconsistency between officers at each level of supervising that the junior DOCS officers receive. So I would say absolutely that it is certainly a matter of training and funding for DOCS.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Have you ever come across a DOCS worker with ill intent?

Ms MOORE: Absolutely not, but I have had DOCS workers say, "What do you mean? Which Act you referring to? What is FOI?"

CHAIR: We are over time and the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans wants to ask a question. I know that you have put some work into answering these questions. I am hoping we can formally take some of them on notice—in other words, ask you for your notes and talk to you afterwards. We want to get some information from some of you and we hope that that will be okay rather than trying to go through them all now. Feel free if you want to make general comments. We usually conclude by asking what you would like to see come out of our inquiry, plus whether there is anything else you would like to tell us. If those two questions do not give you a chance to say what you want to say, I would be surprised.

Ms CAMPBELL: Thank you. I just want to finish up by saying that the staff of the Redfern Legal Centre, while working through their lunch breaks today, experienced overhearing the media reporting that this inquiry had been told this morning that community service provision in this area is selfish and lazy. Those who were working through their lunch break found that quite offensive. I would certainly like to take this opportunity to say that in my observation of working with community service providers throughout this area, there is a great deal of dedication and a great deal of hard and extra work that goes into meeting the community's needs and the needs of the funding providers.

It sounds simplistic to say that it is about money, but in a lot of cases it is about money. With proper resourcing and guaranteed ongoing funding, we will be able to meet more of that need, if that is the case. In terms of what comes out of this inquiry, we have given you some recommendations in writing. I think what is important in terms of the community's confidence is that we need to see outcomes from this inquiry.

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CHAIR: I think we have taken that in. Thank you for your attendance. The Committee's staff will be in touch with you about getting material from you. Thank you very much for doing a lot of work, including giving up your lunch hour.

(The witnesses withdrew)

SHIRLEY ANN LOMAS, and

TANIA MARIA LAURIE, sworn and examined:

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

Ms LOMAS: I am appearing in a private capacity.

CHAIR: Shirley, when I spoke to you before, we talked about your history in the Redfern area and since you moved away from living in the Redfern area but returned to continue living in the area. Perhaps we can start by you telling us a bit about your own history and how that relates to things you want to tell us about today.

Ms LOMAS: As I said, my name is Shirley Ann Lomas. I was born in Moree, New South Wales. I am a member of the stolen generation. My family moved to Queensland and we ended up being removed to the dormitory at Cherbourg, so my family was broken up there. I lived in Queensland for many years. I was about 15 when I came down to Gosford and moved to Sydney in 1973 and discovered Redfern, which was where I rediscovered my Aboriginality. I have worked in many areas. When I first came to Sydney I worked with the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department. I was with the Legal Aid Office when it was started in 1975 so I have done about 20 years legal experience. From then I moved into the Aboriginal community in Redfern. I have worked with Helen Campbell of the Aboriginal Legal Service and I have worked for many Aboriginal organisations. I have taught computers at Namaroo not only for Aboriginal people but also for non-English-speaking background [NESB] groups who want to return to the work force, et cetera.

I am a student at the Eora TAFE. At the moment I am doing a bit of temporary work with the Aboriginal Dance Theatre. I have worked with all the Aboriginal organisations in Redfern and I also do a lot for my community in a voluntary capacity. If people need support letters for court or for housing, I provide that. If they need someone to assist them in the Family Court, I go with them. That used to be known as a friend of the court but they are now called the McKenzie Friend of the court. I have been to the Family Court and the Local Court supporting Aboriginal people. I guess when we are talking about Redfern, you need to know the history of Redfern. We are talking about Aboriginal housing, in particular the riot.

I go back to the beginning of the seventies when all the organisations were started. We had the Aboriginal Housing Company, the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Children's Service and the Aboriginal Medical Service. They were all sort of carved up and different families were given control of them. The same families have been there for 30 years or so. Looking at my community over the years, it has now come to where our people have been oppressed by our own people, so they have learned the rules very well and they have become good exponents of hurting their own people. I believe that until the Aboriginal people stand up to tell the truth that they have done wrong too, we are not going to get anywhere.

