

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES**

**INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING  
INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE  
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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**At Armidale on Thursday 7 August 2008**

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**The Committee met at 12.35 p.m. at the Quality Powerhouse Hotel Conference Room**

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**PRESENT**

The Hon. I. W. West (Chair)

The Hon. G. J. Donnelly

Dr J. Kaye

The Hon. T. J. Khan

The Hon. M. S. Veitch

**JOHN WALKAWIAK**, Acting Inspector, New England Local Area Command,

**ELVA TAYLOR**, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Pat Dixon Medical Centre,

**MARGARET WALFORD**, Councillor, Armidale-Dumaresq Local Council,

**ALAN GRAHAM**, Manager Tenancy, Department of Housing,

**THOMAS BRIGGS**, Chair, New South Wales Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council,

**DAVID HENDERSON**, Chief Executive Officer, Armidale and Business Enterprise Centre,

**SHANE LEVY**, Enterprise and Community Development Officer,

**MATTHEW WALSH**, Manager, Aboriginal Employment Unit, Jobs Australia,

**CHRIS HALLIGAN**, Youth Worker, Department of Juvenile Justice, and

**STEVE WIDDERS**, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Advisory Council Chair, Anaiwan Elder.

**CHAIR:** I declare the meeting open. I thank the participants for being with us today and allowing us to hear from you. Before I make a detailed introduction about where we have been, where we are going and how this inquiry will operate, I invite Uncle Steve Widders to give us a welcome to country.

**Mr WIDDERS:** Thank you very much, Ian. I like being called uncle; I am only an apprentice elder at the moment. Before I start, I acknowledge the presence of other elders here in the room from the Gumbaynggir, the Dunghutti, the Kamilaroi, the Bundjalung, the Biripi and the Wiradjuri. I welcome everybody, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who have travelled to be here today for this important standing committee on Aboriginal disadvantage, and the parliamentary committee as well who have just travelled from Griffith down in Wiradjuri country and from Broken Hill in the Barkandji country. We are fortunate here to have Armidale as one of the few selected places throughout New South Wales for this important inquiry into Aboriginal disadvantage.

I acknowledge that we are on the land of the Anaiwan people. I am a descendant of the Anaiwan people. These are my ancestral grounds. I am a member of a long-established Aboriginal family in Armidale. When you look at it, we have been here for 2,000 generations. My family were on that Anaiwan land. As I mentioned, we share this land with the surrounding tribes and the people and I give my respects to the people of the surrounding area.

As you know, there are 600 different Aboriginal tribes in Australia and our flag symbolises that we share all of that. We share the land and the people and the sun. No matter where we come from, we are all part of one land. We were a commonwealth way before the white fellas come here and said, "I take this in the name of the Commonwealth." We have been a commonwealth for thousands and thousands of years.

But I welcome you here because we share this land together as Australians as well. The fact that we have a Standing Committee on Social Issues on Aboriginal disadvantage is important. Not everything happens in Sydney or the bigger cities. We in Armidale and the surrounding area, the New England and the north-west, have disadvantages as well. We have ways of addressing that disadvantage. That is what we are here for today. We all have knowledge, we all have experience, we all have understanding and here is an opportunity to offer that to the standing committee.

Ian will explain a little bit about it. I am just doing the welcome and acknowledgement to the country of my ancestors, the Anaiwan people. Their story has been here for thousands of years: their story is in the water, the land, the environment, the animals, the food, the music, the culture, the tradition and the language.

*[Mr Widders proceeded to give a Welcome to Country in the traditional Anaiwan language]*

Yugga danya Ngayawanya  
Yoonarah danya tampida

Ootilatanya roonyarah Ngawanya

Welcome to the land of the Anaiwan people. I hope your standing committee here and the visitors as well that have made the effort and the time to come here find it rewarding. I know it will certainly be productive. I wish you all well. Welcome to the Anaiwan.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Uncle Steve, for that warm welcome. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Issues I acknowledge that we are meeting on Anaiwan land and I pay our respects to elders past and present with us today. As the Chair of the committee I shall quickly introduce my fellow committee members, advise you of what we hope to achieve today and what we have been doing over the past weeks and months. The Vice-Chair is the Hon. Trevor Khan, and the other members are the Hon. Mick Veitch, Dr John Kaye and the Hon. Greg Donnelly.

The Social Issues committee was given this particular inquiry by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Paul Lynch on 25 September last year. We have received some 78 submissions and have conducted 11 hearings and forums in February, March and April this year. We have visited Kempsey, Dubbo and Nowra, Bidwill and Redfern in metropolitan Sydney, and now Griffith, Broken Hill and here in Armidale. We tabled our interim report on 27 June this year. The report provided an overview of the evidence we had received to the point of publication and the conclusions we came to on the various issues that confronted us. From the 45-odd issues that we identified, we arrived at four or five basic themes. Those four or five basic themes are what we hope to address today in discussion. Those themes are set out in the document that most of you have received. They go to the issues of measuring outcomes, coordinating service delivery, partnerships with the Aboriginal community, and the vexed issue of insufficient funding. We want to try to focus on those themes and discuss them today.

Today we will have a roundtable discussion, followed by a short break and thereafter we will hear from anyone who wishes to make a further contribution either from participants at the roundtable or others in attendance today. It is appropriate for them to give a five-minute contribution, which will be recorded and transcribed by Hansard to provide the official document of discussions today. It will be the document we use to study and arrive at our recommendations for the final report in November.

I now open the inquiry for discussion. We will not put the issues into silos because this inquiry takes a holistic view. We do not say each of those four areas is in isolation or separate in any way, but perhaps we will start first by discussing the issue of measuring outcomes. Perhaps before that, I will give everyone involved in the roundtable discussion the opportunity to identify themselves and state what they do.

**Mr WALKAWIAK:** I am Acting Inspector John Walkawiak. I am from the New England Local Area Command. I have been stationed at Armidale I think for about 20 years. I am here just simply to hear what the outcomes are and, obviously, what the big issues are within our community that some people will raise today that will assist us.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** My name is Elva Taylor. I am the acting Chief Executive Officer [CEO] of Pat Dixon Medical Centre and I am the chairperson of the culture centre. I am on Jobs Australia as a committee person and Community Health.

**Mrs WALFORD:** I am Councillor Margaret Walford. I work for the Armidale Dumaresq Council. I also represent the Aboriginal elders group from Armidale.

