

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

**INQUIRY INTO REPARATIONS FOR THE STOLEN GENERATIONS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

At Kempsey on Monday 7 December 2015

The Committee met at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Ms J. Barham (Chair)

The Hon. B. Franklin

The Hon. C. Houssos

The Hon. N. Maclaren-Jones (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. S. Moselmane

Reverend the Hon. F. Nile

CHAIR: Welcome to the third hearing of the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 Inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales. Before we commence I acknowledge that we are meeting today on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people and pay respect to elders past and present. I also pay respect to all Aboriginal people who are here today. This inquiry is examining a number of important issues for members of the stolen generations, including implementation of the New South Wales Government's response to the "Bringing Them Home" report, and potential policies and legislation to help make reparation to members of the stolen generations and their descendants. A number of other hearings are planned to be held in Sydney and other regional centres early next year. The Committee has already held a hearing at Wagga Wagga where we heard evidence from representatives of the Coota Girls home at Cootamundra and others.

Given the importance of this inquiry we would like to encourage people to come forward and share their stories. The closing date for submissions to this inquiry was 18 October but the Committee will now be accepting submissions until early next year. If anyone has any questions about how to make a submission I encourage them to speak to the Committee secretariat. I also invite those present to share with their networks about this inquiry. Today the Committee will be hearing from representatives of the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, Kempsey Shire Council, Birpai Local Aboriginal Land and Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council. Before we commence I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing.

In accordance with the Legislative Council's *Guidelines for the Broadcast of Proceedings*, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. These guidelines are available from the secretariat. While members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside their evidence at the hearing. I urge all witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take action for defamation. There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances witnesses are advised that they can take questions on notice and provide answers within 21 days. Witnesses are advised that any message should be delivered to Committee members through Committee staff.

I now welcome the representatives from the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation. On behalf of the Committee I thank you for allowing us to visit the home this morning. Visiting the school and sharing those experiences, which we acknowledge must be very painful for you, is very important to the work of this Committee. Thank you very much.

CORRECTED

TIFFANY McCOMSEY, Chief Executive Officer, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation,

JAMES MICHAEL "WIDDY" WELSH, Wailwan People's Land,

RICHARD CAMPBELL, No. 28, Gumbayngirr, Dunghutti

LESTER MAHER, No. 1, Biripir, and

MANUEL EBSWORTH, sworn and examined:

Mr EBSWORTH: I think my name is Manuel; I am not quite sure. I am definitely No. 28. It is pretty hard to say "So help me God" because he never helped me and my brothers.

CHAIR: Do you have a statement?

Mr CAMPBELL: I would like to acknowledge the Dunghutti people on whose land we are holding, which is my land—my father's land—this hearing and pay my respect to the elders past, present and future. I also acknowledge my brothers who went through Kinchela Boys Home who are here today, any Cootamundra women, former Bomaderry children and other members of the stolen generation who you will be hearing from today and during this inquiry. Lastly I want to acknowledge the Kempsey Aboriginal community and the legacies it has lived with as a result of Kinchela Boys Home having been a site of grief, loss and abuse within their community. Pain was brought here from communities throughout New South Wales and that pain continues to be felt here in Kempsey and the communities it came from.

To this Committee, I ask you please do not let the survivors of the Kinchela Boys Home die with regret. This will occur if we are ignored and our requests to achieve our long-term goal of establishing a Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation [KBHAC] Healing Centre. Achieving this will allow us to restore our dignity, showing our families and communities that we are elders by the way we look after our Kinchela brothers and families and by the education we will provide to the larger community about our experiences. We were denied our childhoods; we should not be denied our role as elders. We need to be supported so we can lead the healing of our families and help put an end to the intergenerational trauma that continues to harm them.

KBHAC exists because of us men and the brotherhood we formed which helped us survive Kinchela. It is our brotherhood that continues to help survive living in between two worlds—white and black—neither of which we fully belong in. No-one understands our experiences. Our best healing comes when we are together, when we look after ourselves and when people that we trust work with us to help develop the programs, which actually meet both our needs and those of our families. The men see the pain their families, in particular their descendants, have suffered. Through KBHAC and the work we do, the Kinchela survivors are now in the position where we can share our experiences with our descendants, acknowledge our own pain and walk with our families so they too can heal. This healing means their pain will not be carried forward and that our family structures will start to restore themselves. In other words the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of our communities and the communities we were stolen from can truly start to be cared for.

It is only in the last five years that KBHAC has received financial support to run programs and activities. Some of what we have achieved include: locating over 80 Kinchela men across New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia and starting the process of properly documenting our stories; holding two healing gatherings each year since 2013, which has brought together the KBH survivors and some of our descendants and immediate family members; establishing our Bringing Them Home counselling service that involves a Kinchela brother acting as a peer support worker alongside the counsellors; and entered a partnership with an aged-care provider that has allowed us to start providing the uncles with aged-care packages so they can live comfortably at home and continue to maintain an independent lifestyle.

KBHAC held a Kinchela 90th anniversary commemoration that was attended by our families and involved large turnout and involvement by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Kempsey community. With the assistance of the previous Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Housing Office, we have established a KBH Community House in Western Sydney; successfully tendered with our aged-care partner to deliver the Ability Links program, funded by the New South Wales Department of Ageing, Disability and Health Care. Our success had a lot to do with the peer support model of care and empowerment that is the basis of KBHAC. Recently our board undertook intensive governance training, which was facilitated by Mr Lindon

Coombes from PricewaterhouseCooper's [PwC] Indigenous Consulting group. This work also involved completing our new strategic and business plans.

We successfully applied and received DGR status and are a registered public benevolent institution. We were successful in our application to the Federal Government's competitive IAS funding. We have built strong partnerships with The Healing Foundation, Caritas Australia, Anecto, the AH&MRC, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, a range of community partners and other stolen generations organisations, in particular the Cootamundra Women. KBHAC has reached a critical point. We have been working ourselves to the bone and we still have so much work to do. We cannot sustain our work with the resources we currently have. We receive bits and pieces of assistance and this is not allowing us to get ahead.

It is important to us that the Government supports KBHAC by recognising what it does and providing it with adequate resources so it can continue to assist us and our families in our healing journey. This needs to happen now. Time is not on our side. We have lost four men this year alone and this will only continue. The loss of these men means they cannot be part of their families' healings which has a negative impact on attempts made to address the intergenerational trauma affecting those families who are left living with the pain of questions unanswered.

CHAIR: If there are no other statements we will proceed with questions.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In the opening statement healing gatherings that are held twice a year were mentioned. Will you talk about the work that that involves?

Dr McCOMSEY: The healing gatherings are usually four days in total. Of those four days we actually have two days that are spent together because the four days involve travel. We usually try to hold it as a space for yarning circles to address some of the key issues affecting the men and their families but because the organisation only recently got funding to do these activities, it is actually about bringing the men and the families together and doing basic relationship building because a lot of the families have felt isolated because most of the men did not talk about their experiences and that is only happening now. So it is trying to address any questions and use experiences in a safe place that helps build relationships with our Bringing Them Home counsellor. We then continue to maintain conversations after the actual healing gatherings are held.

Recently some of the work that we have been doing has actually been around some of the projects we have. So what would the healing centre mean if we had that—and in the last two years that has been one of the main topics that we have talked about during those gatherings? What does healing mean? And the need for an actual physical space because the problem we have is that our resources are consumed by bringing people together, trying to find accommodation, hiring people to hold workshops that are appropriate to discuss the issues and then also the cost of running the gatherings, most of which have been in Kempsey.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What do you need to do to reach out to other boys or former boys not only in New South Wales but also interstate?

Dr McCOMSEY: I will let the men talk about the brotherhood because they have been the best networkers in that respect. From an organisational side, we send newsletters to members, we put out advertisements and calls for men and family members to contact us via the AMS's and other Aboriginal organisations, the Koori Mail, and our websites gets inundated by family members saying, "My great-great-uncle went to Kinchela. Can you tell me more?" They are seeking information that we have allotted to the men themselves, and then also documentary records.

Mr WELSH: With brother Manuel in the chair, we went to a meeting and achieved a vehicle that the Government helped us with funding to get. When we got that we did some journeys out and we took time off. We went out to see these people at the early stages of the building of it. The message became a little bit clearer. We went from eight to 20 and then we get up to the amount of brothers that we have got now. It is difficult for us to describe what you are asking, but it is just telling you that is the way that we did it. We feel as though we really want to know that we are going to get the full assistance that we need because we cannot do it without the assistance of transport and other things that you understand.

Mr EBSWORTH: What we have found out is that we never left each other. Kinchela, when we go and see the KBH's, all the boys and that, we sit down and cry for each other and it is a family that we can't leave behind as we never did leave it behind when we was young. We looked after each other through all the floggings

and the brutality what happened in front of us, and everything else. We haven't learnt to be anything, but all we know is that we are KBH's and we are a band of brothers that could never be parted. We got 84-year-old men, they come to our meeting and, you know, like we are team of geriatrics but we are very sentimental with our brothers. And nothing can take that away from us. If you do, it is like taking—we can't help but do what we are doing to achieve our brotherhood and all of what we have done will be in vain. These boys—we still call each other boys—have fought this far and lived this long to tell our stories. We don't want this to be in vain.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Uncle Ebsworth, when swearing in your evidence you mentioned that you are not sure of your name but you are certain of number 28?