People talk about the man in the middle. The man in the middle, sadly, is the black man who is stopping me from getting to you, more or less. On the night of the riot I was at home at Haberfield. I had been listening to the radio, listening to Bill Crews, and another radio announcer rang up and spoke about it. I thought, "Well, I'd better get out of here and go in and see what I can do." So I took the bus from Haberfield, all the way in to Broadway, and I got off at Broadway and I walked up through the back of the Block, through Caroline Street. At the park I saw a group of Aboriginal women sitting around, obviously upset and drunk. Then across the road I saw Mr Munro, and then up the top I went and saw a number of people there. Some of the children I know. They were sort of pelting missiles and whatever. So I went to them and I said, "This is not culturally appropriate. You know that, as Aboriginal people, you have to bury your dead and then you can set about doing what needs to be done." I think I was on my own for a good part of an hour, an hour and a half.

CHAIR: What time was this?

Ms LOMAS: "The Bill" comes on at 8 o'clock, so I would have left home at 9 and got there at a quarter-past or about 9.30. I stayed from that time until I think 4 or 5 in the morning. I was upset

because there were a lot of community leaders around, there were those that were praying down the road, and it would have been much better if they were praying with me up there. There was another lady, a tribal lady who was very elderly, she might have been under the weather, but what she was trying to do certainly made more sense than the people standing by, who were having a go at me.

I know I was getting through to the children, and then Mr Munro came up and had words with me and another couple of women. It was just a lost cause I think. But there were people there that did not come from our community. I firmly believe that it was not so much race related, it was drug related, because I know that the police had been going round doing raids the day before. And I am angry that people took advantage of a mother's grief to raise their agendas.

CHAIR: So you are suggesting that the riot was partly fermented by drug dealers?

Ms LOMAS: Yes. Well, I saw people there that I had never seen. There was one chap that had a cloth over his face, and I said, "Why do you need to do that?" I said, "With black fellows and police we don't hide our faces." So a lot of them weren't from there. Like, from the way that it was, it was sort of like everything was programmed to happen. I mean, I would not imagine Aboriginal people would be out there getting Molotov cocktails, or getting drums built up ready to go.

CHAIR: You said you have lived in Redfern for a long time.

Ms LOMAS: Yes.

CHAIR: Then you moved to Concord West and now you are at Haberfield. What sort of changes have you observed, given that you come back here so frequently? And how would you explain the problems that have emerged in the Redfern-Waterloo area?

Ms LOMAS: I first lived at Caroline Street, and I have lived in Louis Street, Eveleigh Street and in Holden Street, which is off the Block. In the early days it was a good place to live. You could feel safe there with your children, and everyone got on. Then, with the drugs coming into the area, it just became an unsafe place to live in. But a lot of Aboriginal people will always go back there because this is where their community meets. A lot of them are blow-ins, in my opinion anyway, as they say, because a lot of them, even though they lived out at Waterloo and they might have been brought up on the Block at one stage, they are living out at Mount Druitt and they were coming in.

CHAIR: The problems have arisen from what—from drugs?

Ms LOMAS: From drugs, and the lack of services provided by the organisations. They have not done their job. After the riot we saw people from ATSIC and even saw other community organisations come down there which we had never seen for about ten to twelve years. I think Tania can verify that.

CHAIR: Tania, do you want to tell us a bit about yourself and make some comments on that?

Ms LAURIE: My name is Tania Laurie. I come from Bunjalung, Lismore. My mother is Yaegl and my father is Biragah. I have been around Redfern for about twenty years. I first moved into Redfern when I was working for the Department of Health. I was with the senior adviser to Health. I think Peter Collins was our Minister at the time. I lived in Caroline Street at that time. Then, from there, I went to Eveleigh Street. I lived basically around the Block. I know a lot of people. At the end of the day, it has come down to kids are getting killed on the streets, kids are getting chased by the police, and no-one is listening to us.

I know I have said it for ages: it has to stop. I have tried to do whatever I can. At the moment I am in the middle of trying to set up a cultural centre down on the South Coast. But try to get money for that! The Department of Aboriginal Affairs sit here and say to me they have got a program running down there? Where? They don't even have a local down there! But that is another issue. They did not even have an office. So I basically came up and I did not know this meeting was on. I just sort of rocked in here from nowhere, you could say. But I know the mother. I know lots of mothers. I know

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lots of people. I am not justifying anything or what anyone did. There is no malice or anything. But it has to stop.

I have a document here. This is the last report. Look at how old it is! The last report—"Summary: Report of the NSW Task Force on Aboriginal Health Services 1990". This report was written, funded, by the New South Wales Department of Health. It was New South Wales' response to the Muirhead royal commission. It took about six months to write. It was the only black task force in the country. When Muirhead came along the government did not know how to deal with it. Obviously, he said: We will give it to each State and Territory to take responsibility. So I ended up being a senior administrative officer on this task force.

