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**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3**

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

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**At Broken Hill on Wednesday 17 February.2016**

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**The Committee met at 11.30 a.m.**

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**PRESENT**

Ms J. Barham (Chair)  
The Hon. B. Franklin  
The Hon. C. Houssos  
The Hon. S. Mitchell  
The Hon. N. Maclaren-Jones (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. S. Moselmane  
Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

**CHAIR:** Welcome to the seventh hearing of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3, Inquiry into Reparations for Stolen Generations in New South Wales. I acknowledge the Barkanji people, the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to any Aboriginal people present. This inquiry is examining a number of important issues for members of the stolen generations, including implementation of the New South Wales "Bringing them home" report response and potential policies and legislation to help make reparations to members of the stolen generations and their descendants. Given the importance of this inquiry, we would like to encourage people to come forward to share their story. The closing date for submissions has been extended to 10 March. If anyone is interested in making a submission, please speak to the secretariat staff here today. To date, the Committee has had six hearings: three in Sydney and one each in Walgett, Kempsey and Grafton. In addition to today's hearing, we will be having a hearing in Walgett and then, on 2 March, in Nowra.

Unfortunately, we have had a cancellation today so we will not be hearing from the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, but we will be hearing from representatives of the Warra Warra Legal Service, a community restorative centre, and some community members. Before we start, I would like to make some brief comments about the inquiry and procedures for today's hearing. In accordance with broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery are not to be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that you must take responsibility for what you publish about the Committee's proceedings and it is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about comments they make to the media or others after their evidence is completed as those comments will not be protected by parliamentary privilege if any person decides to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be questions asked of witnesses that they feel they are better able to deal with if they had more time or had more information available to them. Those questions can be taken on notice and witnesses will have 21 days to respond. If there are any messages that need to be delivered to Committee members that must be done through the Committee staff. Could everyone please turn their mobiles off or on to silent. Please check your phones because even if you think you have done it, it may not have been done successfully.

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**SHANNON OATES**, Resource Worker, Warra Warra Legal Service, and

**ANN MAREE PAYNE**, Acting Manager, Warra Warra Legal Service, sworn and examined:

**ELIZA HULL**, Principal Solicitor, Warra Warra Legal Service, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** I am pleased to welcome our first witnesses. Is one or all of you making a presentation?

**Ms HULL:** I will be making an opening statement on behalf of Warra Warra. My colleagues will chime in throughout the hearing if they feel it is necessary. Are we right to get going?

**CHAIR:** We can start now. When you have finished your presentation, we will start with questions, if you are comfortable with that.

**Ms HULL:** Initially I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wiljakali people of the Barkanji nation. I pay my respects to the elders, both past and present, and to those people here today. I am the principal solicitor at Warra Warra Legal Service. Warra Warra Legal Service is an Aboriginal family violence prevention legal service. I have been in this position for about 10 months. Before this, I was employed as a solicitor at the Far West Community Legal Centre, which is also located in Broken Hill. I have been practising law for about four years, and I consider myself a very young solicitor with a lot to learn. I take my role as principal solicitor extremely seriously. I was humbled to be put in the position at a very young age. I am also humbled to be here today to give evidence on behalf of Warra Warra Legal Service.

As a young lawyer, I seek guidance from legal mentors in the community and community members, and I note that I have done that with regard to today's hearing. During the past three years I have worked in the far west of New South Wales. I have had the privilege of working closely with many Aboriginal people, including many families and generations of families. I would like the Committee to know that I do feel somewhat uncomfortable about speaking today. I am not an Aboriginal person and I feel it is not my place necessarily to provide evidence with regard to the stolen generations. However, I work closely with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal clients and I have some experience with the effects that being a member of the stolen generations has had on Aboriginal people.

Further, I apologise to the Committee. Due to my busy schedule, I have not been able to prepare as thoroughly as I would have liked and I put the Committee on notice that I intend to provide a written submission following further discussions with my Aboriginal colleagues and staff at Warra Warra Legal Service. I note that I have discussed today's hearing with my colleagues and Barkanji women Shannon Oates, who is with me today, and Ann Maree Payne. Both support me in speaking today and will contribute to discussion if they feel necessary to do so. I have also consulted community elder Aunty Maureen O'Donnell, who sends her apologies, as she is unable to attend the hearing today. Aunty Maureen has indicated that she supports me in speaking today and also supports Warra Warra Legal Service in providing a written submission in the future.

Initially, I would like to provide the Committee with a brief outline of where I come from and a general overview of what Warra Warra Legal Service does and the issues that we see at our service. I am then happy to answer any questions put to me by the Committee. I grew up in Bowraville on the mid North Coast of New South Wales, and I have previously worked at Manning River's family violence service in Kempsey. I imagine that both of those areas have come up during other hearings to date. Growing up in Bowraville, I attended Bowraville Central School and I was exposed to the disadvantages and racism faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at a very young age and throughout my schooling. I have always felt strongly about working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the plight for justice, which is why I now work at Warra Warra Legal Service.

I am here today to provide the Committee with information surrounding what Warra Warra Legal Service does as a service and how we assist those affected by the stolen generation. Warra Warra Legal Service, as I have stated, is an Aboriginal family violence prevention legal service. We are funded by the Federal Government through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. We specialise in family law, family violence, including apprehended violence orders, care and protection matters and victim support matters. We provide legal advice, representation within the court system and holistic client support. Along with our legal service and our client support, we also provide the community with programs and projects which include education, prevention, early intervention and healing.