Mr EBSWORTH: Yes.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Can you tell us a little bit about your experiences and feelings because of those numbers?

Mr EBSWORTH: When we went through the gate of hell, we call it, they took all of our little belongings and shaved our head and chucked some powder over us, which we had to leave on for two or three days. I do not know why that was. I think we used to use it on sheep but that was the same powder. And you woke up next morning and, just with your number. When you used to go and collect your clothes and everything else they said "number 28", and for 10 years that was my name. And we were not allowed to speak each other's name.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What was the purpose behind that, in your view?

Mr EBSWORTH: Well, like they said, Kinchela Boys Home was, and always will be, the devil's playground. And I think that is what it was, mainly because you lost your identity and after that we could not find it. We could not find that little boy we left behind at the gate, that Manuel Ebsworth that I was supposed to be called. So we left him at the gate and they gave us a number. We were not allowed to say "Michael Welsh", we had to call him "36" or we got a name for him, "Boofhead", or we used to call him (Mr Welsh) and his brother, he was fair and his brother was black, we used to call them "Pepper and Salt". We had a nickname for everybody.

So your name like, for instance, I was sitting on the veranda one day and this dog called Prince come. And I said, "Howya going puppy dog?" and the manager there, he said, "What did you say, number 28, to my dog?" I said, "I called him 'puppy'." And he said, "He has a name. Do you know his name?" And I said, "I think so." He said, "His name is Prince. I want you to call him Prince, number 28." And that dog walked away, I can still see him smiling saying, "You black bastard, I've got a name but you've got a number." And I think it—

Mr CAMPBELL: I think it was a stepping stone towards when we actually, like, became adults and that, you know. So the next step for us was incarceration in a bigger jail, so that was a bigger number. So that was the start of it. I inherited his number. When he (Mr Ebsworth) left, I come in. I inherited his number so I was 28 too. And a lot of the boys actually ended up in different institutions and then straight into Long Bay, Goulburn, you know, Grafton Gaol, you know different jails and that. So, you know, you could see the travel through their lives, through drugs, alcohol, stealing, you know, things like that. And that is all we actually knew.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What happened when you called the others a name?

Mr CAMPBELL: Just punishment.

Mr EBSWORTH: Every boy accepted it, they accepted nicknames and that. And we even called one of the boys "Zombie". When we would sing out "Zombie", he would turn around. But when we left Kinchela, if one of the boys sings out "number 28", we know there is a KBH behind us. And so that name stuck with us for 60-odd years. To understand who you are, like I have got three birthdays according to the Aborigines Protection Board. I have got two names and everything. And I said a lot of us here, I think it was to symbolise: You are here and there is nothing else that is going to protect you; we took away your name so we will give you a number. So actually, we was in prison.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You were stripped of your humanity.

Mr EBSWORTH: Everything, everything. They took our clothes. Like I said, what they put on cattle they put on us, to make sure that our skin was pure of disease and everything else. And they cut our hair, you know what I mean? If one boy got a nit, then shave for everybody. So the number was actually, well, let us put it down as a cruel act of educator or wellbeing to make a small boy be humiliated, it was just humiliation of calling us a number.

Mr WELSH: James Welsh. I would like to say that with the number, you can see the difference there as we are talking, we still have a lot of healing to do in ourselves and this is what we are here for. I believe that the number of James Welsh was to degrade us and set us up for reprogramming our brains and that is what they were doing. They were reprogramming us for whatever they had planned.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just following up something you said earlier about a Kinchela healing centre. Exactly what would that be?

Dr McCOMSEY: Based on the consultations that we have had, the actual healing centre itself is multi-sited. So the Kinchela site, as a museum and truth-telling space needs to exist and actually be shaped in the way that the home looked during the time that the men were there. It did change in its physical form from 1924 to 1970 but the clear map of what it was like in the 1950s exists, and that is something that the men support re-creating and having a testament for each of the men who went through Kinchela at that space.

The healing centre, where you would actually have a residential component where family members and other healing programs could take place needs to be in South West Rocks and that is significant for the men because it was there, when the home used to flood, that the boys were taken. And it was a place where they would have some happy memories and they were also part of the surf lifesaving club and it is a safe place. Part of that healing centre is envisaged as an aged-care facility, because of the way that the men were institutionalised, going into residential care is quite scary and being able to look after the men, especially those, because one of the legacies of Kinchela was the men did not have children, because of the abuses that they suffered. So those men usually do not have connections with their own birth families and they need to be supported in care that would be appropriate for them and where their other brothers could actually help look after them.

Mr EBSWORTH: I think this healing program is to teach us how to love. We never ever heard the word "love" and we do not know the meaning of it. And our children and our wives have suffered because we could not tell them that we loved them, because we did not know the meaning. And it hurts us very bad that we cannot tell our wives and our children that we love them because we do not understand the word—it is foreign to us. As a group, you know, we are starting to learn. With us, it took us 60-odd years to come and talk to you fellows and to not be ashamed of what they done to us. It was pure brutality.

Like, for instance, I had a boxing match and I got defeated and when I went home, I got flogged. And he gave me a pair of boxing gloves to run around for a week with. And the next, following Saturday, I had a fight and when I sat in my corner and I looked across, I seen this little white fella and all I seen was hate. The brutalisation that they gave to us and that is why we are here. You know, they brutalised that little boy and it was not his fault. And it is just the trauma that we had to put up with and that brutality that we dished out as individuals and that, you know. It was a part of our life that we grew up with. We didn't know what it was. We didn't even know that if you paint somebody it was a crime but to us it was just with no excuses. No-one told us why they flogged us. No-one told us why they brutalised us.

This healing place is where we can sit down and talk and tell our children and even tell you fellas that, I think you can understand what I am talking about. The bloke up at Kinchela, the manager there, said, "You know, they got spirits up there." And as you (Revd the Hon Fred Nile) know, as a pastor, there is no healing in hell, and this is what Kinchela has done to us and this is what we are learning now.

We have always loved each other; we always will. Because we know the trauma that we went through but yet it stopped us from telling our family that we loved them. And this is what this healing is for us, this healing process, so we can tell our children that we love them.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Because of those bad memories you do not want the healing centre at the Kinchela Boys Home location. You said South West Rocks.

Mr EBSWORTH: If we can get it at South West rocks, like I said, it would be a lot better. To look at Kinchela and to see what it is, it is like the ghost is still there, the ghosts of our brothers. They don't want them there and, you know, when we was there, we never seen them spirits.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Could there be an historical section of the Kinchela Boys Home showing what happened there? Photographs and—

Mr MAHER: Absolutely, yes.

Mr EBSWORTH: Yes.

Mr CAMPBELL: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And statements from the boys.

Dr McCOMSEY: The details of the healing centre are going to be fully prepared in a report in January. We can provide that to the Committee. But on the site, having a museum is definitely something important to every man. I might just add, some of the men here today, two years ago you would not have been able to have them stay on site as long as they were today and being able to talk about the experience. And I think that is testament to the strength of these men and what they need and want to accomplish around this healing. And the truth-telling aspect of that is vital for them and their families. And that is what we have been doing for the past five years.

Mr EBSWORTH: I think two bottles of straight whiskey, if you can drink that and still come out sober, at Kinchela Boys Home that is what happened to me the first time I went back. I was that frightened and that nervous, you know. I was shaking when I walked in. So the whiskey didn't have an effect anyway. So we need this healing and we hope to get that so that not only our children but our grandchildren too can face reality and say: This is what happened and this should never happen again.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Uncle Campbell, you spoke about the water punishment. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

Mr CAMPBELL: Well, you know, just I done something wrong, I don't know what I did, you know. So they dragged me out of bed. I don't know what—I farted or something in bed or something, you know. Then, all of a sudden, they just dragged me back and they stripped me off and just told me to hold the hose upon my head and I had to stay there until about five o'clock in the morning.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: And that went for five hours?

Mr CAMPBELL: Yes, about five hours, it might have been a little bit longer. See Crow who just walked out the door, that is our testimony, you know. Like, a lot of our Elders actually got dementia. Crow has gone to hospital because of dialysis. And a lot of our boys passed away in the last two years through dialysis. So that is through the legacy of alcohol and drugs and that, you know, that they done just to try and get rid of their memory of Kinchela Boys Home.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Would every child have gone through that process?