CHAIR: When was this?

Ms LAURIE: In 1990. It was placed before Parliament in 1990, and I think it was passed—

CHAIR: Do not worry about that.

Ms LAURIE: It was under the New Directions. It was a black report that went out. We sent a task force out to each region, to the central west and so on, and my boss chaired it. My job basically was to bring everyone in and whatever, and they came up with this big report. This is a summary of the last report. I am not sure, but there were 105 recommendations, and 103 were passed through Parliament. I could read this to you. It is not a matter of losing control.

CHAIR: We can make a copy.

Ms LAURIE: Kooris are about 1 per cent of the population, so at least 1 per cent of the health money should go to Aboriginal health. The present funding method assumes that Kooris use mainstream services, with extra going into Aboriginal health. The result is that unless Kooris use the big hospitals or mainstream services, the services we get are very low. The task force worked out that if 1 per cent of the New South Wales health budget went to improve Aboriginal health, we would have a chance of something really worthwhile. The total health budget is \$4.4 billion per year in New South Wales. We would have access to \$44 million worth of services. Each unit or program in health would be required to demonstrate that 1 per cent of what they spend goes into Aboriginal health. It does not mean that the new Aboriginal Health branch will get this amount to hand it out. It is a job that would make sure that the programs are actually implemented to benefit Kooris. The government has said that—

CHAIR: I am sorry, Tania, but can I interrupt you there?

Ms LAURIE: Can I just finish this page? The government has said that this 1 per cent will be achieved over seven years.

CHAIR: Our inquiry is into Redfern-Waterloo.

Ms LAURIE: Yes, into Aboriginal affairs. This is an Aboriginal affairs issue.

CHAIR: We want you and Shirley, if you can, to talk to us. We need that historical context, but we also want to hear specifically about things that should be done in Redfern-Waterloo.

Ms LAURIE: Partnership, co-ordination, self-determination—name them!—that is the new direction in Aboriginal health.

CHAIR: We will certainly take a copy with us, but we really need to—

Ms LAURIE: This is written by a man called Charlie Perkins. People need to read this and understand this is what we want and need.

CHAIR: We will read that. But—

Ms LAURIE: We want you to act on it.

CHAIR: But, since we have got the chance to talk to you here today—

Ms LAURIE: See if you can find it.

CHAIR: — Shirley and Tania, we would prefer you to talk about local issues, about DOCS, about police. You have heard the last three witnesses. We would like you to talk about where we are now and —

Ms LAURIE: We are talking about Aboriginal affairs here. We are talking about program management. We are talking about government being accountable for budgets. Central Sydney Area Health Service's answer to problems on the Block is a needle exchange. Excuse me! How much do we pay the Director-General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs? And that is the best they can give that community! Don't sit here and tell me that that was to be developed to be what it is today.

CHAIR: Do you have a specific comment about the needle van?

Ms LAURIE: Do I have a specific comment about the Central Sydney Area Health Service?

CHAIR: No, about the needle van.

Ms LAURIE: No.

CHAIR: Shirley, do you have a comment about the needle van?

Ms LOMAS: Yes. This is my community and I would like to speak about it. I have lived her all this time and, like I said, I am there every day, and I have a sister who has a drug problem. So I know where we stand what we go through. That is why I approached the Committee to speak. I would like to continue, if I may.

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms LOMAS: If you want to ask questions, I would be prepared to give you answers.

CHAIR: A number of people have said that the needle van has an important health purpose but it also has a problem in its current location and that for instance it should be moved. Do you have a comment on that?

Ms LOMAS: Yes. I would like, from a personal point of view, for that to be moved. I would not like to see any child grow up thinking that drug taking is normal and that is how we live in society. A lot of the services here, the land councils and medical services, should have the money to provide rehabilitation places. Why haven't they done that? They would be flat out talking to the drug addicts. Their funding revolves around the problem. I often say to people who are on drugs, "You have to steal in order to feed your habit." Funding immediately goes out to the legal services or medical services. My point is that sometimes people do not want you to get better, because if you are better then they do not have a job to do. But you cannot tell me that, after fifteen years, we do not have a proper rehabilitation place. We have metropolitan land councils and land up at Wisemans Ferry.

Ms LAURIE: We tried to start a drug centre up there, but could not get any money. We had the plans and all, but no money.

Ms LOMAS: With the Block, better housing could have been provided if all the organisations had come together.