**Mr GRAHAM:** I am Alan Graham. I am with Housing New South Wales. I am a team leader on the tenancy manager side. We govern an area from Guyra down from the Tamworth area. I am bit like the police inspector: I am here to listen and take back information to our managers.

**Mr HENDERSON:** I am David Henderson. I am Chief Executive Officer of the Armidale and Business Enterprise Centre. We are business and community facilitators and mentors based in Armidale.

**Mr LEVY:** I am the Aboriginal Enterprise and Community Development Officer. I work with David Henderson in the District Enterprise Centre.

**Mr WALSH:** I am the manager of the Aboriginal Employment Unit. I manage the Structured Training Employment Project Employment Related Services program [STEP ERS] and the Indigenous Youth Employment Program. I am here about employment and training.

**Mr HALLIGAN:** Currently I am working as a juvenile justice officer in Armidale. However, I think my representation here is much more useful, based on different experiences and activities. I worked for about 10 years as a community development worker across the region initiating and working for a number of cross-cultural community projects.

**Mr WIDDERS:** I am the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer at Armidale City Council. I also have an interest in much of the stuff that you will be discussing here today, in particular, employment, health and education, and specifically Aboriginal men's health and ways of working together to lessen the 17-year gap in Aboriginal men. You will notice that many of the elders here today are women. The reason we do not have a lot of men here is that they are dying young. I would like to look at that in different ways.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** For the benefit of participants and those who are here to listen I should explain that the interim report that has been produced is in excess of 300 pages. As a result of the lengthy consultation process we have gone through today we have been able to draw from those hearings preliminary conclusions to certain matters. The area on which I have been asked to concentrate relates principally to service provision by various government and semi-government agencies and the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of services provided by public service departments.

It is clear to us that there has not been a consistent method of monitoring whether programs have been successful or unsuccessful. There has not even been consistency in the definition, for instance, of aboriginality. Consequently, it is hard to track the outcomes of those programs even over a relatively short period. With that preliminary observation, and particularly directed at those involved in service provision, the essential question that I ask is: What measures do you use to determine the effectiveness of the programs? Have those measures been successful? What needs to be done to overcome any shortcomings in those measures? I might start with Steve.

**Mr WIDDERS:** Can I refer quickly to one issue?

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Absolutely.

**Mr WIDDERS:** I mentioned earlier the 17-year gap, or what is estimated to be a 17-year gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Australia, which is a real shame. It is terrible to think that, in a well-developed country like Australia, we still have Aboriginal people living 17 years less, on average, than the white Australian population. I know that we have a lot of support services in health and education and we have medical services to address the mortality rate of Aboriginal people, but it is not working. Obviously if it were working we would have more Aboriginal people, and we would also have more Aboriginal men around.

Our services are now employing Aboriginal people to develop and deliver programs. I know that they are out there. Perhaps there is a big gap in that we are not working together. Millions and millions of dollars have gone into Aboriginal health and well-being programs but we still have people who are sick. We still have a high rate of heart disease, renal failure, strokes and diabetes. This is not right for Australia. Something has gone wrong. The wider population is surviving, but Aboriginal people are not. I know there also is a lot of responsibility for individuals to look after themselves—the Government does not have the whole responsibility—but there are plenty of agencies.

We have to work together in a more coordinated approach. The issues that we are dealing with today include housing, health, education and employment. There are four major areas that we need to reassess and evaluate to determine what has gone wrong and to establish why people are still disadvantaged. But I think we also have to look at other stuff in our communities—things such as governance, leadership and empowerment and Aboriginal people being able to make their own decisions and determine their own destiny. For too long we have been too reliant on government. We have to start standing up for ourselves, be independent and make our own decisions.

I appreciate the interest and concern of government people, but often governments make wrong decisions. I have only to refer to the stolen generation, to the number of people who were removed from their families, and the transgenerational effect and trauma that that has had on Aboriginal people. Sure, that might

have happened 50, 80 or 100 years ago, but the effect is still transgenerational. Young Aboriginal people who are growing up these days do not have any idea about their identity, their culture, or who they are. You might think that that is not important, but it is. If people do not know who they are they do not know where they are going.

Aboriginal people have a big role to play in that, in particular, the elders who have the responsibility of passing that sort of information back down. I am saying that in order for Aboriginal people to overcome a lot of disadvantage they have to have a responsibility to themselves to do that, and they must work hand in hand with the government departments that I mentioned. We have been around for a long time and government departments have been around for a long time, but often the results are still the same. Coordination of services would be a good thing.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** What Steve said is true. Government departments are now structured. When you go back to my days the departments looked at Aboriginal people, but that has now been reversed. I lived those policies. When the Government gives funding now to a non-indigenous committee it has to work side by side with Aboriginal people. Let us take the Hunter New England Area Health Service. This is the second time that we have had a partnership. The first partnership was disgusting. Today, when I sit at the table on those committees, the department takes different types of funding in a community. I am not knocking anyone; I am just referring to the structure so you understand what I am saying.

Let me talk about the hospital. There are mothers and babies and community health workers, and they are all in different departments. We must come together and work in partnership with the Aboriginal Medical Service [AMS]. For any Aboriginal organisation it is like shaking hands. One department should shake hands with the Aboriginal department. We are doing that today but it is only a vision; it is not what we are supposed to do on the ground. We are starting to do that now but we are a long way away from that. I look at it this way: I have been a part of this community for so long but this is getting worse. It is not getting better.

You are here from the Government. I hope when you walk away from here you have an answer because we do not have the answer. We do not have money because the money is going to other departments. They get the funding but I would like to know how many numbers go to all those things. It comes back to you. If you want to do something properly, do it for the community.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** I wish to intervene and to ask a question. We have travelled extensively around the State. I think, without exception, in every community we have gone into it has been clear to me, and perhaps also to others, that there are major and significant problems with indigenous health. I am sure that you would be well aware of that. I am sure that the problems in Armidale and the surrounding areas are probably as bad, and perhaps even worse than in other parts of the State. I keep asking myself this question: If we have been approaching Aboriginal health in the way in which we have been approaching it for the past 40 years or so and we have been producing such appalling results what needs to change?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** If it were me I would look back on that 40 years to see what I had done wrong. I would come back and make decisions, like you are doing here today. You went around New South Wales. Different areas have different needs, but health is the important issue. We all have bad health. I will give you an example. We did not have a doctor at the medical centre. I tried to get in because I always go to the medical centre. When I got sick I could not get in to see one of the doctors because all the doctors had closed their books.