Mr CAMPBELL: Yes, every child went through that process. Like, even with the line and that, they all went through that process. And also the tree and things like that. So, like you said, when we left Kinchela all we had was just hate, hey. And that hate, you know, got us incarcerated through the jail system. Then we got a bigger number. But like, it took us 56 years. I am 60 next year. BH boys are in their sixties and a lot of boys are in their eighties. It took them a long time to actually come out and talk about their sufferings and what happened in Kinchela Boys Home. So you got to realise that there was a lot of boys that actually was in there that actually didn't get punished, they actually seen the punishment of the other boys and that is still stirring around in their brain and in their memories. And they are affected by it too. We don't say anything when we come home and all of a sudden we got to come out and start talking about it. And I think we woke up a lot of eyes within the Government, and things like that. So this is why you are here. That is why you went to Cootamundra and I don't know whether you've seen Bomaderry yet.

Mr EBSWORTH: I think it shows what KBH's evil power is, that we started off with two blokes and right now we got 100 blokes and all of these blokes, they are 84, in their 70s and 60s, like Lester said, and they come to this meeting, come to our meeting, this healing meeting, so they can heal. You know, you got an 84-year-old man who never healed and they are willing to come because they are KBHers, they come up to Kempsey, sit down and talk to us and bring their wives and that up, and their carers and that. So the testimony that we are doing is bringing healing power to the boys. We still call each other "boys" but not only that, to the community, to our children and to our wives, so they can understand, you know, why we don't love them.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Thank you to all of you for showing us around Kinchela this morning. I know it was a very difficult experience for some of you but it gave us a real understanding that we otherwise could not have achieved. Some of the stories that we heard this morning were shattering.

Mr CAMPBELL: You haven't heard most of it.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I understand that. A few uncles said to me today that one of the most important things is to make people understand what actually happened in Kinchela. As you said, Tiffany, people are taking some time to be able to talk about it. I wanted to pick up on something that was said this morning. That is, if any of you would like to take the opportunity to tell us stories that you want on the public record about what happened at Kinchela you should feel absolutely able to do so.

Mr MAHER: My name is Lester Maher, No. 11. I would just like to read out the first statement, which says to this Committee actually please do not let the survivors of Kinchela Boys Home die with regret. This will occur if we are ignored in our request to achieve our long-term goals. Two of the things that have happened to me personally are that I was flogged by the manager for running away. Two things that came out of that were I had a very deep hatred for white people. That took me a long time to get over. I guess that has happened to all of us. That was the first thing and it was understandable for all the stuff that we went through. The second thing is I had very little respect for the authorities. One of the things that happened to me after I got married and had children was that I became very protective of my own children because I have always said that no white bastard is going to take my kids away from me. As I said, I have got no time for the Department of Community Services [DOCS] because they are still doing the same thing today.

If there is anything that I would like to see come out of this hearing today it is that—I have mentioned to one lady today that it has been mentioned to us, or to me anyway and probably to others—a lot of people have said, "Why don't you just get over it? Forget it and just move on." My reply is, "Why don't you get over Anzac?" You white fellas are still on about Anzac all the time. We went through the same brutality as probably the fellows who went and fought for this country. We can never forget what has happened to us. It is the same thing, I guess, with white fellas with Anzac. It is the same principle.

I would like to think that if there is anything that would come out of this hearing it is that, as you know, most of us are over 60 and we do not know how long we have got left. I would like to see a recommendation that we would get some sort of compensation for the rest of our lives, some sort of pension or some sort of thing that is going to sustain us and keep us. Sure, we think about our children and our grandchildren but it is about us; it is about where we are going from now. We have got a life to live, we have got our kids to look after and our grandchildren and all that sort of stuff. I think that we deserve something as a compensation package to get out of this for the rest of our lives. I think all the stuff that we have been through, we will never forget what has happened to us.

Mr EBSWORTH: We can never heal. You cannot bring back the past, but we can talk about it and the brutality that was done to us as children. We can never forget that a man will stand over you with a big stick and flog you like a dog. That is what we went through. When I left Kinchela I enjoyed a flagon of wine just as much as going out and hitting piss out of white fellas. I enjoyed both of them. That is what hate does to do you. You do not care who you bash. Because no child is born with hate, hate is bestowed upon you.

Mr CAMPBELL: It is taught.

Mr EBSWORTH: Every time I had a drink if I saw a white fella come past me even if I did not know him I would just get up and flog him, kick piss out of him and enjoy that. That is how much hate that I had in me. I did not care what I did. A white man was an enemy. To me he was the devil. When I saw what we saw in Frank White's eyes, who was a manager of Kinchela Boys Home, no children want to see the hate that came out of his eyes and out of his mouth and out of everybody who worked there. They made children so frightened.

They were too frightened to sleep because they thought and they knew—they never thought, they knew that one day that one person would come and pick him up and take him into the showers to brutalise him and rape him.

No children want to see that or grow up the way that we grew up with so much hate and watching our own little brothers who were five or six years old be brutalised and then turn around and say, "Have a shower you black bastard. You feel dirty. You look dirty." So the only way that we can cry is when water is running over us. We learnt not to cry. We learnt how to cry in silence. It is hard for young children to cry in silence but we learnt how to. We always said we would never give this man and these people the satisfaction of seeing us cry.

Mr MAHER: You must remember too that all the brutality that happened to us was under the so-called Aboriginal Protection Board. They had a duty of care to take care of us and yet they brutalised us and bashed us for no reason at all.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Do you think they were trying to break your spirit?

Mr MAHER: Absolutely.

Mr EBSWORTH: Yes, I think that was it but we were too strong to let them break it. That is why we are here today to tell you. We are starting to realise now that our stories should be told. We have kept this up in silence for 60 years. Only us can sit down and talk. We can only talk to each other. We could not talk to anybody else. But now that we have got this opportunity to get together and start healing each other, we can tell this story. We are not ashamed no more. We know we are black, and at the boys home we never had that satisfaction of being anybody. Being a number you did not know what you were. We are still lost. When I go home my brother still says, "What are you doing here?" I tell him, "I don't know. I suppose I think you're my brother." He is 74 and I am 66 and we still do not know each other.

My two sisters who went to Cootamundra never met our mother. We have to heal me and my sisters and everybody else at Cootamundra and Kinchela Boys Home who went through the same experience. It is bad when you sit down next to your sister and you do not know her. This is what happened to us. The memories that you had of your family were taken away by a No. 28, by a number.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would like to begin by saying thank you so much for sharing with us today. We really appreciate you and we can only imagine how painful it is for you to share it but it gives us great insight. I would just like to begin by thanking you.

Mr EBSWORTH: I do not think this is insight, this is reality. To have insight into it makes us feel that we are talking to somebody who is not listening to it. This is Kinchela and this is reality. We sat up here and swore on the *Bible* to tell the truth. To say this is an insight is also an insult to us.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry.

Mr CAMPBELL: If you are going to not insult us the way to not insult us is to listen to us properly and do something about it, because you have got the power to actually say something and help us out, help us get our spirits back and help us heal with our families.

CHAIR: We are here to listen. I am sure that Courtney meant no offence.

Mr EBSWORTH: I agree but just what she said at the moment, here we are giving you the true meaning of the life that went through. To say it is an insight into something which is—

Mr CAMPBELL: We just swore an oath on the *Bible* here just a minute ago.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I said sorry. What I was saying is I would like to say thank you for sharing with us your experiences. You have talked a little about your experiences. I was hoping you could say how old you were when you were taken, if you can remember.

Mr EBSWORTH: I was five.

Mr CAMPBELL: I was 10.

Mr RITCHIE: I was four years old. My two younger sisters were babies.

Mr MAHER: If you reverse that, if an Aboriginal person done that to white kids they would string them up from the nearest tree.

Mr CAMPBELL: This was a time when they did string them up from the nearest tree. In 1967 was the referendum and Kempsey was one of the most racist towns ever. They voted against the referendum, 99 per cent against it here alone, or 97 per cent or something like that, I am not sure. We have to live in this community and this community has got to heal too from their past relatives, their families. I know a lot of the massacres that went on here. That is still not healed in the community. Drugs and alcohol are doing it, ice is terrible here. This is what we are talking about. These are my family. I was that close to seeing my father—

Mr EBSWORTH: What they bestowed on us and all the sickness and everything else, you have found a cure for sickness that you can heal but how come you have never found a cure for hate? How much hate does one person need to give another person the opportunity of being like you are, that we can walk free and heal ourselves? But every time we look at a white person we see hate. You have cured everything else but the hate that you have had for the last 220 years. With so much education that goes on and the healing powers that you have got, why have you not cured hate? Is there a problem?

Mr CAMPBELL: How can you cure our hate towards you, to the government system?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: We are ashamed of what white people did to you. We are ashamed of what they did to you. There is no excuse for it.

Mr CAMPBELL: But me and Crow, we live in the community. They keep telling us, "Get over it." How are we going to get over it? We can't get over it. We have only just started talking about it only in the last three years. They were lucky to get me to speak.

Mr EBSWORTH: Fred, you said the right thing. Let's not be ashamed. Let's start healing all of us so we can sit down and talk and be a united family, not segregated. You fellas can get a suntan and say, "Look how brown I am." Let's leave that alone because if it is on us it is black. Let's be a family. Let's unite and get rid of all this hate which was the past and let's all heal together. That is what we are trying to do with our brothers, our family. We went to Moree and talked to them. They said, "We seen you fellas on television but we never thought you'd come to our family." We want to heal. We want to heal together. There is no use if we are going to pull together that one is pulling away from us and we cannot heal. None of us can heal. You can be apologising all your life and we will still be abusing you all our life. We have to be united.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How do you overcome that?