We are a holistic service and our Aboriginal client support workers, such as Ann Maree and Shannon, work closely with our clients to ensure they are supported appropriately throughout the legal process. We deal with a range of matters, and matters that are dealt with by workers at Warra Warra Legal Service are extremely resource-intensive. Our clients demonstrate generally five of the following indicators which cause complexity amongst their issues: (1) family violence by current or former domestic partner; (2) intergenerational family violence; (3) mental health issues; (4) drug and alcohol abuse issues; (5) literacy and numeracy issues; (6) financial issues; (7) housing and accommodation issues; (8) discrimination issues; (9) victimisation as a result of other forms of crime, i.e. non-family-violence-related crime and links with organised crime; (11) intergenerational trauma; and (12), and most importantly, connection to or affected by the ramifications of the stolen generation, notably intergenerational grief, loss and sadness.

In general terms I can indicate that more often than not the clients who access our service have suffered intergenerational grief, sadness and loss in relation to past government policies. To be more specific, our service deals with parents whose children have been removed or who currently have children who have open-case plans in the Department of Family and Community Services. I can say with confidence that generally all of these clients had a history with the department. It may be that their parents or family members were part of the stolen generation or they were themselves removed. Colloquially they would indicate that they were part of the system and grew up in foster care. On further investigation sometimes it may be that they were not directly under the care of the Minister; however, most clients believe that they were in some sort of foster arrangement.

The issues that astound me, working closely with these clients, is the always present intergenerational trauma, loss and grief that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people suffer as a result of historical government policies placed on them and the subsequent lack of understanding, lack of specialist services and policies to deal with the issues which stem from that loss. I think it is important for the Committee to be aware of the extreme complexity around the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the seriousness of this complexity. This complexity, I believe, puts a lot of pressure on services like ours to deal with these issues.

I wish to highlight the extreme isolation in which the Far West region sits in a geographical context within Australia. In the Far West region we do not have specialist Aboriginal services available to the extent to be able to assist clients facing these complex needs as a result of ramifications of the stolen generation. Clients have difficulty accessing rehabilitation, mental health services, counselling services, housing services, education and employment and general support services in the Far West region, all of which, I believe, are integral to the future health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

I can digress at a point here and tell a story of a client. For example, hypothetically, we see clients who have had children removed and the department indicating that for those children to be returned to the care of their mother or father that they must access a rehabilitation centre. The closest rehabilitation centre that we have in Broken Hill is Brewarrina, which is an eight-hour drive from Broken Hill, and that is not a female-specific or child-friendly rehabilitation centre. More often than not we try and send clients to Sydney to access a specific rehabilitation centre for women and children. This allows for us to be able to organise contact between the child and the mother. This is somewhat difficult because the mother then has to travel a two-day drive to get to the rehabilitation centre, pay for that transport to get to that centre and then stay at that centre for approximately 10 weeks doing their rehabilitation with little to no contact with their children or contact with their family, and some of these women have never been out of Wilcannia or the Broken Hill area, for example, and I think that that is a lot to ask of someone in such a vulnerable position.

That is something that I just wanted to highlight to the Committee, that having a rehabilitation centre, having mental health services, drug and alcohol services in the Far West at the moment is very lacking and I think it is important that the Committee is aware of that situation out here. Overall, on a daily basis, Warra Warra Legal Service deals with intergenerational trauma and loss suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Again, the Committee needs to look closely at the current services that are provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, particularly in regional and remote areas like the Far West. There needs to be more holistic, culturally appropriate and Indigenous-governed services in these areas to support vulnerable clients who have very, very complex issues as a result of intergenerational trauma, loss and sadness, which is a direct ramification of the policies that have been put in place previously by previous governments. I will now take questions from the Committee. Thank you.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you for coming today to speak to us. It has been an interesting process for the Committee and I think it is good that we are in the Far West to hear from organisations such as yours. One of the things that have come up quite a bit on every day that we have had a hearing of this Committee relates to the importance of healing, particularly for people who have been affected and subsequent generations. You mentioned just briefly, Ms Hull, in your opening remarks about your service running programs around healing and I wondered if you could tell us a bit more about that. I am happy for your colleagues to also address that if they would like to.

**Ms HULL:** We do run what is called a Speaking and Healing Program through Warra Warra Legal Service, and that is an overview term, I guess, that we use for a lot of the different projects that we do. The Speaking and Healing Program actually started before my arrival at Warra Warra Legal Service so there are a few projects that I would have to go back and look into, and I hope to be able to go into further detail in the written submission.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You can take that on notice.

**Ms HULL:** I can indicate, though, that recently in August 2015, as part of the Speaking and Healing Program we applied for funding through the Royal commission's funding into child sexual abuse and we did receive some funding through that program. Subsequently we arranged for a group called Desert Pea Media to come out to Broken Hill and work with Broken Hill High School students, Aboriginal students, to do a production. They developed like a hip-hop song and they filmed it and that is about family violence and intergenerational trauma and those sorts of things. You can now watch that online; it is on their YouTube and it is on our website and it has been a positive project that we have been part of in the community. Historically we have done a lot more, but I will take that on notice and I hope to provide further information, very thorough information, on the sorts of projects that we have been doing in relation to healing.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Particularly those—and hip-hop is a good example—that have been successful and have worked out here would be great to feed into our process.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** At the end of your presentation, which I thought was excellent, you talked about the need for more services in the Far West, and I think that your example of the Brewarrina situation is a very good one, but I was wondering what specific services you think would be required in an ideal world out here to assist the situation.