CHAIR: So would you be critical, for instance, of the Aboriginal Housing Company for their management of the Block?

Ms LOMAS: Well, for allowing it to be that way, yes; and for allowing the drugs to come in. They do not brick up the drug houses, only because a landlord can now be fined. The laws have changed.

CHAIR: I am sorry, but could you repeat that.

Ms LOMAS: They bricked up the houses, but that's probably only because the laws have been changed now and the government could charge landlords for operating drug houses. But every organisation has stood by and watched that place rot.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I would like to make a statement and then see whether you agree with it. Has the Government failed a generation because of its softly, softly approach, or because it was too scared to intervene?

Ms LOMAS: Yes, I think so. The Government has failed us, and our own people have failed us, particularly now. I listened to you earlier when you talked about the Department of Community Services and about children. We could have had a safe house years ago. With all these services why did they not get that done? You see a lot of them. Their children get the best things. In the Aboriginal community today what we have is the haves and the have-nots. That is a sad fact. The young children that we saw on the night of the riot are the have-nots. We went to a meeting the next day. The so-called community leaders were quite happy for the riots to continue, but their children were not there.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I refer again to the needle van. You have been around. Have you seen people getting needles from the needle van?

Ms LOMAS: I have seen that. I have walked up and down the lane. I have been in some houses where I have seen young people inject needles into the veins in their neck. It is just sad.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: When people with children who are accompanying them go up to the needle van, are they still given their fix?

Ms LOMAS: I have not been up to the needle van every day. I have seen people going and getting them but I have not been there every day watching the van. I was quite surprised at the number of kits that were dispensed at one stage.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We have heard a lot of people talk about the Department of Community Services, what it should and should not do and about the inconsistencies relating to it. When do you think the Department of Community Services should intervene, and what do you think the role of the Department of Community Services should be in relation to some of the families that you know on the Block?

Ms LOMAS: As you know, the Department of Community Services has a bad history with Aboriginal people. They are public enemy number one. They are still the Aboriginal Welfare Board to us. It does not matter if they change their name. But what I would like to ask is why they let all these things happen over the years, and now all of a sudden they want to come in and they want to do their bit. Is it to remove everyone from down there? People might say that it is a crime-ridden area but, let us face it, it is the jewel in the crown. It is the richest piece of real estate in the country.

Ms LAURIE: A dispersion of the people.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Your key point is that when you wrote the Government's response to the Muirhead report the elements in that report have not been implemented in the last 14 years? That is your key point.

Ms LAURIE: That is what I am saying.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The Government did not know how to respond and it got you to write the report? You were one of the people who wrote the report?

Ms LAURIE: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You wrote a report, which the Government then enforced?

Ms LAURIE: I was only young then; I was only about 20. It was prior to the birth of my first daughter, so I was about 23 or 24 and I did not really understand what was going on. I am older now; I will be 38 or something soon. I am just fed up. I am trying to set up a school on the South Coast. We have kids on the streets. I have watched kids on the Block die from heroin. I have watched it. I was a senior youth worker down there at the Settlement. I have seen my friends' children dying. I have seen my friends dying. My friends are dying at the age of 50. Aboriginal Affairs must take responsibility and do its job.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: When you were involved in the writing of that report that you have referred to were you a youth worker?

Ms LAURIE: My boss was the chairperson. I was her senior administrative officer.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you helped to write that report?

Ms LAURIE: My capacity of employment was to get the task force together. I arranged the conferencing, the accommodation and all the transport from each airport. If they were going to Orange I would get the task force to come to me in Sydney where Liz would brief them and then they would all go on a plane to Orange. One day they would meet with government departments and the next day they would meet with community people. Then they would come back and we would collate those different area reports. My job basically was to collate the reports in the health department under the guidance of Liz. Then at the end of it all we ended up going to a motel. Charlie, Neville and I were sitting in one room, and Liz and the task force were sitting in the next room. We stayed at that motel for seven days. Out of that we wrote this document. My job basically was to assist Charlie with the typing and the editing.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But your beef now is—

Ms LAURIE: I do not have a beef. Do not get me wrong. I am not coming here with malice. I do not have a brief. What I am talking about are the new directions. Things are not going on properly. It is not happening right. It is time for new directions. We cannot do it if no-one will back us.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you are saying that the Government was committed to that document at the time. Is that what you are saying?

Ms LAURIE: It is a response to the Muirhead royal commission. I do not know what that royal commission is, but I know that it is very powerful. This is a summary of the document. That was my job at the time. When I finished it was just before Christmas because I had my daughter on Christmas Day. I think it went to Parliament House. I am not sure whether it went to Parliament, but I am sure it was at the beginning of 1999.