Mr EBSWORTH: Your pen of 1901 has done the damage and the white policy. It is not about how we can do it; it is about how you can do it.

Mr WELSH: You have it there right in front of you. That is the best we can do. We get away and talk about it and we come together and bring these things together. As we sit here and discuss this around the table at the moment you can see the diversity in our feelings and how we are answering your questions and the understanding of each word that is the same. That is because we come from every part of this land across this country. We have come together and we have been moulded into this place now. We now feel we are brothers and we are comfortable with each other. We feel uncomfortable while we are trying to explain ourselves. But at the same time we know that if we do not try it will not go anywhere. We do not want this hate to go to our children or to our grandchildren and great grandchildren.

For myself as a father, I need to be able to see that there is some chance for my children in this world. We do not want handouts from you. What we need is help to rebuild a structural family that can develop our own way of living and that can build industry that will make this country better. That is all we are asking; we are not asking for anything else. You cannot give back what was taken away from us. I was eight years old, my brother was 10, my sister was five, my other brothers were four and two, and the twins were six months old. I watched them all come back home to our homeland, and I watched them all get denied from the homeland the same as I was. This thing that we have in front of us is a very strong thing about us and what we are hoping to do. If you can help us with that we can help our children.

Mr EBSWORTH: My son came home from school with a note saying, "Your son does not know anything about Captain Cook or the First Fleet and he cannot speak English." In a multicultural country like we have today, why should they send such a letter home to an Aborigine, especially one from the Stolen Generations? I went over there and asked them why they did not tell the truth—that the disease and everything that he brought into this country has killed more Aboriginal people than myxomatosis killed rabbits. That is true. You ask us how we can think, but it depends. I realise that and I learnt that the pen is mightier than the sword. It is the white men who made those laws with the pen and they can also clean it up with the pen. Like I said, there is so much hate within that white policy. You fellas made that decision.

Mr RITCHIE: How can we heal? My mother had seven kids taken away. That not only affects us; it affected them too. My eldest sister is a beautiful black woman, but she does not want anything to do with Cootamundra. She never met her mother. I am the only one in the family of seven who lived with my mum. She is gone now and they never had that chance. How can you heal from that? Whether she did or not, I do not think so. It is so hard.

Mr EBSWORTH: I think we have the opportunity here today and you also have the opportunity. You have more. Like I said, the only way we can heal is to listen and talk to each other. We go out to talk to communities and help them heal too. We are talking to our own people with the help of all this. We do not have to sit down and tell our mates we hate you; we can tell our mates who helped us. If this Committee is determined about what you want to do, this is the opportunity for us to help you to help us and our communities. This is what it is all about. There were too many rejections in the past. Now you have the opportunity to take those rejections and make all of us heal.

Mr RITCHIE: My two youngest sisters never went to an institution; they went straight to adoption. Will they be compensated?

CHAIR: They were taken away?

Mr RITCHIE: They were taken and they went straight to a white woman for adoption. They were only three and one. We will probably get compensated, but they never went to an institution. Will they get compensated?

CHAIR: This is why it is important that we are hearing your evidence and receiving submissions.

Mr RITCHIE: I have never heard anything about that.

CHAIR: That is right. Most often the consideration is about institutionalisation. But our time has finished.

Mr MAHER: Can I say one more thing? We went to a couple of communities at places like Moree. You know how strong Moree is with political things. They opened our eyes and opened our arms. That is the sort of response we get from communities. That is what Kinchela is all about—trying to heal communities.

CHAIR: That is why your evidence has been so valuable. The submission is very valuable in that it lays out a plan that we can consider. That is what you are asking for in terms of support. We also acknowledge that it is not only the Committee that is here; your local member Melinda Pavey is here listening. We are listening and we recognise how important it is that we offer an opportunity to support you and recognise the wrongdoing. We are sorry about your life experiences. We appreciate that you are sharing them with us and we will take that information forward and make recommendations to the Government. We hope that it is a positive path forward for you.

Mr MAHER: Can I ask one last question? How much research has been done so far with regard to Kinchela Boys Home?

Mr CAMPBELL: Don't say you read about it in a book because I am sick of white people saying, "We read it", or "We heard of it."

CHAIR: It varies for each member; we have had different experiences, we have read different things and spoken to different people.

Mr CAMPBELL: There you go.

CHAIR: This is the process of doing an inquiry. It is a recognition of the importance of finding out what has happened and providing an opportunity to hear from people whose lives were affected. That is why parliamentary inquiries are important. They provide that opportunity not only to hear book stories or someone else's story but your story, your experience and your evidence.

Mr CAMPBELL: Fifty years of my life is a myth.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: No, it is not; it is true. That is what we want to hear about. It is your truth.

Mr CAMPBELL: It was.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is why it was so important that we went out there today to experience it with you and to hear about it here. It is your truth and we honour that.

Mr CAMPBELL: Thank you, but get rid of that myth, please.

Dr McCOMSEY: As we mentioned during the site visit, we are preparing the conservation management plan, and it will be completed early next year. I would like to table a copy of that report as well as the healing centre report.

CHAIR: We would like any additional information you can provide and also what you showed us at the site—the maps with the numbers of people. We have asked Link-Up for similar information about what mapping has been done to establish the number of people and where they have come from. We will be going down the South Coast and will speak to people at Wollongong, Nowra and perhaps Bomaderry. We are not sure. We will be going out west to Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Walgett. We are looking at where we can go that will be most effective in hearing people's experiences and getting guidance about what is needed to move forward. You can keep sending us information. As I said, if you speak to people and they say they would like to make a presentation—

Mr EBSWORTH: That is what we hope to do. The places that you are going to are places where a lot of Kinchela Boys Home people come from. With your assistance we can go out there and talk to them too. What we are doing is not only healing us but also those children of the Kinchela Boys Home boys who never made it home. We can tell them the story of their father or grandfather. That is what we want to do. Like I said, let us all heal together and go out there and heal our people who still live on reserves. Please do not treat us like dogs.

Mr CAMPBELL: Bring us home.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I hope you will stay for the rest of the afternoon.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Thank you very much for sharing with us.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

KATHY OLIVER, Director, Community Engagement, Kempsey Shire Council, and

DAVID RAWLINGS, General Manager, Kempsey Shire Council, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Welcome to the inquiry. Do you have an opening statement?

Mr RAWLINGS: We have not prepared an opening statement.

CHAIR: We will proceed to questions. Perhaps you can tell us whether the council has an Aboriginal committee, whether it does social reporting in depth or survey work around the needs of Aboriginal people, and whether or not stolen generation issues are raised in that or addressed.

Mr RAWLINGS: I will talk a little bit and then I might pass across to the director. I suppose what I might mention in regard to that is when I first came here there was work being done through a group that was called DALMA, the Dunghutti Aboriginal Leaders Management Alliance. What they tried to do was bring together the heads of the various Aboriginal organisations that were operating in Kempsey because they realised there was quite a number of them. I suppose that was an attempt to try to bring together all the aspects of the Aboriginal community and the council community together, which I thought was a good idea and a good approach. We find that there tends to be a bit of splintering within the community so when we are trying to get traction—and it is probably no different to the non-Aboriginal community—that you do get a lot of different groups with different interests.

I thought that was something that was good. Previously we had adopted a resolution about a Reconciliation statement and those sorts of things before my time here, and that was looking to try to develop things and take them further. But after a while it ran out of steam. It was something that was good for a while but we did not seem to make a lot of traction in trying to move forward. I know one of the things that we are very keen on in the council now is trying to find ways that we can bring the whole community together—all of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community together—and find a way forward because we have quite a number of disadvantage factors and they do not always sort of isolate themselves to one sector of the community.

We are taking a bit of a focus on looking at saying, "There's a lot we need to focus on about disadvantage." Sometimes we are doing a bit of a disadvantage to the Aboriginal community, I think, by tagging a lot of these disadvantage factors back to saying they are Aboriginal things when in fact they are a lot about health issues, about diet and about employment opportunities. They are not really a factor of whether someone is Aboriginal or not; they are a factor of our economy and our broader community here. We are sort of having a bit of a shift in view of looking at saying, "Sometimes we might not be actually creating a good service to the Aboriginal community by tagging them constantly back to things that are often seen as negative in the broader community."

Ms OLIVER: We certainly have gone through the motions of having an Aboriginal liaison committee. We started that quite a few years ago—before my time. As David Rawlings has said, it kind of like petered out in terms of attendance and what it was actually achieving and it became more of a talkfest than really taking positive actions. That was very difficult to engage in and have regular attendance at those particular meetings. We have moved away from that. We embraced the opportunity to work with DALMA, which was the Aboriginal community bringing the various different groups together to actually engage with council. That has since dissipated.