**Ms HULL:** Obviously, a rehabilitation service is paramount at this stage, not only just for clients who are dealing with care and protection issues but I know in the criminal justice sector as well there are a lot of issues around getting people into rehabilitation services. I think that Aboriginal or Indigenous-governed healing services would also be appropriate. Another issue that I believe needs to be looked into is services available for defendants or perpetrators of acts of violence. More often than not the perpetrator, as well, is suffering intergenerational trauma and has been a victim. I think it is important to at least start discussing that issue, talking about that and working out some of ways to assist perpetrators of family violence. I will take that on notice, as well, because I am sure I could go into a lot further detail.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** You should feel very comfortable about adding further information about any of these questions. All we—the chair and the committee—are interested in is getting as much information about these issues as we possibly can. To hear from people like you at the coalface is utterly critical for our deliberations.

**Ms HULL:** Yes.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** In relation to the last question I just want to ask a broader, conceptual question. Do you believe that there are any specific issues of concern that you deal with in your work? Your work, which is obviously substantial, deals with a lot of trauma. Is there any of your work, which specifically relates to the stolen generations, where you have issues of concern that you would like to highlight now? Or do you believe that the stolen generation issues are so deeply embedded in all the work that you do—for those who were taken or those suffering intergenerational trauma—that you cannot separate out specific issues of concern that are solely or predominantly due to stolen generation issues?

**Ms HULL:** In the work that I do at Warra Warra, I do not think that I can separate those issues out. I work with a lot of clients who may not have been removed but whose family members have. They are suffering

loss and grief and intergenerational trauma as a result. I would find it difficult to separate particular issues around that, although I think that there are areas and services that could be specifically related to the people who have directly dealt with the stolen generation. Healing programs around that may be a worthwhile thing to look into, to try and support those people. I will take that on notice, as well.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thank you very much for your presentation, and thank you for being out here and working here, in this area. It is very important. You mentioned in your introduction the parents of the stolen generation. Has there been any attempt to reunite parents with their children, who are obviously now senior adults?

**Ms HULL:** Last year, I had two matters in which I reunited four children with their families. One of those mothers was a member of the stolen generation and the other was a foster child who was brought up in the system at a later age. So there are legal ways to have children placed back in the care of their parents. I went through a lengthy court process to have that occur. That is part of the work that we do at Warra Warra. If we are approached by a client who would like to try and get their children back into their care we assist in that process.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Obviously, we would rather that children always remain with their parents wherever possible. There is some controversy over the children, if they are taken, being placed in white families. I am anxious—I think that we are anxious—that they should be with Aboriginal families.

**Ms HULL:** Under the legislation if it is an Aboriginal child there are rules around that. The department must attempt to have that child placed within an Aboriginal kinship placement. Unfortunately, in the Broken Hill area it is difficult to find kinship placements. That is just because of the lack of availability of carers in Broken Hill. There is legislation around that already.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** We understand.

**Ms HULL:** I completely agree, and I think that Aboriginal children should be placed in kinship family placements, and on their cultural land, as well.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** We agree with that. We are concerned that that does not always happen.

**Ms HULL:** It does not always happen, and the reason for that not happening out here is that there are limited placements available for children in the Far West region. I do not really know how to resolve that issue.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Did the children who were taken basically go to Kempsey and Cootamundra—the boys and girls homes—or did they go anywhere else from here?

**CHAIR:** Historically.

**Ms HULL:** I am not aware of those details. I would imagine that the community elders would be able to answer those questions more appropriately. As I said, I have only been in Broken Hill for three years—two-and-a-bit, really—and I deal directly with clients who are coming into contact with the system now. I cannot answer that question.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Could you take that on notice? Is it possible to check with those elders?

**Ms HULL:** I can take it on notice. I can speak with community elders and members of the community and find out anecdotally where, generally, people were taken. I believe there are a few members of the community who are speaking today who might be able to answer that question in a bit more detail for you. Anne Maree might know where, generally, people were taken.

**Ms PAYNE:** No.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thank you very much.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** You raised in your presentation and in your answers the issue of the intergenerational trauma. Can you elaborate on what sort of trauma the clients present to you when they come and talk to you. Maybe your colleagues could also speak to us on that subject.

**Ms HULL:** I can. I am just thinking about how to. It is difficult to describe the trauma. Would you like symptoms of the trauma?

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What do they tell you they are suffering? What do you see in them that you understand as being traumatic?

**Ms HULL:** For example, I get a lot of comments to the effect that the client is suffering due to a loss of connection with their family and hurting over that. Sometimes they cannot necessarily describe how that feels but they know that they are really sad. They know that they have lost something that they cannot get back. I am thinking of a particular situation to try to describe. I have had comments from people who feel as though they have lost their whole family, as if their family has died. That is the seriousness of the grief that they are suffering. Reconnecting with that family has not been an easy step to go through.

That has caused them trouble with their identity and trouble functioning within the Aboriginal community and with the rest of the community. It generally causes a lot of pain in their hearts. I would say that the clients I see who have been children of the system or who have, themselves, been removed and clients who have been affected directly by the stolen generation are heartbroken. I do not really know how to describe it in any other way. It is very sad and shocking to deal with.

A lot of the time we get requests by the Department of Family and Community Services for these clients to attend counselling or psychologists or mental health facilities. Clients say to me, "I do not want to do that. I want to talk to my family. I want to talk to my sister or my aunty. That is the way I am going to heal. I am not going to heal by going to a white counsellor. I am going to heal only by reconnecting with family and talking to family."