Ms LOMAS: Tanya is like a lot of other mothers who share that frustration. They are fed up with the reports that have been written. Today is today and we have to make a change from today. Having lived our lives that way we get frustrated and our emotions get the better of us.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I would like to ask you Shirley and Tanya about the future. Would you give us your thoughts about the future of the Block? What kind of housing do you think should be there? Would you give us your views on other issues surrounding the future of that piece of land?

Ms LOMAS: It is hard to know what to say and it is hard to know what the future holds. As you said before, the Aboriginal Housing Company and the medical services are not under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act. The housing company is coupled with it and I guarantee that it means that its members are shareholders. So if they sell the block they stand to make millions of dollars. How does that benefit the rest of the community? The same thing applies to the local land council. That is exclusive. You have to be a member. If you are not a member they do nothing for you. That is a fact. I would like to see affordable housing for all people. I would like to see something that generates employment for Aboriginal people, or community people in general who live there.

I think a lot of Aboriginal people were annoyed when they built the Redfern Community Centre because Aboriginal labour was not used. As soon as it was built they got in the black fellas to stand guard so that it was not destroyed. So they are not involved in the beginning process. I, as an Aboriginal person, would like to see Aboriginal people being given freedom of choice in anything, to use whatever services they want in their own country. This is a right that our own people are denying us.

You heard earlier from the lady from youth services saying that they had a large Aboriginal clientele. They have a large Aboriginal clientele because the other services that were set up were not doing their job. Those kids went into those services and they did a great job with them. Now they are calling for another youth service. So, in a sense, our own people are marginalising us too. That is what I see happening. They want to keep us in this little vacuum and they do not want to let us out.

CHAIR: So you would rather stick with services like Fact Tree Youth Services?

Ms LOMAS: I think it is up to individuals. They should be given a choice as to whether to belong to unions and what services they want to use. I know that a lot of Aboriginal people feel comfortable with their own services simply because they have been locked in reserves and that is entrenched in them. Just taking us away from there does not take it out of our minds. We are a people that evolve and we have the same rights as other Australians.

The Hon. IAN WEST: You can have freedom to choose but you do not have freedom of choice and access to those choices. It is important that we reach a point where we have not only the freedom to choose but also the ability to access those choices. In other words, there seems to be a view that we are set up to fail, not necessarily intentionally. Because there are no appropriate support mechanisms we can make whatever choices we like, but the choices are hollow.

Ms LOMAS: All the rules that the companies set up are not our rules; they are the white man's rules. Our people have just learned them very well. When they talk about Aboriginal ways, I value my role as an Aboriginal person. Traditionally I believe that we are custodians. So as custodians we have to care for everyone who is in this country.

The Hon. IAN WEST: You see no problem in the general community being involved in administrative and support mechanisms as long as you are in a position to make the ownership decisions?

Ms LOMAS: Yes. Earlier a lady was talking about agencies that run on the first Thursday of every month. We have representatives from most non-Aboriginal and white organisations. They all come but the main powerful organisations are not allowed to come. So they are still held down. So how do you work with people that will not allow you to network with them? Those are the people who will be in charge of the health problems of the Aboriginal people.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do I take it from the comments that you made about 1970s organisations that you believe there is a need to restructure them or somehow make them more participatory for the Aboriginal community as a whole?

Ms LOMAS: We need to remove people who are there. John Howard has been in for 30 years. It is time for him to go. You cannot stand around. The other view is that most of the people in key positions are on the same boards. They go out and select people that they can control. They have been there for so long. Young Aboriginal people who have studied and who have a lot to offer cannot get a foot in the door because they are not related to them. That is a fact. That has been going on. Now you get the same organisations that groom their families or their children to take over these empires that taxpayers fund—empires that you and I fund.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: On the night of the riot I take it from what you were saying that you thought you were making some progress with some of those kids?

Ms LOMAS: I was.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When Lyall Munro arrived—

Ms LOMAS: He sent two Aboriginal women out. They had had words, not really nice words. Munro came out and threatened me. Then I walked up to Dennis Smith who I know from around the community. I said, "There is nothing that I can do to stop this." But I did not stop at that. I went to his family's place at Waterloo, spoke to an aunty and a cousin and asked them to come back up to the Block, or to where we were in Lawson Street.