We work directly with groups that are doing things in the community, whether they are non-government organisations [NGOs] or whether they are the land council, or whether they are the schools that arrange some programs. We have found that we are engaging and creating a much more positive impact in working with groups that are wanting to do things in the community rather than trying to make a group do something that it does not really want to do. That is the approach we have been taking and have been very successful in that endeavour.

Mr RAWLINGS: The other thing I will add is that you would be aware of the Breaking the Cycle group that has been set up. We have been very actively looking for that to be set up and something to go with that. Probably at the moment we are actively pushing for resourcing because, again, we are finding the same

thing: That we have not got any additional resources, so we are finding it very hard to get traction and get actual changes and outcomes that we see are going to bring some beneficial outcomes. Breaking the Cycle has been a big one for the last couple of years of trying to get something together to show exactly what is being done—different programs and that—and seeing whether they are actually getting the outcomes we are expecting.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What is the population of the Aboriginal community?

Mr RAWLINGS: About 3,200 roughly—around that sort of figure. I think it is around 11 per cent now of the population. It has been growing as a percentage of the overall population. It has slowly been increasing. The rate that the Aboriginal population has been increasing is probably between 3 and 4 per cent per annum over the last 10 years whereas our overall population has been pretty well stagnant in the same sort of period.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: To what extent is the council aware of the experiences of the Indigenous people who had been taken to a boys home for years? What is the experience of the council? What is the understanding of their experiences?

Mr RAWLINGS: I would say that most of that would have come through the Kinchela Boys Home. They have been a very active group and they have been very active in working with council, not me personally a lot, but particularly with the director. A lot of our understanding has really been through those people who have been associated with that. I have not heard a lot from people who are outside that particular group about their experiences. That comes through the broader community.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: We have heard a lot about a healing centre. Has that ever been conveyed or communicated to the council?

Mr RAWLINGS: Yes.

Ms OLIVER: No, not that I am aware of. We are very mindful of the sensitivity of dealing with the Aboriginal community and the cultural aspects. It is not something that is readily discussed with council and those forums. Certainly other issues are, but the actual specifics of the stolen generation, not really. That has not been raised by the community, nor have they approached us directly to say, "Look, we would like a healing centre."

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I ask because that came out in our discussions and in the evidence today.

Mr RAWLINGS: Yes.

Ms OLIVER: Which is great, but it is certainly not something that they have suggested to us.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Would the council welcome discussions about a healing centre? Would that be a fair statement to say that?

Mr RAWLINGS: In principle, yes; but, as always, the problem we have as a council is that we are already financially well behind the eight ball.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, sure.

Mr RAWLINGS: Often when we are talking about these things, if there is not a funding model that can go with them, it makes it very difficult for us because we really do not have capacity to add extra things to our offer. But in terms of working with the community and finding ways to achieve things, that is something we are definitely open to.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: They are suggesting that South West Rocks is where it should be; not the old boys home. They say it has too many bad memories. Sometimes the local, State and Commonwealth governments assist with these projects so it is not a burden on the local council.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Can I just follow up on that issue? Apart from the healing centre, they are also requesting consideration of an actual memorial-come-museum at the site of the home itself. Is that

something council would consider supporting—obviously ideally financially but certainly in other practical ways?

Mr RAWLINGS: In terms of practical ways I think that is something that the council would be very supportive of. The council has been very supportive of that group all the way through the events and activities they have been trying to organise in order to raise the profile and awareness of all the issues around the boys home. I think you would find the council is very supportive of that group in general and of the type of activities they have been talking about.

CHAIR: Does the council have an Aboriginal officer?

Mr RAWLINGS: We did have one but we don't have one at the moment. We did find there was a lot of talking but not a lot of actual outcomes. So we moved away from having an officer and into working with various groups for projects—for example, we had an experience where there were a number of young people riding motorbikes without helmets. This was brought to us by the elders and we were in a position then that we could put some resources into going and building a communication plan, sitting with those people and lining them up with our motorcycle group up at Greenhills and getting some new outcomes. So we started moving the money into identifying different projects that we thought had been beneficial and running those instead.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Ms Oliver mentioned that you do not do much with the stolen generations. Does your council have any specific programs or are they more broad Indigenous programs?

Mr RAWLINGS: We do not have any specific program on the stolen generations; it is broader things. As mentioned in the past, most of the issues have been on different topics. I suppose economic development has been one of the primary big things and the issue around drugs and those sorts of aspects have been more the primary driver of conversations.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: There is really not much discussion about the stolen generations?

Mr RAWLINGS: Not that I would hear; that is not to say that they are not in the Aboriginal community. I think the director mentioned that it may be one of those areas that other than the boys home it is not one that is really raised out there in the community.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: What Aboriginal employment strategies does the council focus on with such a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal people in this community?

Mr RAWLINGS: We have a target in one of our KPIs to look at our level of Aboriginal employment. I do not know exactly where we are but we are probably still below that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: What is the target?

Ms OLIVER: We would have to take that on notice. I am happy to do that.

Mr RAWLINGS: The target was set to reflect the Aboriginal community broadly. I think it is indicative of the percentage of Aboriginal community compared with non-Aboriginal community in the workforce but I cannot remember the exact percentage. But we have not really put in a lot of very positive approaches to that because we are looking to try and not create too much of an "us and them" sort of situation at the council as well. We are looking for opportunities to bring people in that will be really broadly accepted by everyone because theoretically we are on a merit-based system. Our biggest problem though is that it is relatively easy to get people in as labourers and those sorts of things but it will take more effort and more time to try to get people further up in the structures because there are a certain amount of skills in that. That is one of the things we are facing—we don't have high levels of education and achievement. So we have got those steps that we need to go through and focus on to get long-term beneficial outcomes if we want to get them into a better place overall.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Would you please take on notice both the target and where you are sitting under the target?

Ms OLIVER: Yes.

CHAIR: My apologies, I should have read out at the beginning that there may be questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time with certain documents to hand. In those circumstances witnesses can take questions on notice and provide answers within 21 days.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Given your numbers, is there any communication with the State and Federal governments to address the situation of the Indigenous community—for example, Indigenous employment and the boys home—things that can be resourced?

Mr RAWLINGS: Probably more at a State level, not a Federal level because there are not really many Federal resources in the region. At the State level we would have a number of ongoing discussions in terms of Premiers and Cabinet through Aboriginal Affairs and now we have had "Breaking the Cycle", which is an attempt to bring all the various groups in. But there have been a lot of ad hoc discussions—for example, at different times there will be discussions with the schools, with Education around issues about Aboriginal education; and at different times there will be discussions about employment. You will be dealing with different departments on an ad hoc basis but there has not been any good, clear, strategic sort of discussion about resolving underlying issues and problems, which is what we are trying to get out of Breaking the Cycle. We are trying to get away from the ad hoc and more into looking at the issue holistically and in the long term and try to aim towards long-term benefits.

CHAIR: Does your council follow the Department of Local Government engaging with Aboriginal communities document?

Ms OLIVER: I would have to say that I am not aware of working through that document, no.

CHAIR: That document was produced in collaboration with the Department of Local Government and the Local Government and Shires Association to provide insight to local government about working with Aboriginal communities. It can be found on the Department of Local Government website—or whatever the organisation is now.

Mr RAWLINGS: Yes.

CHAIR: It creates that sort of step-through process and provides clarity as to how to engage. Kempsey was very quick after the Bringing Them Home report to make an apology, whether or not that apology is still recognised and adopted by council as a guiding statement about the council's commitment to the stolen generations.

Mr RAWLINGS: The director has a copy of it there.

Ms OLIVER: It was signed in 1999. A statement of commitment and a separate apology to the stolen generations was issued by council in that period of time. Yes, it is still quite prominent. They are on our website. It is something that we recognise and try to adhere to.

CHAIR: The Committee is finding that the impetus was there after the report was released and the apologies were made but we are looking at whether more work still needs to be done and how that would work—from the community level through to the Federal Government. Are you open to continuing the path of achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal people?

Mr RAWLINGS: It is clear from my perspective that whilst that was a good step in isolation it has not really substantially changed things—we are not looking at the programs and the things that we need to do to actually get the changes happening. The documents can be good and even if you adhere to them and think they are the best thing in the world, they are not the thing that is going to change the outcomes for the people. We need to move on to getting those changes for people. I do not know all the answers but—

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The Committee has heard evidence from some of the stolen generations. They estimate that 20,000 boys went through that home and that they were mainly trained to be farm labourers. So a lot of them could still be in this area. Has there been any assessment of that? The stolen generations are a theoretical thing for Australia; you may have them on your doorstep.

Mr RAWLINGS: Until the Kinchela Boys Home got very active and started to become outspoken it was definitely something that was not really talked about, and still isn't. It is nothing that we have got information on. There is nothing I can see as an easy way for us as a council to really get a good feel for exactly who is where and where the generations are spread out as well. Now we are not only looking at the original boys but also their families.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Their families?

Mr RAWLINGS: Their families and who are they? Where they have ended up is really not there. I do not think there is much of a record.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What was the major initiative after the policy in 1999? What initiatives has the council taken since then?