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What about Aboriginal counsellors? Are there Aboriginal counsellors that they can turn to?

**Ms HULL:** Yes. We have a few but not many. We do not have many counsellors out here anyway.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Ms Payne, would you like to say something?

**Ms PAYNE:** I support what Eliza has just said. From what I have seen through Warra Warra Legal Service there is a loss of identity. As Eliza said, there is a feeling of not fitting in.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Do you have figures or records of how many people come in to your centre with intergenerational trauma?

**Ms HULL:** Yes. That is why I would like to put in a written submission. I apologise to the Committee that I have not had time to go through my statistics and files to pull apart the figures and let the Committee know what is going on, what we are seeing and how many of our clients are affected by this idea of intergenerational trauma.

**CHAIR:** There is absolutely no need to apologise. Anything you can do to assist the Committee is greatly appreciated. Take the time you need. No apology is required.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thank you for being here today. I know people can be a bit nervous, and the environment is more formal than it needs to be. In a short time you have eloquently outlined for the Committee the range of issues that people in the far west face. You touched on the problem of extreme isolation. If the services are not available here in Broken Hill it makes it very difficult for people to access them.

The Committee has received submissions and evidence from other legal services that they have become the coordinating point for different programs. You might be aware of that. Some of the other services have talked about the support that they offer for parents, specifically early intervention programs to allow families to stay together, rather than separating them. Sometimes this means prenatal or postnatal care or helping kids

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transition to primary school. Is the Warra Warra Legal Service involved in any of those programs, or are you aware of any programs that are run in the far west that we can point to as being successful?

**Ms HULL:** We do not have any programs like that at the moment. If a child has an open case with the department, we try to work closely with the department to avoid removal. Mission Australia, Centacare and Life Without Barriers also work closely with the department on early intervention programs. I believe that the Far West Community Legal Centre is part of the care and protection program that is funded through the national community legal centres and that it provides advice to clients on an early intervention basis. I would love to be able to do that more but, unfortunately, we are at capacity with care matters and family law matters that are currently in court. If we could have funding we would be more than happy to try to get those programs up and running as well. Centacare and Mission Australia run parenting and early intervention programs.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How many staff do you have?

**Ms HULL:** We have two Aboriginal staff members, Shannon and Emery. Emery is the acting manager and Shannon will be going up into the management position next week. We are funded to have one more Aboriginal staff member, so hopefully we will have a full staff in the coming weeks. We have a junior solicitor, Charlotte Buckton, who is in the public gallery and a finance officer, who works one to two days a week.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Roughly how many clients do you see? You can take that on notice. I am trying to work out how big the demand is for the number of staff you have.

**Ms HULL:** I will take the question on notice, but I can give you a general overview. In the past six-month reporting period we gave around 240 advices. We have around 103 open cases at the moment. That includes victim support and compensation cases, family law matters, care and protection matters, plus a few apprehended violence orders and miscellaneous civil matters that we sometimes pick up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Thank you very much coming today. In your opening statement you said that some of your clients believe that they were in foster care. Would you elaborate on that? Is it because of an inability to get to obtain documentation or because of trauma that clients are unsure about what happened?

**Ms HULL:** I believe that some clients were given the impression that they were under the care of the Minister. On further investigation—and I cannot go into too much detail—it was subsequently revealed that there may not have been any orders in place for those children. It may just have been that they were passed on to family members or supposed foster carers. There was never an order placing them under the care of the Minister. There is confusion for some community members as to whether they were within the foster care system or whether they were just passed to family members and watched by the department. I am referring to more contemporary cases as well, from the 1990s.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I do not want you to disclose the details of clients, but how have you found the process of obtaining that information about current or previous clients?

**Ms HULL:** I have found it reasonably difficult. Sometimes it just comes out that that is the case. I would not necessarily delve into whether they were part of the system. If a client tells me they were a foster child, I take them at their word.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Yes.

**Ms HULL:** At a later date it may appear that that was the situation. I will take that on notice and look at our files to get more of an overview of that for you.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That would be great. Thank you very much.

**Ms HULL:** It is an interesting situation.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Thank you.



**CHAIR:** Thank you for the work that you do. No doubt you are under pressure and placed in stressful situations and deserve more support. That is why it would be great if the Committee could get more of the details. I am interested in the point about available services. You list you mentioned Mission Australia and Centacare. What about the development of Aboriginal owned and run services and facilities? Are there any here?

**Ms HULL:** We have the Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Service, which is a fantastic Aboriginal organisation. There is also Murdi Paaki and the Community Restorative Centre, which are appearing today. I still believe that there is a lack of Aboriginal governed services in the far west region. It would be a positive step for the community if those sorts of services were in place or even if there were specialist Aboriginal services within the already existing services. I should mention Lifeline as well.

**CHAIR:** Because of the impact of past practices on the whole community, do you think that there is a general lack of trust and fear of dealing with government bodies? Is that something that needs to be acknowledged and addressed, if it exists?

**Ms HULL:** I will refer that question to Ann Maree, if she would like to answer it.

**Ms PAYNE:** If I may, I will take the question on notice.

**CHAIR:** Sure.

**Ms HULL:** I would say that there is still a lack of trust within the community.

**CHAIR:** It is something that the Committee has heard before. That is why I asked about Aboriginal services. For many people that is a far more comfortable way to start a journey of healing or to disclose their history.