When I went to a meeting in Sydney I went to the Australian Medical Service [AMS] at Redfern. The doctor said to me, "I cannot let you go out of here." I said, "I have to go home. I am going home." She said, "No, I have to write a letter about you not being a client." She said, "You have to go into hospital." So I went into hospital and I got checked over. When you look at it as an Aboriginal person, I would not have gone any further. When you get knocked back once you do not go back again. You suffer, or you get Panadol or Vicks—you name it. Those are our remedies. If people are taking money from departments to fix Aboriginal health there has to be another way. We are burying people all over this State. Last week we had five funerals and that is happening all over New South Wales. I deal with people who want to get help.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** I know that what I am about to say will be controversial, but it has been put to us that the model of delivering health to indigenous Australians, primarily through Aboriginal medical services—which seek not to be mainstreamed and to work closely with major area health services—is flawed. At the end of the day it has been argued that a better way of delivering those services would be by large

area health services operating through and working closely with Aboriginal medical services in the local communities.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** The majority do not use the medical centre. There are three types of Aboriginal people. They had their own doctor for years. You want the medical centre to look after the people who do not have a doctor in town. That is what we do at the medical centre and that is why the programs were set up. There was a new structure going in in the medical centre, but the members rejected it because it was new and did not suit the Aboriginal people.

**CHAIR:** Perhaps we can come back to that. Aunty Margaret might like to comment. We are talking about measuring outcomes.

**Mrs WALFORD:** You have not mentioned youth on the list. It is a big problem. I have an issue with the Aboriginal youth hall. I am trying to rebuild it because we had storms that destroyed it. Now we have to strip it down and try to rebuild it. We are looking for some funding to rebuild the hall. There is another thing with Aboriginal elders. Our Aboriginal elders do not have any office or place to meet every week or month. That is something we are looking at—trying to get accommodation or a place suitable for Aboriginal elders and perhaps getting a bus to transport them back and forth.

There is disadvantage. We had a Community Development Employment Project [CDEP] running in Armidale. That went wrong. All our Aboriginal people are disadvantaged by losing our CDEP. They have to travel up to Guyra and to the plantation up there. There is disadvantage in having to transport them there. That is a big issue here with us.

The program that was set up with the CDEP workers, Jobs Australia and Centrelink is not working properly. You have to look at that problem and work out a better solution in that area. If things do not go right with Jobs Australia and our workers and they put in a complaint to Centrelink because some of our workers do not turn up for appointments, Centrelink will cut their wages for eight weeks. A family or couple cannot afford to go without money for eight weeks. A better solution has to be worked out.

We are talking about health. As Mrs Taylor said, we had a partnership with the hospital. That did not work very well with the Aboriginal Medical Service [AMS]. The AMS is in a crisis situation. We have the clinic, but AMS is a place where Aboriginal people meet. We did have a doctor and a dentist, but funding is not available and that was stopped. We are in a crisis.

We see government people talking on the television about health. We have a beautiful building but we cannot get funding for the AMS. The funding body did employ three coordinators on big money and they should have picked up the problem at the AMS, but they did not. We need funding. That is a big issue for us.

The Department of Housing is another issue. We used to pay our rent to an Aboriginal organisation. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs has stopped all that and transferred all the housing business to the white organisation, which is in the mainstream. Aboriginal people do not want to go to the mainstream to pay their rent. They want an Aboriginal organisation set up; that is where they want to go to pay their rent. It is just not working out with the white department. We need to get back to paying our rent to our own Aboriginal organisation. That is all I have to say.

**Mr WALSH:** I am from Jobs Australia. To get to our outcomes we are very strictly monitored. Cutting people off payments if they do not go to work is part of the contract that we have agreed to. Part of the contract is that we work to get people job ready and things like that. To be fair, if people do not comply with that, it is part of our contract and our hand is forced. If someone does not comply, our hand is forced to push the button for the payments to be adjusted.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Are your contracts year by year?

**Mr WALSH:** That is right.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Do you have to lodge a tender each year?

**Mr WALSH:** It depends on the program. Jobs Australia has many programs. The Jobs Network tender is every five years. Aboriginal-specific programs are year by year, which can be problematic because we must write big tenders and they take day lot of time.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** Chris Halligan, you are with Juvenile Justice. Can you tell us what measurement criteria you apply, if there are any, that determine whether we are getting improved outcomes in terms of Aboriginal youth not going through the criminal justice system? If so, what are those measures?

**Mr HALLIGAN:** I will be a bit more general and pick up on some of the things that have been raised. Forgive me if I wander on a bit, I sometimes do. Alva said there is a difference between the vision and the groundwork. Wherever you go and whatever you try to do, it needs to be acknowledged that there is a difference between what you actually do or set out to do and how you deliver that outcome. That is significant.

We know there are two standard ways of measuring things. There is the quantitative, which looks at statistics, boxes, preferred outcomes from the authority providing the funding and setting down the framework. That is something we must measure. It is relatively easy to do if you are a good practitioner. The more important aspect is the quantitative measure. How does that process actually translate into delivery to other people—that is, what are the real outcomes for real people? I always try to measure effectiveness based on client need, whether that is an individual, a family or community.

In terms of measuring effectiveness, we need to consider the process. It is not just what we are doing, it is also how we are doing it. That links very much into arrangements we might establish in partnership, whether that is non-indigenous and Aboriginal partnerships or always multicultural partnerships. Whatever that partnership is, we need to start with equity and clarity of purpose in communication. Once we have that then we can measure outcomes that are effective for all participants. If I keep going now I will just keep talking. Perhaps we can let it flow around a bit more.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** One of the things that became very clear in the first part of our inquiry is that there is a problem with the coordinated delivery of services. In particular, we were told constantly that there are gaps in provision and that they vary from place to place. However, everywhere we went people identified gaps in traditional services. We would like to focus on those gaps and how we close them. The two key findings are, first, that it is clear that there has been a failure in strategic planning of services, which has led to the opening up of those gaps and, secondly, there are issues about the relationship between government service providers and community service providers. We would like some opinions on how we address that.