Mr RAWLINGS: That is what I see. I think there have been a lot of words and so that was before my time and then there was at some stage the adoption of the policy for increasing the percentage of Aboriginal workers. There was a group formed then and that group then sort of fell aside after a while, and there was another group that turned up which was the DALMA group and after a while that fell aside. But when you look back and you talk about actual programs and things that have happened on the ground and changed things there is not much you can really point to. It is difficult from our perspective because we have always been in a situation where we have not got much funding and without funding it is very difficult to do more than talk about things. We never really got to that stage where we had a good clear direction forward either and something that you could say would be giving you great outcomes.

Ms OLIVER: There have been a lot of things that have happened, but specifically associated with stolen generations maybe not. More broadly across the community where we have worked with young people, we spent a lot of time at East Kempsey Cemetery putting in the Barrunbatayi area for Aboriginal people and doing a lot of radar ground proofing to try to establish where those graves were. There are a lot of things that we have done in the community but, specifically, for stolen generations probably not. Does that make sense? We tend to try to be as broad, more widening to try to get there, but we work with projects. Like we are working on a mapping project with the elders and the young people at Melville High School and the primary schools at the moment so we are working on that kind of level, not specifically stolen generations.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I was a counsellor so I know the difficulties in local government. There is an acknowledgement and an apology, if you had made it as a core issue then perhaps relating to the stolen generations it could have been addressed but I understand the importance of the issues.

Ms OLIVER: Yes.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I will make a suggestion of a possible initiative, and this has only just come to me now and it may be utterly inappropriate for the corporation members who are sitting here and if so I will retract it unreservedly. One of the issues that have been addressed with the Committee is the identification of boys who were in the home and that there is constant outreach trying to identify them and to bring them into the community, into the brotherhood. I think the point made by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is very valid that potentially there are still in this area a number of survivors from Kinchela. Would council consider, for example, putting something with a rates notice or when it communicates with the entire council area, some information asking for Kinchela boys to contact someone in the corporation. I am looking for some sort of suggestion that this is not an utterly inappropriate thing to say from the back. To me if you are trying to continue to identify people then that may be an opportunity.

Mr RAWLINGS: We will take that on board because I think that is a good option. We have talked about the boys home in the mayoral column, for example, so there are opportunities to put that message out there.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Yes. Obviously only if the organisation feels that that is appropriate.

Mr RAWLINGS: Yes, I might leave it at that. If the organisation does come to talk to us about trying to put that message out we are quite happy to help with that. We can do that.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: That is fair.

CHAIR: I think that is a big part of what is happening with the process. We all accept, as you said, that words were said and perhaps a failing to follow through with actions. This Committee is taking this opportunity to listen to what can be done—it is a bit late—to have better communication and opportunities for action to result from that knowledge and support stolen generations peoples. There will probably be a lot more ideas.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Committee has heard a lot about in this inquiry and in submissions is the intergenerational nature of the effects of the stolen generations. It might not be directly related to stolen generations but some of the challenges that local intergenerational communities face are related to the fact that they were taken in the first place. Mr Rawlings, you said you have a range of issues that you are trying not to identify purely as being Aboriginal or indigenous but that you are trying to address. What are some of those issues that you are addressing at a council level?

Mr RAWLINGS: Looking to try to address, because it is a difficult one. Different people start at different points in the cycle. For me I see that at the end of the day employment is one of our key problems in this area, and valuable employment as well. So we have been trying to identify ways that we can build a more valuable economy. We are looking at agriculture very strongly, and looking at how we can move from a fairly low agricultural bay to a much higher agricultural bay. The reason we are looking at that is because if you do not have a prospect of a good job at the end of, for example, going to school your incentive to go through school is very low. I think that would be the same whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

I see that as one of the core starting points because it is very difficult to encourage children to go to school if they think at the end of their school time, whatever it may be, I am going to end up sitting on a lounge next to someone who may not have spent all that time and effort. If we do not have opportunities there, and it is not seen that there are opportunities, it is very hard for people to be motivate to go and get education because I think education is one of those fundamental building blocks. When you look at the research that has been going on around the world education is very closely linked to achievement and personal wealth and community wealth. But I think we need that incentive first so people can see that there is an option. So we are currently focusing a bit of time on trying to see if we can make opportunities to build more employment opportunities out there and hopefully that will start to be a sort of drag factor on the employment. Increasing employment will then be a drag factor on taking people out of poverty situations which will improve health outcomes and all that sort of thing. It is really a chicken and egg thing but it is a matter of trying to pick a starting point and then work our way through because it is quite a significant problem that I think has built up over quite a long time.

CHAIR: Does Kempsey have a tourism management plan?

Mr RAWLINGS: We do. In past years there has been a very large focus on tourism but there really has not been a lot of investment. There is not a lot of investment I know about in tourism at the moment with the tourist operators. So that is why we have shifted focus a little bit onto the agricultural area where I think we have got a greater opportunity to build the economy at this stage. But still do have a tourism plan and we are still doing more work.

CHAIR: We understand that for stolen generations the issue of being taken from family and community often meant there was a loss of experience of culture. The State Government is doing some programs to do with language and opportunities to support Aboriginal tourism and Aboriginal arts. Sometimes that is the way you can have healing and the economy working at the same time so at a local level, and understanding of connection and the opportunity to perhaps access some of those funds from State and Federal Government around the more cultural things for the very strong Aboriginal community here. Perhaps the State is not doing enough to connect with local government, even though those opportunities are there. It would probably involve looking at those ones too.

Mr RAWLINGS: Yes. I do think that for our particular region there is a lot of value in Aboriginal tourism that has not been tapped, that cultural tourism is really growing and people do want those experiences. I think there is a bit potential there for developing something where you can bring people in and given them a real experience and an experience they can take home and talk about.

CHAIR: It is such a beautiful natural environment.

Mr RAWLINGS: That adds.

CHAIR: It is a shame that we are inside not outside in it but it is a beautiful area.

Mr RAWLINGS: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Does Kempsey have some fairly serious employment problems?

Mr RAWLINGS: We have.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Unemployment in the dairy farming industry that has had a downturn.

Mr RAWLINGS: Our unemployment has been high. I often talk about what has happened here seems to be a death of a thousand cuts. We never had any big employer lost that was big enough to trigger the rapid intervention type of thing. But when you go back and look at the number of manufacturing and various aspects, the telecommunications and all those that have gone over, if you go back about 15 years, it is quite a significant decline that has come there. There has been nothing that has come in to replace that. The tourism has not really grown to replace it. None of those has been big enough that it has triggered approach of government that if there is a crisis situation we have to go in and try to find an alternative way forward. It has really been just these numerous cuts of 100 jobs here, 150 et cetera over a long period of time. It has just slowly contracted the economy.

CHAIR: I am a couple of years out of local government plans and I understand there has been some changed within the framework that the State set down for a social plan and now it is under the new management plan.

Ms OLIVER: Integrated—

CHAIR: Integrated plan. Is there a social plan that identifies those issues of disadvantage or whether they are identified with particular reference to Aboriginal people?

Mr RAWLINGS: Our current plan probably does not individually focus on Aboriginal people. So basically we have got four areas. We say we wanted to be a healthy, wealthy, safe and sociable community. So we put most of our areas under that. In each of those areas we have got targets say, for example, where we are looking at say the level of educational payment. So we have not split that into Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, it is really just "This is what we need to achieve for the community" but the logical flow-on would be that you would be looking at those areas where there are higher deficiencies in education and trying to bring those up. I suppose, we had a broader community target and then trying to push for actions. I will go back to breaking the cycle, that is what we see as the key mechanism that could affect some of those because most of the key issues we see are things that we really are not in a great position to influence that much. Just the scale of it and the issues that are involved are a bit difficult for us to deal with because they are caught around building an economy and building up a good education base.

CHAIR: I am not sure whether this fits in with breaking the cycle but the issues around domestic and community violence, child removal and those issues happening and I think this is an area with defunding in some way around the refuges and the community service centres. Are you aware whether that has had a major impact and whether it will cause disadvantage Aboriginal people as well? My understanding is that services were closed that had in the past offered direct support to Aboriginal people and disadvantaged people?

Ms OLIVER: I know that the women's refuge closed but that was taken over by the Samaritans. Whether they are like-for-like services, I am not 100 per cent sure but the Samaritans assure me that they are. There has been some shifts in funding, I guess, from a broader policy the Government wants to deal with larger players in the community service space as opposed to lots of local little players. I do not know whether we have had a significant loss of services to the community. Breaking the cycle group has a series of sub-groups that whole case management is being addressed with FACS and police and domestic violence. So there is a special category of people that are picked up in breaking the cycle now that are being looked after, perhaps, at a higher level than where they were before. So that has been facilitated through that group. Yes, the breaking the cycle group is looking at lots of different things in case management and working with domestic violence and educators as well as health, which is the other big issue with young people is to address those. There is probably more of a focus on that aspect in this community than there was before.

CORRECTED

CHAIR: So more integration, is that what you are saying?