**Ms HULL:** Speaking from my personal experience of working in both a specific Aboriginal organisation and also at the community legal centre, which is not a specific Aboriginal organisation, I feel as though Aboriginal clients are much more comfortable with coming into our space at Warra Warra. They are much more comfortable speaking to me as a white solicitor. We pride ourselves on our cultural awareness and our cultural competency at Warra Warra. We try to make the space as comfortable as possible for people. We have Aboriginal artwork and open plan areas available, and an art space for clients who wish to come in to do some art and things like that. From working in an Aboriginal run service that is set up like that I think the positives are there to be seen. I think it is really important that there are more services like that available for Aboriginal people to access.

**CHAIR:** In relation to that, one of the difficulties is understanding the number of people who would require services. My understanding of the "Bringing them home" report was that there was going to be some continued data collection about how many people were affected, who they were and where they were so that the services that were recognised as being needed could be provided. But there has not been that process. Do you think asking people when they engage with government agencies, either Family and Community Services [FaCS], the police or whoever it is, if they are personally connected or impacted on by stolen generations would be a reasonable question?

**Ms HULL:** So you are talking about asking them that as a direct question to try to get some statistics? Is that what you are saying?

**CHAIR:** Yes. As somebody said, you could ask it and they would not have to answer it. But if they chose to answer, it would at least mean that we could collect some more data.

**Ms HULL:** Personally I think that is something that you should ask Aboriginal community members specifically, and maybe people who have been directly affected. I do not feel I can answer that question and speak for Aboriginal people when it comes to that question.

**CHAIR:** My apologies, I was not asking you to speak for Aboriginal people but whether you think that could be an appropriate thing that you be able to manage within a service and to ask people when you gather information.

**Ms HULL:** I would say that at Warra Warra we indirectly gather that information without it being a question, for example, on our intake form. As for whether or not that is a question that should be asked of people by the police, the Department of Family and Community Services, and other government agencies, I think it would be amazing to be able to capture those statistics. Whether or not it is appropriate thing to ask I think you would need to ask the Aboriginal community about.

**CHAIR:** Yes, we have. I was interested in your perspective of dealing in support and when you gather information whether or not that would be an opportunity to say to people, "Well, you would be able to access specific services if you were."

**Ms HULL:** Yes, I can see positives in it.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I have a quick question. We have been getting some information where the Government is trying to help some of the stolen generations with the reparation process. There is a class action. Rather than having litigation we try to mediate one-on-one. Are you aware of any stolen generations people out here involved in that process?

**Ms HULL:** I am not aware of whether they have been involved in that process or not.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Could you take that question on notice?

**Ms HULL:** Yes, I can.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** And any feedback as to whether they are happy with that process or not.

**Ms HULL:** Yes, sure. It is not something we deal with directly at Warra Warra but it is something that I have had anecdotal conversations with people about. I will take it on notice and talk to some community members who may not have been able to make it today about that.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I have a question about numbers. You indicated that you have about 100 open files and you have seen a couple of hundred people in a six-month period. I am just wondering what do you think is the size of the population out there that could potentially be your client base and that perhaps—because of the shortage of current facilities and services—you could address if provided with more resources?

**Ms HULL:** I might take that on notice and think about that one.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I know it is a complex question.

**Ms HULL:** I do agree that at times we have to turn people away or refer people on because we simply do not have the capacity. When I first started at Warra Warra there was only Anne Maree, me and another Aboriginal worker. So obviously we did not have the actual human resources to be able to pick everybody up. Obviously there are people who would not be accessing the service for various reasons. So I will take that question on notice and have a think about that number for you. It might be difficult.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What are the statistics for Indigenous people in the area?

**Ms HULL:** I am not actually sure. I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You said before that you have to refer clients elsewhere. Where do you refer them to? What are the other options around here?

**Ms HULL:** I refer them to private solicitors if I can. I do have some colleagues in Sydney who I refer to who are willing to travel to Broken Hill. They appear in the care jurisdiction and in the family law jurisdiction out here. So I refer to them. I think there are three solicitors in Sydney who I flick things to. In addition I refer to the community legal centre [CLC] as well. But, yes, there are limited referral options.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you are under pressure in terms of resources and staff then potentially that causes delays for people out here in terms of accessing the services.

**Ms HULL:** Yes, I prioritise crisis situations and urgent matters. If I do not have the capacity to continue working with that situation then I will try to refer it to someone who I know will be up to pick it up. We have two family law private solicitors out here who I refer to and then the Sydney-based solicitors as well.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And that is for clients in Wilcannia and Menindee as well?

**Ms HULL:** Yes, that is for Wilcannia, Menindee and Broken Hill. We also do outreach to the Dareton Wentworth region. So I will refer those clients out as well. And I do refer to a few solicitors in Mildura as well. So there are some solicitors there who cross over the border and do some work in New South Wales and are connected with the New South Wales legal aid system.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Is that more for clients are the Wentworth area? Are they the ones you refer to Mildura?

**Ms HULL:** I will refer Broken Hill clients down there as well if I need to. But I believe there are only two solicitors, maybe three, in Mildura at the moment who are actually on the legal aid family law panel to get legal aid matters. So that is a problem as well. There are limited referral options.

**CHAIR:** I think you will get some additional questions on notice as well. As a general question, and just a final one that you might want to take on notice, you mentioned early intervention. Do you or either of your colleagues have any indication about how often you believe or have seen situations where if there had been better support services earlier that would have prevented people from engaging with the criminal system or with the FaCS system of reporting?

**Ms HULL:** Sorry, can you please repeat the question.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a sense of whether or not early intervention and support services would have made a difference?