We would like you to consider two specific issues—as well as the general issue of the gaps and how we close them. The first is the best model for the representation of Aboriginal communities in the delivery of services. My colleague Mr Donnelly made some remarks about things we heard recently. We would like your views on how you think engagement between the Aboriginal community and the delivery of services works best. The second issue relates to Aboriginal community dependence on mainstream services and accessing mainstream services. What can be done to make those services more accessible and more appropriate? I am not sure where to start.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** I will explain something to you.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Please do.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** At the medical centre we have aboriginality forms. They have to go into the Department of Housing. This is the structure for the whole of the department. Centrelink sends a form for people to register. I know the biggest majority of Aboriginal people here and I send the ones moving into town back to their area. That is what we do to work with all the departments. What the departments cannot do, we do for them. But they are getting the money; we do not get money, even from the Department of Housing. If we can do that, other departments should be doing that with us. That is our time. If I send someone to a department, I should get funding for my time too. We put aside time for the things that we do for the people in our community and outside.

**Mr GRAHAM:** I agree. We rely on the AMS for aboriginality forms. We manage Aboriginal housing properties and, as Margaret said, we manage the properties that come over from the community in the short term until another body takes them over. Any Aboriginal person coming in for housing is required to prove aboriginality. That is dictated by the Aboriginal Housing Office. It is a standard format. There are a number of

formats, but it has to be on that form. We rely on Elva's community group to put them through if they are known to the community. The difficulty is for Aboriginal people coming from another area and that is a disadvantage. They might from Brewarrina or Dubbo and it is very difficult to prove their aboriginality in town. To get that Aboriginality in town is very difficult because they are not known and some groups are reluctant to have to sign it. Elva's group has been really helpful for us in being able to get those through the Aboriginal Medical Service [AMS] whereas through the land council it is quite difficult for them.

About three years ago the department instigated a housing forum that we run each year across the New England north-west. That has been happening in Tamworth. That is coordinating the Aboriginal Housing Office—Housing New South Wales we are now called—and Community Housing, which is a growing body here in the New England. It is to come up with some better strategies to provide a joint product that we can manage with demand in certain centres. So, we have a large stock transfer of properties happening in Gunnedah where the whole of Gunnedah is transferring across to Community Housing, and that has been in consultation with the Aboriginal Housing Office as well. We are going to a shared waiting list in Tamworth. There is a trial where we will be allocating clients to Community Housing and to Housing New South Wales off the one list. So, that saves the client having to access a number of organisations to get on the waiting list. If they register at one place, they are on both waiting lists. That certainly will be an improvement. That forum also is a planning exercise for Aboriginal Housing to look at its demands. Some of it is hidden demand a lot of the time: they do not show up on our waiting lists and our waiting lists sometimes are not reflective of the true demand in those locations.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** I wanted them to not have those yellow forms for Aboriginal people. I spoke to one gentleman in Parramatta in the department of AHO and they said that is part of their policy. So we have just got to do it.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** The department you are referring to is AHO?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Yes. And the Department of Housing, we are together.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** So it is the Aboriginal Housing Office?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Yes, but AHO, they are the ones that have that form.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** They have that responsibility?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Yes.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** And without that form you cannot access Aboriginal housing?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Aboriginal housing, yes. So, we have to go through that form. But I feel sad for the people coming outside of our area to do that. I have to knock them back because I do not know them. Also it is about community and who they know, but some of them do not.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I understood you to say that one of the issues confronting you was that you were not getting access to resources to do the work—to get the money, basically, to do the sort of work you were required to do?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Yes, that is true but, see, we take it to the board of directors, we have to do all that; we have to have all their names down and that is where I find we are not a housing body. We are a health body. But when you look at the structure of Aboriginal people—poor health, poor housing, unemployment—it all comes under that one category of health. So, that is what I am saying: I will never knock people back if I can help it. So, if we are looking at things, those four things come together.

**Mrs WALFORD:** I would like to say something about the rent of the Department of Housing. If you have a husband and wife living in the same house and they can be on an age pension each, can you answer this question Alan, are they assessed on the income that they have? If their rent is \$220 or something like that, why can that amount of money, the rent, not stay at that instead of you assessing the income that is coming into that house and assessing both their age pensions and taking half of it from both pensions, which I think is wrong? It should be assessed on one pension because they are still husband and wife.



**CHAIR:** That topic is not on our agenda today.

**Mrs WALFORD:** Yes, but that is a big issue not only with Aboriginal people but also it is with the white community because they are assessed on both incomes, which is a pension coming into the house and then half of their pension or one pension is almost gone to pay that rent, which barely leaves them almost one pension to live on for the next fortnight. So, that is a very important issue.

**CHAIR:** We are putting it down as an issue. If Alan wishes to respond, he may.

**Mrs WALFORD:** Okay, I just put it down.

**Mr GRAHAM:** We assess all residents at the premises and it is assessed on a percentage of their income. It can be split equally between their Centrelink payments. So, they can each pay half or elect to have it taken out of one income.

**Mrs WALFORD:** If you go to a real estate agent and pensioners want to rent a house for \$200 and something, they are not assessed on that.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** We certainly have that recorded in *Hansard* and it is something we will consider in our report. Shane, did you want to comment?

**Mr LEVY:** Just to comment on your service delivery. I think if you care to look, you will see that it is a fact that a lot of the reasons we fail in service delivery are because of the human factor in these organisations. There are people in there that hold key positions that will not play the game; they will not encourage Aboriginal people to do anything. They still have that mentality that we had 50 years ago of racial discrimination. That is one of the bottom lines of why service delivery is a failure.

The other reason from the Aboriginal community is that because of the changes to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act at the moment we have gone corporate. As boards of directors of land councils we are expected to address all these issues we are talking about here through the land council system. They have given us two days' training on governance, two days' training on how to develop a land and business community plan. What are going to be the outcomes of that? Do you see what I am saying? We are not getting the training. You cannot expect us to fix all these problems with two days' training in governance. Governance is the key to all this. Teach our people how to run an organisation, how to run our communities, and people will improve. They are not going to listen to white people telling them what to do all the time. Let the black people tell them what to do. Give us training.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** How would you see that training best delivered?

**Mr LEVY:** There is nothing wrong with the delivery we are receiving, but two days is not enough.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** So all you are saying is that the training is fine but that there needs to be more of it?