I asked them whether they would go down and speak to Gail because we did not want any more deaths. I will say something in favour of Dennis and the police. They stood back. I am glad that they did because it is all right for people who were not there to say, "This would have happened", or "We should have gone in and do that." I think more deaths would have occurred. As Aboriginal people, it has always been "us" and "them". Bill Crews referred earlier to the man who was praying.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you think Lyall Munro's attitude would be of any use to the community in the future?

Ms LOMAS: Lyall is living in the 1970s. This is 2004. I cannot converse with him and bring his ideas forward, I am afraid. But, sadly, the public will see him as being our representative or our leader. He certainly has had a lot to offer over the years. But his time has come. The same applies to a lot of community leaders. They have to go. There are smarter, younger Aboriginal people who are coming up and who can do the job.

CHAIR: It sounds like politicians.

Ms LOMAS: Yes, it does.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The Aboriginal people comprise many clans, just as the whites have great diversity. It seems to me that the problem is that people in bureaucracy are Aboriginal, there are elected people, and there are the elders. Are you suggesting that people representing Aboriginal people are running their own agenda of nepotism, or family favouritism?

Ms LOMAS: Definitely.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What do you suggest is the best way to get good representative Aboriginal leaders out of those different systems?

Ms LOMAS: For the first time in the history of ATSIC we certainly have a good leader in Marcia Ella-Duncan. She has not mucked around since she came in. She has got the job done. She first came to Redfern after the riot and has been in contact with the community every since.

CHAIR: Ms Ella-Duncan gave evidence to the Committee last week.

Ms LOMAS: Yes. It would be a shame to see the likes of her go with the loss of ATSIC. A lot of Aboriginal leaders talk about cultural awareness. But let them give themselves a crash course, because they seem to have lost their way.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can we find a formula? It is not good to just grab one leader and listen to what she says. How do you suggest that a white government or bureaucracy should find credible Aboriginal leaders? By what method; election, elders, applicants with qualifications? How do you find a representative group to speak for the interests of Aboriginal people?

Ms LOMAS: They should probably get rid of ATSIC; that was a democratic way for all Aboriginal people. You had the land councils, who are exclusive Aboriginal members, and the community organisation, who have to be members too. What hope does a blackfella have unless they have a democratic voice, which was ATSIC.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In other words, you would go back to the elected system?

Ms LOMAS: Yes, I would. But I would get rid of the people who are there and get new blood there.

CHAIR: Tanya, do you want to say something?

Ms LAURIE: The Aboriginal Registrar should also be questioned on how it operates and how it sets constitutions. When I was at the housing company they had a limit of 100 people and we had to fight.

CHAIR: Are you referring to the shareholders?

Ms LAURIE: Yes, the membership who make all the great decisions for people's lives. They kept it at 100, and they would not let any of us in. Even though I worked in the community and have been around the community, the residents on the Block were not allowed to become members of the organisation. No malice; I speak ill of no-one. But things need to be looked at to know the reality. It needs to be sorted out now. Surely you could organise and co-ordinate a roundtable discussion to put everything in the open. Not what you will offer us, but what suits us, what suits our needs and how we live and our family structure. We will right it for you.

CHAIR: Obviously that is one reason why we are talking to you and Shirley and holding this inquiry.

Ms LAURIE: I have watched kids grow up and at 14 and 15 they shoot up. There is nothing I can do about it. The needle exchange came out of the baby clinic, through Central Sydney Area Health Service. But when we try to get programs run at the centres with land council and try to co-ordinate with the council, we could not get any help. What does ATSIC want to do? Jostle papers all over the place? It is unbelievable. \$150,000 to start a school on the South Coast, a cultural centre. We ask for something and ATSIC says no. That woman has \$190,000 a year—something is missing! I am missing the point here, what does the Department of Aboriginal Affairs do for our people?

CHAIR: The Committee has the task of investigating all those issues, checking and making recommendations. I thank you for talking to us.

Ms LAURIE: I did not know it was on.

Ms LOMAS: In closing I would like to say what I would like to see happen. First, something that would cost the Government nothing, or people of this country nothing, is to show us respect for who we are. The sad fact is that we are human beings too, but because of our being here first we are seen as less than human. It costs nothing to respect another human being. I would also like to see a rehabilitation centre. I will work the Bill Crews and we are going to Melbourne to look at an aboriginal detoxification place. Hopefully we will bring back something that all people can use. I am sure that non-Aboriginal people can go a long way to learning a lot from us, once we get the middle man out of the way. Thank you for your time.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 3.55 p.m.)