**Ms HULL:** Generally I think if there were more services available for people to access—such as drug and alcohol services, mental health services, educational opportunities and employment opportunities—that would be a preventative measure to keep people generally out of the system. I would agree that early intervention programs and methods do assist in preventing clients from becoming caught up in the system. The issue again is that unfortunately we just do not have the services, particularly in the outlying areas like Wilcannia and Menindee. We just do not have the services available to be able to support those clients in an early intervention phase.

Anecdotally I know that the Department of Family and Community Services itself is very under resourced in Broken Hill. I believe they only attend Wilcannia once a week which, considering the issues faced by that community, I think it is very bad, a particularly major problem that the Department of Family and Community Services can only access due to their resources Wilcannia on a weekly basis.

**CHAIR:** How many years funding do you have at the moment?

**Ms HULL:** We are funded up until July 2017 and then they will re-assess our situation. We do not have any State funding, we are all federally funded at Warra Warra. I just have one last matter I want to raise that you reminded me of. I see a lot of young people aged between, maybe, seven to 18 who are not being able to be accessed by the Department of Family and Community Services that is under-resourced from what I can tell. Those children are falling behind and falling through the cracks simply because there are not enough services out here to be able to assist those young people. Obviously babies and very young children are being looked at very closely because that is an integral part of one's life but I do find that children of an age between seven and 18, or 12 to 18, for example, are slipping through the cracks due to the lack of services out here. That was something I would like to add.

**CHAIR:** If you think of anything else, or of anyone else who could assist the Committee, please advise it. We know the regions are struggling with resources and if you are able to provide further information to clarify the matter it would be most helpful to the Committee to gather evidence.

**Ms HULL:** Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak.

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**(The witnesses withdrew)**

CORRECTED

**DALE TONKIN**, Manager, Community Restorative Centre, and

**BRENDA MITCHELL**, Senior Transitional Officer, Community Restorative Centre, sworn and examined:

**DIANE HALL**, Intensive Transitional Support, Community Restorative Centre, affirmed and examined:

**Mr TONKIN:** The Community Restorative Centre [CRC] transitions offenders from custody into the community with a view of a 12-month period to show them some independence.

**Mr JONES:** I am originally from Wilcannia.

**Ms Dianne HALL:** I provide an intense transitional support, a 12-week program.

**CHAIR:** Do you want to give a presentation?

**Ms MITCHELL:** It is not going to be the length of the previous one.. The Community Restorative Centre is an independent community organisation with a broad funding base. The CRC mission aims to change lives positively by supporting people affected by the criminal justice system. Our primary goal is to improve our clients' quality of life by providing practical and emotional support. We aim to reduce crime and the impact of incarceration on individuals and the community through a range of services and targeted projects. The CRC works in partnership with other organisations to improve access for our clients to supports and services. We create opportunity for our clients to participate in the wider community and achieve independence. We are made up of seven staff, five of whom are of Aboriginal descent. They do the transitional work.

The goals of CRC are to improve the quality of life of prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families to heed their transition to life after prison. We also promote health and wellbeing and get the clients to foster social cohesion. We provide quality services and support to create opportunity for our clients to achieve independence. For me personally the Bringing them home report from 1996 hasn't made a real big difference in the local and remote communities. Broken Hill is not even classified as a remote community, therefore, it is not seen by the Government as being a priority for essential funding for services. The life expectancy for an Aboriginal male in Wilcannia is 37 years old. The rate of incarceration for our Indigenous women is really high and it is increasing. Over 60 per cent of the juveniles in Juvenile Justice [JJs] are Indigenous.

I want to make a statement with regards to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] as well. It really is not designed, as far as I am concerned, for Aboriginal people. But they need it because of the high rates of disability and ill health. The clients that we have have complex needs and issues. We have clients that have massive mental-health issues, cognitive impairment, disabilities, and other issues that they face are loss of relationships, loss of connection with community. We have some clients that have relocated from other communities. Most of our clients cannot read and write, and that is one of the issues. I feel that they lack connection to government agencies and services—you know, not being able to interpret and understand what is being put in front of them.

I heard mentioned before that there is a lack of families to take children that have come in touch with the Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs [FaCSIA]. I have seen the documentation that is put in front of people and I can understand why there is a lack, because it is a three- or four-page document that needs to be filled in. you have families and people that cannot read and write very well.

Like I said before, CRC has a referral process. We do three months pre-release where the staff will go into the local correctional centre and do assessments and find out what the clients' needs are upon their release. The transition, we keep them for 12 months post-release. But the reality of that is that we have had some clients on our project since we started; this is our sixth year. They are still not grasping the reality out there. We have recently appointed two staff to Wilcannia, who are of Aboriginal descent. We have about 18 clients up there.

**CHAIR:** Does anyone else want to speak?

**Mr TONKIN:** We have just started a project in Wilcannia—it is mudbrick making, so we have just made a mudbrick pizza oven for the school there to get some enterprise going for them. We have a long-term view of making mudbrick huts or houses for the people there because the housing shortage in Wilcannia is

ridiculous. We have been speaking with the Community Working Party [CWP] there and the Aboriginal Land Council and we may be in a position to build these mudbrick houses at a very low cost. We have a scheme where we will get the families to build them and once one of the houses is built then that same family will move on to the next one, and the next one, and so on and so forth. That is our long-term goal, but at the moment we are still building our mudbricks, so to speak, and finding out the best components to use. We have used lime, cement and a whole mixture of different materials to get the right mix.