**Mr LEVY:** Yes.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Does it need to continue?

**Mr LEVY:** We need more because all we are doing is covering the peripherals. We need to go in and have a look at why these corporate structures need to do this; why we are meant to be doing this. At the moment a particular land council or any organisation within the communities are just sitting in their communities isolated. They have no concept of the bigger picture. They get the funding and they are meant to work in. Again it is through government policy where you tend to isolate everything and put it in boxes. Black people are not like that. White people are not like that. We all live in this holistic environment where everything affects it. It is great you give me a job to employ me, good, but I cannot go to the doctor's yet because all the doctors have closed off their lists. Transport: there is no transport around because of the cost of fuel. You are trying to close this gap but your policies out there are widening the gap.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Are you saying they are widening the gap because they are not speaking to each other; there is no communication?

**Mr LEVY:** No, we are talking about external influences: the cost of fuel, the cost of living. All that goes up; it affects us as well. We are not going to come running saying, you have these you-beaut government programs. It will take more than that. Giving me a job is not going to fix my health and wellbeing. We can talk about housing and education, anything we like, but the underlying problems are the mental health issues.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Mental health issues?

**Mr LEVY:** Yes, that is what it comes down to.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** You would address those problems with more mental health workers?

**Mr LEVY:** Trained mental health workers know what they are talking about. Some of the people running around the country have no idea.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Is it important that those people are Aboriginal?

**Mr LEVY:** I would say it depends on the people.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** We had a mental health worker at our service but it went to community health. We still have the mental health patients and that is the sad thing because when you look at a department, the mental health patients have someone to look after them—case workers—but the case workers are there nine to five. But for anyone in families, that is our problem. It really puts a lot of pressure on community and the families. Years ago we used to send them to Morisset and Callan Park, but today they are staying at home.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Your argument is that they require more support on a 24-hour seven-days-a-week basis?

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Yes, and support for their family. We are not getting that.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Some useful comments have been made about service delivery. I want to throw it open to anyone who has not said anything yet but who might want to raise an issue about this area.

**Mr HENDERSON:** Perhaps I can just briefly bring this thought I have into some sort of context by saying that Shane and I both work at the Business Enterprise Centre. We deliver a program on behalf of the Department of Education and Training. That is the Aboriginal Enterprise Development Office program. We recently have been awarded a new Careers for Aboriginal People program. Shane knows a lot about Aboriginal people; I am learning a lot from him. Just to put it into context, I do not come to this forum as the owner of any great knowledge of the system; I am a learner. I am 62 years old and I am absolutely getting to learn about working with the Aboriginal community. I say this as a background of keeping my ears and eyes open over a lot of years and working with a lot of people. I know how judgemental they are, I think. My thought is less theoretical, less practical than perhaps some of the discussion around the table, more compassionate and personal, and it is this: might we each as members of the mainstream community make a point of getting to know and understand our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. I hope my language is appropriate; might we each make a point of being non-judgemental; might we each make a point of being non-judgemental; might we each make a point of really listening; and might we each make a point of opening our minds and hearts to the issues. My friend Robin Heath at Dorrig Plateau Aboriginal Land Council says to me it is all about respect for the people, the land and the animals. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Uncle Steve would like to make a final comment.

**Mr WIDDERS:** In response to John, you talk about more effective service delivery. I think government departments have to look at what they are delivering and whether it is appropriate to be delivered. I worked in an Aboriginal community where there was a need for a lot of services. I worked previously with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I am going back 25 years. I went back to that community eight years ago: they have got worse. I think government departments think they know all the answers and Aboriginal people do not know the answers. They are getting things delivered to them that they do not want. So I think service delivery needs to be responsive; it needs to be flexible and it needs to be culturally appropriate.

If you are putting a lot of money and a lot of services into something that people do not want it will not work. Money is not always the answer. In fact, money divides Aboriginal communities. I mentioned earlier

leadership and empowerment. There is a big gap. That is the most important thing and it is missing in Aboriginal communities. Not everybody will agree with me, but I am being a leader in saying that there is no leadership in Aboriginal communities. There is no empowerment. A lot of people who are not qualified think that they can run Aboriginal communities. They think they can make decisions.

We have to look at the failure of some communities to serve their own people to see that leadership and empowerment are missing. People are making their own decisions. We have every educational opportunity to get qualifications, to get skills, to learn and to understand, but not many people are taking them up. Those that do so do not come back and engage with their communities. One big thing in the Aboriginal community is nepotism. That is really killing our communities. In every community that you go to you find that nepotism is killing those communities. If people do not know what nepotism means, it means families looking after families, not community. That is what is killing our communities.

You can put in all the government services you like until you are black in the face, but unless you get real leaders you will not make any changes. So we need empowerment, leaders, and leadership training for our people who want it, not for people who appoint themselves as leaders, but for people who really want to make a difference. If we encourage them we will make a big difference in the communities. Most importantly, we have to deliver services that are appropriate. We need more consultation with the Aboriginal community. Millions of dollars do not solve problems; they create them.

Cultural relevance is also important. I referred earlier to Aboriginal identity. That causes a lot of problems because many Aboriginal people do not know who they are or where they are from. That causes conflict in communities. People have to be culturally aware of who they are and what they are doing because there are so many divided communities in New South Wales, and in Australia for that matter. People cannot work together if they are divided. We have such divisions in our communities. You will not get any results while people are fighting and they are at each other's heads all the time.

Eight years ago we had 28 registered organisations in this town. We are pushing for eight now. What happened to the other 20? Where has the leadership gone? John asked the question: How can you have effective service delivery? It comes down to Aboriginal leadership. Shane said that we needed more training and governance. We need Aboriginal people who are qualified and trained to train our own people. We must train the trainer. The white people who come in do not necessarily know what they are giving us, and the black people who are listening do not necessarily want that. We do not want to be a community where millions and millions of dollars go in and the problems become worse because there is no leadership.

We do not want to be disadvantaged for the rest of our lives. That is the most important thing. I do not care who criticises me, but nepotism is killing our community. Nepotism is the worst thing in our community. It is killing our community, it is killing our spirit and it is killing our people. People do not care any more. They are only looking after themselves.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Steve, we thank you for your views. Can I ask you one brief question? I am mindful of the fact that we are now over time. Is it the way that governments are delivering money and services to communities that is encouraging nepotism? The other half of that question is: What can we do from a government delivery of services perspective to help Aboriginal communities overcome the problems of nepotism?