Ms OLIVER: Yes, absolutely.

Mr RAWLINGS: What we are looking at is, we see that there is a lot of money that is being poured into the area at the moment but we are not seeing positive outcomes coming out. So we are taking the focus of saying: Well, where is this money going into? What is it doing? And are those the right activities? Are they the right things to be doing? And if we can do things differently and better and if we can get some positive outcomes out of that, then we need to somehow find a way to make that change happen. So it is really looking at saying, at the moment there have been things being done but they are not getting better outcomes so we need to find different ways of doing things.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just a quick question. I had a phone call on the way here. A church in Sydney found out I was coming to Kempsey. They said that Pastor Roberts up here is keen to have an Aboriginal building for a church. And the church in Sydney is prepared to donate the building and they said that the council is opposing it. That is what they told me. It would not approve the church being built.

Ms OLIVER: No, it certainly has not been raised with me.

Mr RAWLINGS: It has not been raised with me either, so I do not know if there is some more ordinary sort of planning issue about the block of land. So they had their own land?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I gather, yes.

Mr RAWLINGS: I have not heard of that, so I would have to take that on notice.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I will get some information for you.

Mr RAWLINGS: If you could get some information to me, but it is not something that has come to the top of the organisation as yet.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I was surprised when they told me. I thought the council would do that.

CHAIR: It is a long way away, that Sydney place, isn't it, when you are living on the North Coast. Thank you so much for coming to our hearing and providing that evidence. There are some questions I think you have taken on notice and I think you might be getting some other questions put to you, if that is fine and you can provide some additional information, it is very much appreciated. We know that you have got a really dedicated, and quite large, Aboriginal community here, and we hope this is one part of the process to have better communication and genuine healing and a better quality of life for everyone. If we can be part of that, that would be very good. Thank you so much for coming.

Mr RAWLINGS: I think definitely one of the things our council is really keen on is just, as I said, getting the whole community integrated back together because we need to all be working together in this. That is our primary objective.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

CORRECTED

KEN DICKSON, Chairperson, Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council, and

GREG DOUGLAS, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming along. I welcome you to the Inquiry into Reparations for the Stolen Generations. Could we have your name and your title before we start?

Mr DICKSON: Well, once seen, never forgotten—my name is Ken Dickson and I live in Port Macquarie, grew up here in Kempsey, did all my schooling here, high schooling, then college in Sydney. I am on the Board of Directors of the Elders Council and I am also Chairperson of the local Aboriginal Land Council. So, everything has happened to me all at once in 2015.

Anyway, I am here to give some information to all of you about Kinchela Boys Home, because I went to school with a lot of them and unfortunately a lot of them are all dead now, they passed away as very young men. After they left Kinchela, they moved to Sydney for work obligations and to get work to support their families and that.

My affiliation with the Kinchela Boys Home was back in the mid '50s. And I attended Kempsey High School with a whole range of boys that have gone through there. And it's sad to say, a lot of them are already dead, died as young men in the city area. And I could count them, if I had four hands I could count them on that, because they were all good mates of mine from all over the State. I do not wish to mention their names but they were good friends, good mates and we socialised together, not just in Sydney, but here in Kempsey when the football was going and Kinchela Boys Home always had a pretty hard side to beat. There was Burnt Bridge, Kempsey High School, you name it, they were brilliant.

And my mother used to make damper because of the poor food that was given to them at Kinchela Boys Home by the then Mr Harry White, who was the manager at Kinchela. And my mum used to make extra sandwiches. We would cook a damper for these boys and I would take it into school, into the high school. And they would throw their sandwiches away, which consisted of just one dry piece of lettuce, a bit of Vegemite, or one dry piece of lettuce, or baked beans. You know, they just didn't get fed properly. And my mother used to sympathise with all that, when I would go home and tell her. So that was how they were treated by the then manager. And it is sad to say, because he treated them so bad, that he paid the price in his future life, because he lost his son Keith at 15 years of age of leukaemia. And I knew Keith from high school as well.

So they are just some of the situations that I recall on the Kinchela Boys Home. And it is good to see that there's an organisation now operating in Redfern, in Regent Street, called KBH, which you would all be aware of. And one of the mates that I used to go to school with, Stephen Ritchie, he is working there in a coordinating position. And the other two boys that I know that are still alive is Harold Harrison and Ian Harrison, who is now in Booroongen Djugun, up in the nursing home.

Harold is still living down the South Coast. Now, these two boys are the stepbrothers of Jimmy Little, the famous Aboriginal singer. So remembering a lot of the names and knowing them, socializing with them, it was a great experience in my life because I was never ever part of the stolen generation. My dad was a hard timber cutter; mum was a domestic and reared up six kids, plus four others, her sister's kids and so on and so on, as we do in our Aboriginal culture.

And my dad, being the hard worker that he was, died a young man at 53. You know, after leaving the hard timber industry up in the mountains here, he died whilst working for the Main Roads Department in Sydney as a very young man. A much easier job but working in 42-degree heat and trying to push over a big boulder on your own is no mean task, so he collapsed and died of a heart attack.

So all of the time that I've lived in Sydney I've socialised with these young fellas. Some were postmen; some worked in the Post Office, round the Redfern-Chippendale area. They were smart young boys, well educated, but their misfortune in life was being taken away from their families. And it is sad to see that. And I think my knowledge of reading and listening, they were still doing it up until the eighties. That is not a long time ago, the 1980s.

And when you go back to my age, the age of 13, 14, 15, socializing with these young men, you know, it is a fair way back again. So all I've got to say, on behalf of the Kinchela Boys Home and the people who are doing something about resurrecting some type of gratitude, or compensation, because the ones who are still living deserve it for what they have endured, the misery that they have gone through. But also the families, which some of them have never ever got to find or see again. They should not be forgotten in regards to some type of compensation.

And I do know that a couple of my friends who are up north in Cairns and one in Tasmania, they were part of the stolen generation but they are still alive, you know, and I see it in them, in their eyes when I'm talking to them, I can see the pain and the hurt they have endured back then as two- or three-year-olds and you can still see it today in them.

So, you know, what do you do? Get them referred to a doctor for mental illness, psych treatment, or anything like that? They need more than that. They just lost their tracks for their families. So it needs to be considered to them two young men and all the men that I still know down the South Coast and one here in Booroongen Djugun nursing home and quite a few of the boys too that came from here, you know.

So it about sums it up for me, because when I was with them in our younger days and in our teenage days in Sydney, I felt for them, you know. Just like my mum did. That's about all I've got to say. And I only hope that Kinchela Boys Home, as it is today, can resurrect a lot of that stuff that went on years ago. I will hand it over to you, Greg.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Just before you do-

Mr DICKSON: You want to ask me some questions?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Yes, just one. What, in your view, would be a suitable form of compensation? This is an inquiry about reparation and you rightly said there needs to be some form of compensation redress. What, in your view, is the appropriate thing?

Mr DICKSON: Well, for the ones that are still alive, and that can be tracked down, some type of financial gain for them. Because that is what the world is made of today—finance. No matter which way you look, you need that. It's a tool. Money is a tool. So it could help them pull together or travel and try to find their ancestor or their ancestors' homes, which a lot may not have. I could tell you now, Ian Harrison, he was in Kinchela Boys Home. He's up in Bulbin now, suffering from dementia. But he is initially from Wallaga Lake, down the South Coast, south of Sydney. So financial, or a nice home for them through whatever the situation comes from—housing, welfare—for them to live in.

The thing today with a lot of Aboriginal people is the escalating price of housing rental is tremendous and a lot cannot afford it because of their socio-economic situation. They just cannot keep up with the rental situation. That is why a lot of them, as you would understand, Fred, are out on the streets a lot, sleeping on cardboard boxes. I just got back from England and I saw it over there, people sleeping on the Tube on cardboard boxes. I am talking about young people, not just people in their forties and fifties who may have become alcoholics. I am talking about 18 and 20 year olds, which I even managed to capture on film. It is worldwide, we know that, but it is a monetary thing that creates it.

They haven't got it or they've got it. There is not a lot of gap in the middle for the people to be helped other than the work that Reverend Fred Nile does, some welfare agencies, I can't say all, and our organisations that are there to help our people whether they were Kinchela Boys Home people or they are people from out the west transiting here to the coast to live. The Aboriginal organisations, the lands councils, the elders, we just do not have the funding to assist them fully. Everything is like a scrap of bread; it has just got to be dished out a little bit at a time. When you look at these boys I am sure they would appreciate in later life to get some type of assistance. The only tool that can help them is in some type of monetary form, or better housing.

CHAIR: Mr Douglas, do you have a submission to make or would you be happy to answer questions?

Mr DOUGLAS: I have got something written here that I want to read; however, I would like to preface it with the fact that our valley and many of the families in it have seen people taken, often in very sad circumstances and, dare I say it, violent circumstances as well. It is a question around attempting to restore somebody who has had everything taken from them. I don't really know how many people are still here with us,

but in honour of my ancestors and the pain that they went through and the pain of our families today I would like to acknowledge that this is Dunghutti country, ghutyn bavvi dhytin. We have endured the pain of multiple communities and that thing is still ongoing and it is largely attached to the fact that the boys were brought here from all sorts of places and under all sorts of misleading circumstances as well. I think I should just read the submission that I have put together and just go from there.