**CHAIR:** Do you have funding support for that program?

**Mr TONKIN:** Us at the moment.

**CHAIR:** Do you have any State, Federal Government or local government funding support for that program?

**Mr TONKIN:** In Wilcannia it is the Prime Minister and Cabinet which is the funding body.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Thank you for being here today. You work predominantly with members of the community who have just been released from prison.

**Mr TONKIN:** Yes.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What transgenerational impact do you understand is the consequence of the stolen generation?

**Ms MITCHELL:** If you look at the population of Aboriginal people being 2 per cent, the impact of the stolen generation impacts on that minority, which is quite small, but it is large in comparison to the wider community. As a result of that there are obviously disconnections from land and family, because we have our correctional centres taking in people from further north—from Bourke, Brewarrina and the surrounding communities. Of course, in those communities there have been stolen generations. In Wilcannia alone, like I said, the minority is small but in comparison to the wider community it is actually large. I think community members in the audience would agree with that, because it is a small group but in comparison to the wider community it is actually a large number of people and families that are affected by the history.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** You said in your opening statement that you provide emotional and practical support. Can you tell us about that?

**Ms MITCHELL:** We are not qualified counsellors. But having an understanding of where the community comes from, what they have been subjected to in the past and what they are going to be facing, more importantly, when they do come out of the correctional centres—I think those men are lucky to have lived in Wilcannia and to have had experienced with that type of thing. We have a greater understanding and work from a sensitive approach. Having that understanding and being sensitive about the whole issues, and building up that trust and rapport is very important for our clients. It boils down to that trust because you are delving into people's lives. They have complex issues—you know broken relationships, separation from their children, separation from their communities, trying to better themselves.

**Mr TONKIN:** We also have a few projects that connect the men together, so we will have a men's group that will have a yarn; we will take them back to country. The last time we did it, they spoke about deaths in custody, which was really passionate in the way they spoke. We will do art projects with them. We have another program, called Choppa Weed, which is where clients can work their work development order [WDO] off. They go and clean people's yards and they get the hours taken off their WDO. We have a different range of projects, and similar for the women as well. It is getting the guys to connect together; sometimes parole might not like having parolees all together in one area, but they are all supervised by us. They feel very comfortable and they really vent on how they are feeling.

I think that is a slight healing process for them as well. I heard Ms Hull speak about trauma. Myself, as a non-Indigenous male—and I do not want to offend anybody—we would get referrals from parole or the correctional centre or other services and from that referral do an assessment on the client. If you are talking about trauma, I would say at least 50 per cent of our clients would speak about sexual abuse at a very young age. The sexual abuse becomes petrol sniffing, which becomes an acquired brain injury [ABI] later on, cognitive

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impairment, hence contact with the criminal justice system. It seems to be a cycle. That is as honest as I can say it, basically.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** In terms of your funding, you mentioned there was broad funding; can you elaborate on that and how long is your funding?

**Mr TONKIN:** Our funding is for another three years through Prime Minister and Cabinet, suicide prevention and social justice. We initially started with capped funding, but that ceased. We also have some CJP funding as well.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** CJP, what is the full title?

**Mr TONKIN:** Criminal Justice Program, which will now roll over to NDIS.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Thanks for being here today and providing some really useful information for us. It is amazing, as we travel around the State, to hear about some of the excellent programs that are being run, particularly by the local Aboriginal communities. I am particularly interested in what you have been talking about this morning because we have heard about the need for a program like it on the north coast. They were talking about how we need to help transition once they have had contact with the correctional system. There is no support for them to transition. Do you know of any other programs or did you model your program on something you have seen elsewhere or is it a community need that you stepped in to fill?

**Mr TONKIN:** Initially six years ago it started as a pilot program. I do not think anyone thought it would be a success because it originated from Sydney. It was just Brenda and myself and we basically had 100 clients between the two of us. The re-incarceration percentage decreased dramatically and that is when we got refunded—basically, due to that.

**Ms MITCHELL:** I want to continue on with what Dale was saying. When we were first in the position and the model was a Sydney model we were able to turn that around and say we are not in Sydney, we are in Broken Hill, and the needs are different when you are looking at the demographics of where we are.

**Mr TONKIN:** We changed their model to suit us.

**CHAIR:** You tailor-made it to here?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes.

**Mr TONKIN:** And it is the same as Wilcannia. Wilcannia will not work the same as Broken Hill.

**Ms MITCHELL:** We adapted to suit the area.

**Mr TONKIN:** We adapt.

**Ms MITCHELL:** We were able to be flexible with regards to the service.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You guys are the ones that are driving it on the ground, full credit to you. That is really impressive. Is there any potential to roll this out around the State?

**Mr TONKIN:** Yes. We have an annual general meeting in Sydney once a year.

**CHAIR:** Sorry?

**Mr TONKIN:** We have an annual general meeting in Sydney once a year and they will have inmates speak and most of them are released with nothing. If they are not referred to our program—there is the door, see you later. We have had experience of inmates in Sydney that have served 30, 40 year sentences and they wouldn't know what Facebook or a mobile phone is. That can be traumatic in itself.

**Ms MITCHELL:** The pre-release is so important for the clients because it gives them an opportunity to tell our service what they really want. It is genuine because they are locked up and then it is our job to cater for their needs.

**Mr TONKIN:** It is their goals. So when we do a case plan it is their goals and what they want to achieve. Our program is voluntary so you do not have to come on our program. That is incentive in itself. They are motivated to want to come on to our program. Housing is always a major issue both here and Wilcannia. I like to use Brenda's phrase—the salt and a pepper approach—where the indigenous are spread all around town, not just in one area.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Blacks amongst the whites, so to speak.