**Mr WIDDERS:** It is leadership. People need to be trained as leaders. Traditionally, people reached a stage when they were elders where they could take responsibility. These days that is not happening. People are appointing themselves as leaders. You need real leadership. If you are going to give an organisation or a community millions of dollars, you need to have people who can handle it. They must not just spend it; they must be able to maintain it and be sustainable.

There are a lot of things that are not sustainable. You have heard in every community that it is a big problem right across New South Wales. Money is not the answer. Provide relevant and responsive services and consultation with Aboriginal people. It is no good putting something in there that people do not want. It does not work. Does that answer your question, John?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Yes, it does.

**CHAIR:** We have plenty of time. This session will continue until 2.30 p.m. We will then take a break for tea and those who wish to make a statement will get an opportunity to do so. They can come up and they will be asked to give their point of view. Time is not a problem.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** I just want to explain. Look at me so that you get a better idea of where I am coming from. I have been part of Armidale for 40 years on and off, but in my heart I work for Aboriginal people. People have talked about nepotism. Nepotism is family. I am related to the biggest majority of the Armidale community. I came here but I am a Dunghutti elder. I bought my home and I worked here. Steve and I understand about nepotism. When you go all over Australia you find that nepotism is part of our culture. I am sorry, but I am related to the biggest majority of them here. Am I doing wrong because I am related to members of my family?

I wanted to put that to you because you probably hear it from every community. Where I am sitting now I have qualifications. I will tell Steve something. I work for Aboriginal people. I am not knocking you but when it comes down who is going forward? Who is following in our footsteps? No-one in the younger generation is following. Are they coming along? It is time that we looked at them, as they are not following in our footsteps. The saddest thing that I see today is that no-one is following us.

**Mr WIDDERS:** That is what I meant by leadership.

**The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH:** My questions will follow some of the things that Steve was talking about when he referred to engaging Aboriginal communities earlier when developing programs that would be delivered to them. My questions relate also to Aboriginal communities having a say about what programs will be delivered to them, and initiating the programs that they want in their communities. We have been told that Aboriginal communities must be able to make decisions about the programs that they need, and that Aboriginal community controlled service providers should also have their funding extended.

I would like you to put forward a couple of things. Steve Widders and Elva Taylor have already touched on those things. Do Aboriginal service providers who are providing services to Aboriginal communities do that better than government providers? If so, why? Another issue that has been referred to is the way in which elders are being used at the moment. In some communities the elders are saying that they are involved in everything, that they have no time left, and that they are getting tired and burnt out. That follows Elva's comments about the next generation coming through and it follows Steve's comments about leadership and empowerment of people. I open up the floor to anyone who wishes to talk about those two issues.

**Mr HALLIGAN:** I want to be a bit of a devil's advocate and start by saying that I am not aware of all circumstances, situations or practices. One of the big gaps is that of disadvantage. The way to overcome that is through empowerment and strengthening the capacity of persons to work together. We know that whoever we are and wherever we work the human factors that include nepotism occur—Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, et cetera—and it has a detrimental impact on the direction of public moneys. How people work is critical.

My experience working with community has been and continues to be one of learning, reflection and awareness of the depth of their culture, language and identity. That is a gap between a city fella or a woman, whatever their cultural background, coming out to deliver a program. They really have no idea, and the real barrier here is language, both the capacity of indigenous people to speak with empowered, strong clear voices and for non-indigenous people, or even some indigenous city people, to listen deeply, relevantly and to find between them the common language—the common script that will build that partnership and that relationship. That is lacking.

Whoever you have and whoever you are, if you do not have the skills or enough of the skills to deliver your service effectively, you will fail. I just want to throw in something here which I reflected on over the last few days to try to identify some framework for a solution. The ethnic affairs priority statement is more relevant in the cities than it is here, and it is applied through government agencies. It is a positive approach to advocating and encouraging recognition in the multicultural community of the values that different cultures have and represent, the different contributions they make, and valuing those contributions. I see that as something positive and affirming.

I want to make one other point for people's reflection and thought. In a community development application I have seen a number of projects fail. I have seen token projects that are shameful to be part of and I have seen projects that work. The projects that work are the projects where empowerment is built into the

application. For example, a community development worker goes into a community and engages with motivated community members with various levels of skill and capacity. They go in and deliver to those people effectively the tools to deliver a process. You can pencil them out. You can write a list of tasks that need to be done or that would be beneficial to be done within the process, and you can give them to people so that they know what is expected of them.

That is in contrast to going in and saying, "I want you to do this. Come back next week. If you have not done it I do not care because I have done my bit." That sort of application can make a huge difference in empowering people to get value from that initiative, to step up more effectively skilled, and to take part in a follow-up initiative. It also allows for greater reciprocal learning in that relationship. Do we need a statement to educate some members of the Aboriginal community on what is expected of them? Do we need to look back a bit more thoroughly at the non-indigenous workers who are delivering process to Aboriginal communities and give them more effective skills training and assess those basic requirements when we do our applications?

**Mrs WALFORD:** I would like to say something. We all know that Aboriginal people are very jealous of one another. Of all the cultures ours is a very jealous race. Aboriginal people are jealous of each other. Until we get over that barrier and face the fact that we have to work together and build a relationship amongst our own people, I do not think that things will work. That is my opinion. I have to say something a bit different. I am really down on this. It is the words "indigenous" and "Aboriginal". We know that we are Aboriginal Australians. When government people or people on television are talking about the Aboriginal people of Australia, they talk about "indigenous" people. We are not indigenous people; we are the original Australian Aborigines. When they talked about the Alice Springs and Northern Territory Aboriginal people, they were saying "indigenous people". They are not indigenous people; they are the pure Aboriginal people. I am really afraid that we will lose the word "Aboriginal". That will be a shame because Australia is made up of Aborigines. I would like that recorded and for you to talk about it. When you are referring to us as Australian Aborigines, say the word "Aboriginal". When you are talking about overseas Aborigines, that is when you call them "indigenous". That is the difference.

**CHAIR:** What about the Torres Strait?

**Mrs WALFORD:** ATSIC brought that in. They do not support the Aboriginal people. We have to fly their flag with our Aboriginal flag. I have no gripes about that, but I just want their support.

**CHAIR:** I was only asking a question.

**Mrs WALFORD:** That is a very big issue among the Aboriginal elders.

**Mr HALLIGAN:** I acknowledge that because I used those terms. It is important. It is a small illustration of how the terminology, even with right intent, can create problems in ongoing dialogue and even interpretation of what is being said.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** What you have said has indeed been a topic of the conversation with the committee already.