The stolen generations has had a very serious and deleterious impact on the lives and lifestyles of each individual child that was unfortunate to have been removed from their families and from their countries. Whilst this phenomenon is not unique in any one location in New South Wales, the Macleay Valley was home to the Kinchela Boys Home [KBH]. Some of the things that we have witnessed and we endure from people that have been in there or in relation to people that have been in there are particularly around their capacity or ability to relate with themselves and/or with other people, with their families, with their extended families and with their community families. That was, for me, as big a source of pain for them when they came home or they tried to come home and encountered rejection to a degree that was not fair to them.

If I could offer some reasons, our people forgot how to speak to their own children. It may or may not have been fair or unfair, but a lot of times when people were coming home it created a burden in the community that was difficult for everyone to deal with. A lot of times it actually saw people leave and then never come back. It has left a huge emotional void in or on every single community that each child was removed from. As I said before, this place bore a large slice of that due to the fact that Kinchela Boys Home was here.

The stolen generations in New South Wales has had an observable effect on Dunghutti people and land. The suffering, the sorrow and the mourning associated with each individual child has had an accumulating impact as well. We have felt and endured the pain of KBH children, their families and their communities for a long time and we still are today. There is much that has been said about the Macleay Valley that negatives our community and our community members, but not much has been done to identify some of the root causes for this negativity. Among many reasons is KBH as a small yet significant element of the confusion and dysfunction that seems to impregnate our communities from time to time.

Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council [KLALC] has an open and ongoing relationship with KBH survivors and the KBH corporation. In principal Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council supports the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation's endeavours to create an educational memorial to their history. We also support in principal the desire of Kinchela Boys Home and the survivors to create a healing centre and home for former KBH children. We have seen the pain of their memories in their eyes. We have felt the pain of their memories in their hearts. We believe in whatever can be done to assist the restitution of these stolen children to a life and a lifestyle in which they as much as possible can overcome their anxieties and fears and emotions—I should bracket it and really call them nightmares—of their time as Kinchela boys.

Kinchela Boys Home is on a heritage register in New South Wales and as a physical memory those buildings will be there for a long time yet. How do you provide reparations or restitution to somebody that has had everything of value to them removed and separated? On a personal level I am not really sure how you answer this question and I respect that this Committee has been put together to consider this. I suspect that a part of the answer involves an idea like "whatever we can". KLALC have sat on many occasions with members of Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation and yarned about some of their dreams and their ideas.

As these gentlemen get older, as it is with all people who age, time is given to ponder how we will live out the remaining years of our lives. With this in mind the Kinchela boys as a collective have expressed a desire to see a wellbeing centre built in this valley somewhere. It is a place in which they can safely age, a place where they can be supportive of each other and a place in which their life in the Macleay Valley can be a more positive experience than what they had as Kinchela Boys internees. KLALC strongly supports Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation in this potential solution and would very much like to see this aspect of their dream realised. For along with the emotional, social and psychological advantages for the Kinchela boys or former Kinchela boys comes an economic value and an economic potential for the Macleay Valley and our people in terms of potential future work, training and so forth. Thank you for listening to me. I wish you well but I also wish the stolen generations better. Thank you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I think it is excellent that you are supporting the project as you just outlined. It is always a concern whether the land council is on the same wavelength as the people, but you are and that is very good.

Mr DOUGLAS: We are trying to get there.

CHAIR: Are you able to explain the legal constructs that sit around the site now and what might need to change if it was to go the way proposed by KBH?

Mr DOUGLAS: Benelong's Haven entered into a negotiated lease with the Minister for Lands in about 1979 and around that time it became a rehabilitation centre. The ownership of that site was transferred to Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council in around about 1984. In effect, the Kempsey land council does not have a lease with Benelong's Haven at this point in time. No lease arrangement was negotiated nor commenced between Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council and Benelong's Haven. That is a neither here nor there kind of an issue, but the lease that they have with the former Minister or the Minister's office in terms of their occupation of the site still stands. For one reason or other Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council has not had an opportunity to talk about that. We are currently in the process of initiating conversations with Benelong's Haven around there. The full story legally is that property will always at this point in time remain the property of Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council unless, of course, revoked by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, which may or may not be a possibility or a reality at some future stage. I think that is a fair summation of that question.

CHAIR: When we were on site there was talk of it being restored to its original status to allow it to be visited by people and that would change some of the reality of how it currently operates.

Mr DOUGLAS: There are a lot of community values and benefits that are derived from Benelong's Haven's occupation and what they do there. One of the conversations that I have been privy to with Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation was around the fact that they are the occupant and, while respecting their desire to reclaim the site, it becomes an issue around restricted access areas.

Kempsey Local Aboriginal Land Council gets probably on average half a dozen to a dozen requests for land or to provide land for restricted use, whether it be for a post-release pathways facility or a refuge facility or something like that. The current site is a KLALC asset and has restricted access on its boundaries because of what it does. It is not my call initially or ultimately, but it would certainly be presented to the board that that would be a precinct where that possibly could happen. Without pre-empting the future discussions that we are about to enter into with Benelong's Haven, KLALC has not for one reason or another entered its position with Benelong's Haven. So that stuff will make its way into life somewhere in the new year, when negotiations around that site will start once and for all between Benelong's Haven and Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: We have heard evidence from the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation. They want a healing centre at South West Rocks.

Mr DOUGLAS: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There are too many very unhappy memories at the Kinchela site.

Mr DOUGLAS: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There could be a museum or some other educational thing from their point of view to record the history. But they say they need something somewhere else. Where is that "somewhere else"? Is that land that the Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council could set aside for them at South West Rocks? Do you have any control over that or are you restricted to Kempsey?

Mr DOUGLAS: Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council's boundary is fairly large, and it does have a few vacant land assets. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act reserves the right for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council [NSWALC] to make decisions of that nature in relation to long-term use or long-term occupancy. It is not something that a local level land council has a delegated authority from Parliament to make a call on. Any discussions around that would necessarily require Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council to take the issue or any such issue to its membership and get their endorsement and the board's endorsement to take it to NSWALC. Those land dealing provisions in that Act do not mean that things are not possible. They just mean that there is a time window and a whole bunch of other things that come into effect once that aspect of the legislation is initiated.

The site itself has been a source of angst in the community. It is almost really sad that it is still a place of restriction. There are memories and ideas attached to that institution and some atrocities. Dare I say it, but some good must have come out of it somewhere along the line. I am not sure what it would be, and I do not know how to articulate that. But it is possible that that may have happened in some way. But it deserves to be something that potentially remains available to anyone and everyone in New South Wales to have a look at. But in its current situation that is just not possible.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you see an opportunity for the site still to operate with Benelong's Haven along with what is being proposed as a museum and also how potential—

Mr DOUGLAS: No, people live in on site; a lot of things happen on site. Imagine a situation where we decide to do that. The restricted access would then be a problem for people who might want to go there to have a look.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How much land is there?

Mr DOUGLAS: I think it is about 2½ acres. It is Lot 362 DP 758; that is pretty close. I can provide that information to the Committee. There is also a block of land behind it that Kempsey Aboriginal Land Council owned. I would not like the brothers to go through that. Why would you want to wake up and see the thing that caused you such pain? In principle we support the ideas attached to it becoming that. But I do not think that that can work in the current situation and what it demands now.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: The drug rehabilitation program would have to go to another location and the restriction would then be lifted.

Mr DOUGLAS: That would be an inevitable conclusion.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: We heard earlier that the boys are now getting on. Is there a sense of urgency to provide support to them to ensure that their concerns are addressed?

Mr DOUGLAS: I think it is fair to say that that is something we run into every day. We at the land council have heritage delegations from Parliament, we have land delegations from Parliament, and we have economic development delegations. We have a bunch of things that come from Parliament that we deal with. On a huge front we endure a lot of painful accounts of life in Kempsey and the Macleay from our people. So the imperative to try to do things is always counterbalanced by reality and the power that we as an organisation or institution possess. I do not really want to go left of field to talk about this, but there are a significant number of life experiences and accounts that I could share with the Committee that would talk about our imperative at that level. We will do what we can to support them. With the support of our membership, which we already have, and the support of our board we will do whatever we can to assist the Kinchela Boys Home boys in their endeavours. That is just a given. We do not talk about that necessarily from an Aboriginal perspective. My family has been in there, and I am pretty sure a lot of people in this community have had family members in there, or people who have come out of there. It has become part of their DNA. We will do that all the time.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the Committee. If at any time you would like to provide more information, please send it to the Committee. If anyone in your community who hears about the inquiry would like to make a submission, we are continuing to receive them. It has been very valuable for us to be in Kempsey and to have that firsthand experience of going to the site and being able listen to the stories of the people. Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee adjourned at 4.55 p.m.