**Mrs WALFORD:** All right.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** There was very considerable discussion about the naming of the committee. We did not do that; the terms of reference were not ours. I have certainly been aware, particularly in the north west, of the matters that you have raised. The members of the committee are very much alive to that. However, in other areas of the State the sensitivity that you quite justifiably raised has not been raised in the same way. Perhaps that is because I am from here and I have been pulled up on this before, but I very much alive to what you say, as are the other members of the committee, and we do take it on board.

**The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH:** Shane, do you want to talk about providing services to Aboriginal communities in your economic development role?

**Mr LEVY:** A lot of these services can be delivered by local organisations and, again, the land councils are a perfect example. But the problems are the same no matter where I go. There is no desire to get out; these people do not want to start a business or to do these things.

There are also mental health issues. These people just do not want to play your game. There is something out there stopping us from coming to the party. When I talk to these people I can hear it in the way they speak—they have no desire to start a business or to jump through the Government's hoops. They just want to be left alone to live their own lives. But they cannot because we have unskilled, uneducated leaders in our community who are meant to be instilling community vision and taking us ahead. That is not happening, mainly because of the lack of resources.

Aunty talked about us being the greedy people. We were not 200 years ago; we inherited that. The only reason we are greedy is the lack in our community—lack of housing and employment. They are the issues. There is a barrier between us here and the people we need to get to. They are worlds away from us. It is mental health issues. We need to be talking to these people and asking them why they do not want to work. What is going on in their head? Why do they flog their wife and bash their kids? Why do they not send their kids to school? These are the questions we must ask.

We talk about engagement, but we stand on the edge of our communities and expect them to come forth and tell us all their problems. We should go in and really engage with these people and find out why. It is obviously a mental health issue. We talk about health and all that, but it is underlying health. I get sick, but that does not stop me from going to work. But if I get mental health issues that are debilitating me, I do not want go to work because all the motivation has gone out of me.

**CHAIR:** If you were writing a recommendation on that issue, what would you tell the Government to do?

**Mr LEVY:** The suggestion was made earlier that we need more trained black workers to fix the problems, only because we relate more to our people. It is at the grassroots level. You can come up with all the employment and housing programs in the world, but they just deal with the symptoms. We should find out what is making these people tick and ask them why they do the things they do. What is influencing them to make them do this? There is community influence and government influence.

You have all these things coming at them all the time. They cannot think straight and they do not want to do something because there is an expectation that they will do this and that. When a man is spiritually broken and disempowered he will not get up and do anything or play the game. He has no desire to do what you people want him to do. They are out there; I see them every day. That is where the problems lie. You need to address those people, perhaps through the land council system or whatever organisation you have in the community. Again, it comes down to governance and the lack of training of those people. There are all those agencies, but the nepotism is in the boardroom and no-one else benefits from all the money that is going through government programs because it stops there. That is where it is all eaten up or taken away.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** The saddest thing is that all the Aboriginal people doing these things are volunteers. The elders do things voluntarily. They spend their time at meetings when they should be sitting at home. The elders in Armidale work hard and they have to use petrol to get to meetings. They have no money. They are the ones who are going to educate the younger generation. If we do not teach the younger ones to follow in their footsteps it will be hard for them. They are only pensioners, but everything they ask for is knocked back. They were our leaders once and they are still our leaders. Money is poured into departments, but the elders get nothing.

They are asked which way we should go. The non-indigenous do not know, so they come back to the elders to ask those questions. They are the ones who miss out on funding. They are the ones who deal with issues like the Department of Community Services, the Department of Housing and Centrelink. You have to realise that family is connected to an elder. The elder is the last one to have a say. We elders give our children the answers. Some of them have mental health problems. You would not believe the amount of mental health problems in our community. All our families have problems like that. No-one looks at funding for the elders and it is time they did.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** The issue of payment or reimbursement for expenses has been raised before. In fact, it was raised with the committee in the context of circle sentencing, which does not operate here.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Yes it does.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** It does. People at one location said that some people were spending a lot of time on these issues and that they should be reimbursed for petrol expenses. Frankly, we were quite compelled by what we were told. We raised the issue at the next community we visited that had circle sentencing. The response was completely opposite. They said that if they started introducing money into the volunteer scenario it would create jealousies within the community and the whole system would fall apart. We are getting decidedly conflicting signals on these sorts of issues. We fully understand, and in fact we acted on the first occasion. We wrote to the Minister saying that he should do something about reimbursing people for expenses, but at the next meeting we got the opposite remark. Some of the comments today reflect that very conflict—that there are completing interests in the community and that they create various tensions.

I did not come here to see participants beat themselves up about shortcomings in the community. We understand that. However, we know that some services that are delivered by government—and which must be delivered by government—are not being delivered correctly. We may have a capacity to influence those outcomes. There may well be issues in this community that need to be talked through. However, we want to help in the areas in which we can help. If it is assistance in training, we can do that. But there are other areas in which we cannot help. I am not the chairman of this committee, but I would like to think that in the time remaining we might concentrate on the shortcomings in what the Government and the white fellas are doing so that when we write the report we can tell the Ministers that this is where they are bugging up. That is my opinion. Do not feel you must beat yourselves up for us. We want to beat ourselves up because it is the Government that is failing in part.

**Mrs WALFORD:** It is all right to talk about training, but there is no follow up after the training is finished and there are no jobs for our people. A lot of our people have gone through the training, but when the two years are up after the training and they are finished they are unemployed again. You have to look further than the training; you have to look at a job at the end of the training. That is not happening at the moment in some cases.

**CHAIR:** In some ways that leads us to the fourth area.

**Mrs WALFORD:** You have the advantage of giving them training, but the disadvantage is not having a job at the end of the session.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** In some sense the heading I will deal with—which is the fourth and final heading—has been covered in part by some of the comments made already. I said to the people who participated in the roundtable yesterday in Broken Hill that I thought the heading "insufficient funding" was a little leading. It may well be the case, and it may be put quite cogently that in certain areas there is insufficient funding. But as an overall statement of insufficient funding, that may well not be the case. Some people participating at the roundtable this afternoon have actually indicated that there is an argument that in some areas that perhaps there may be too much funding. It is a question of how the funding is actually put together and then distributed, and how the outcomes are measured and assessed with, I guess over time, some refinement and finetuning. In other words, these things are not static in time, but funding, expenditure and investment in a range of things may be appropriate at a point in time; over time there may be a need to recalibrate and perhaps even change the way in which the money is spent.

The overall heading is funding. There are complex issues as you will appreciate: we have funding from the Commonwealth and the State. We should not miss out on mentioning local government, which has an important contribution to make. So, potentially there are three levels of funding. We also have the issue, and it is a tension wherever we go, between funding for people located in the more built-up populated areas—Sydney, Wollongong or Newcastle or some of the other regional cities—and those in the more remote areas. Time and again we have heard this particular issue about funding initiatives, projects and ideas for a short period of time. That creates real difficulties for those running the programs because of the uncertainty about whether there will be funding for the next cycle, whatever that might be—twelve months, two years or whatever the case.

My final point before opening the matter for general discussion is the challenge of the programs or initiatives that actually are not receiving any funding that may well be deserving of that consideration. In other words, there may be opportunities that for one reason or another have not come to the surface or been articulated well enough, so that they are viewed as something that should be desirous of some funding. I leave it at that as a broad introduction and open up the general topic of funding and related matters. The committee will welcome any comments.

**Mrs WALFORD:** We all know that women have everything: they have a women's refuge, a women's centre and all that kind of thing, but we have not got much in the men area. What we are looking at doing is a place for homeless men and men suffering mental health. It is a problem in town. Recently we had a young fellow who lost his wife and he became homeless; he just could not get a place to stay. If we had a place for homeless men, he could have had a room there. We also have men with mental health problems wandering around town. We have to take it a bit further than mental health; we have to look at accommodation for men in Armidale.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** What is the length of time it takes to get somebody like the bloke Margaret just described into some accommodation?

**Mr GRAHAM:** For single people in Armidale it is about two years. It is a fairly short wait here in Armidale.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** It gets pretty cold in two years in Armidale.

**Mr GRAHAM:** It gets pretty cold, yes. We have a new initiative that has been approved, a position to be based in Tamworth area office and it is a Rental Brokerage Officer. It is an identified position. It will be based in either Tamworth or Moree, but it is an area base for the New England. That person will be working with real estate agents and Aboriginal clients to get them into private rental if they are in crisis, as an alternative. There is no priority for the department for an Aboriginal housing property. That position has just been signed off in Sydney last week and it is about to go to advertising. So, that will be a real help for here.

**Mrs WALFORD:** That will be great if we can get even a Department of Housing house just there for men until we get the proper halfway house for homeless men. It is urgent, so we need to put that on priority.

**Mr GRAHAM:** I know the Homeless Men's Association has a block of units the department provided in Tamworth that works really well. It links in with mental health, so it is addressing all the health concerns to get them on track. And then a lot of those go into mainstream housing. So, it will be great to have that here.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** In his earlier contribution Steve spoke about questions of funding. Are there any additional points you would like to make, Steve?

**Mr WIDDERS:** Funding is not necessarily the answer. Anybody who has worked in Aboriginal organisations would agree with that: it breaks communities and organisations up. When are we going to stop being victims all the time? When are we going to stop putting our hands out and saying, "The Government needs to give us money?" We have to stop that. My parents, my grandparents and a lot of the elders 50 years ago fought for equal rights. They fought for equality with everybody else, but we still are putting our hands out saying, "Give us money, we need to survive. Give us money. Help us." When are we going to get to that point when we say, "We're independent now. We've had enough assistance, we can do things by ourselves" instead of fighting over money all the time? Money and nepotism breaks people. The Government has to stop saying money is the answer all the time. You can do a lot of things without money. If people come together like they did 50 years ago without money and without government assistance, if they come together and work together as a community, there would be no problems.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** Steven—

**Mr WIDDERS:** I am not specifying any individual.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** I am just saying that the sad thing is we are not together, the biggest majority of our community. If we did come together and looked back on the 50 years, yes, but today we do not get money. The non-indigenous are the ones who get the money. You look at the structure they have to put into place with Aboriginal people. So, black fellas get none. You look at how many organisation we have got. None. So, where is the money? That is what you should be saying.

**Mr WIDDERS:** If you let me finish, Shane talked about it earlier; he is in enterprise development. No Aboriginal people want to get in there. What has gone wrong? When are people going to learn about sustainability? We have to learn about sustainability. Our people did this for thousands of years. We had our leadership and our own ways of dealing with things without government money. What has happened to us? Have we softened up? Has the Government softened us up too much? Where is our resilience? Why do we



always have to rely on government all the time? I said it earlier: governments make wrong decisions because they do not ask Aboriginal people what we want. If you ask us what we want, we would probably tell you and then we can work together. Money is not always the answer; in fact, it creates more problems than it helps. I will leave it there; it seems to have created a bit of discussion.

**Mrs TAYLOR:** I want to say this. When you look at it, why is the white fella taking the black fella's money? That is what I am on about. Steven, the white fella is taking the black fella's money today and we are in so much trouble in our community till we all come together. The Department of Community Services [DOCS] has that much money, took most of our kids away. You look at all these new organisations that came into town. They are the ones supposed to look after the black fella. So I am using this "we're black" because I grew up as a black woman, but what I am trying to say is no government give us money. Yes, I came off a mission but I got my clothes off the Government. But I am sick of that. Till we come together as Aboriginal people and fight for what we believe in, the white fella is getting the money. Blacks get nothing.

**Mrs WALFORD:** I would just like to say that in regard to spending on Aboriginal, I have seen the Government give it to us and take it. That is exactly what happened here in Armidale. We have had all these things like Community Development Employment Projects [CDEP] and now our medical centre and something else. Anyway, that was taken from us. Like I said, my parents worked very hard and they paid taxes and a lot of other people's parents worked hard too and they paid tax. So, they are only getting their own tax money back. We are not freeloaders. We are getting our money back what we paid, and that is how I look at life when they say the Government is giving us money. I look at it, yes, you work hard, your parents worked hard, your uncle and aunty work hard and they all pay tax. So, you are not bludging off the Government; you are getting something back from them and you are getting your tax back from them. So, that is how I see life. If the Government is willing to give us money to build this and build that, well, yes take it because, like I said, we are only getting what we give to the Government. We are getting it back and that is how I look at life. That is how I see it.

**CHAIR:** We need to be mindful also of the first three issues: measuring outcomes, partnerships and the coordinating of service delivery. They are probably more important issues than the one we are talking about at the moment.