**CHAIR:** Checkerboard they used to call it.

**Mr TONKIN:** Pardon?

**CHAIR:** Checkerboard.

**Ms MITCHELL:** That is a new one. The mayor actually used that phrase, the salt and pepper approach.

**CHAIR:** When you speak keep that mike close.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Just to follow on, a lot of our work we do is hands on and practical stuff. We basically hold their hands and support them.

**CHAIR:** They trust you?

**Mr TONKIN:** Yes. That is the holistic approach. We do not just work with a client we work with a client and their families.

**Ms MITCHELL:** It is not an easy job.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** You said you have clients in Wilcannia?

**Ms MITCHELL:** And it is growing.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How many do you have in Broken Hill?

**Mr TONKIN:** Approximately 80 at the moment.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** How long do you work with them in pre-release and how long after?

**Mr TONKIN:** So, three months pre-release and that is why the referral is very important, it gives us insight into the criminal history and their offences and even if they were at JJs [Juvenile Justice], or whatever the case is. From there in the three months we will go inside the correctional centres. It is not just Broken Hill, we go to Ivanhoe, Wellington, mainly those two correctional centres, and we find out what their needs are and from there we can work with them to achieve their outcomes. At the end of the day it is about their quality of life but it is about us assisting them to become independent so they do not need us anymore. Post release is 12 months, but like Brenda said we have clients that have been with us for close to six years. What we have recently done is when we see them become independent we will do a graduation for them so they feel good about themselves and then it is almost like, we do not need you guys anymore and I am on my own.

**CHAIR:** We will have to move on as it is time limited.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I have a question about your organisation. You referred to Sydney and I was wondering if you are part of a statewide organisation and if so are there other similar CRCs [Community Restorative Centre] across the State or nationally?

**Mr TONKIN:** It is across the State. I think we have an office in Bathurst and Sydney and Newcastle.



**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you share experiences or issues in relation to stolen generation and also programs and if so what are some of those?

**Mr TONKIN:** Not so much programs. Like Brenda said, we have designed our pilot program here to suit our area. I am sure Sydney and Newcastle are similar and Bathurst has just started.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Can I just say, with regard to the stolen generation, when the ladies from Warra Warra were speaking it triggered a memory for me with regards to my grandmother. Back in those days she was taken from one community into Wilcannia. It is very hard for older people to speak about their experiences because they were picked up and put on a truck, taken to the river banks and told this is where you are going to live, this is where we are going to manage you people. And their brothers and sisters were left around the countryside. I still do not know my grandmother's story because it was too hard for her. She went on to have 13 children of her own.

Like I said, that experience for her was so traumatic it was like opening a wound, peeling back an onion. You will find there are a lot of stories back in my grandmother's days that are very similar. But as the years progressed you have the other generation and they were able to speak about that sort of stuff and get stories because it helps other families, it helps Australia deal with the fact that this happened. For me there are very few stories from my grandmother's generation.

**Mr TONKIN:** At the end of this month the elders in Wilcannia are having an elders' ceremony and we have been lucky enough to be invited. The elders are going to tell their stories to us on video. We will gain a fair bit more knowledge regarding the Stolen Generation—or I will personally, being a non-Indigenous male.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Would it be possible to get copies of that video for Committee purposes?

**Mr TONKIN:** I would have to speak to them and get their consent.

**CHAIR:** Is that funded through the Healing Foundation?

**Mr TONKIN:** I am not sure.

**CHAIR:** We will follow up on that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I will go back to some of the matters Ms Houssos was asking about to try to get more clarity around your dealing with inmates who are pre-release. Is every Aboriginal inmate whether they are at Broken Hill, Ivanhoe or Wellington offered your program and it is voluntary, or do you have a capacity for how many you can have? How do you manage that? How do you pick and choose if you need to?

**Mr TONKIN:** We do not really pick and choose. They are referred to us and basically we accept that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Who makes the decision to refer them to you?

**Mr TONKIN:** The correctional centre or Probation and Parole, or Justice Health.

**Ms MITCHELL:** There is no limit to the amount of people that we can take. Like Dale said, we have from 80 to 100 clients when we worked alone.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you know much about how the Corrective Services staff make the decisions about who they refer?

**Mr TONKIN:** They are aware of our programs and they would know whether the inmate would need our services or not. I guess it more based around family and housing. I guess the offenders that have a lack of family or no housing or something like that or who need to be relocated here would be referred to us. Our referrals are only based here. You have to reside in Broken Hill and now also Wilcannia, because we are based in Wilcannia.

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**Ms MITCHELL:** Like Dale said, it is a voluntary program. Word of mouth gets around with regards to the service. I think at the moment Dale is organising to go up to give the correctional centre a bit of a story on what the CRC has got to offer, just give them an introduction to the services.

**Mr TONKIN:** The three main correctional centres that we get referrals from, we have gone through with their staff and explained what our services do. But now with Broken Hill Correctional Centre we are particularly going to focus on offenders who do not have parole orders upon release. We are going to present to those offenders in the next few weeks just so they are aware of what is out there for them. Usually probably 90 per cent have got parole orders, so now we are going to try to target some offenders that do not have orders and see how we go with that as well.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** One of the things that has come up in other hearings in relation to government departments in general—it could be the departments of health or FACS or education—is that some handle cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity very well and others do not. In your dealings with Corrective Services and your clients do you find that Stolen Generation issues and intergenerational trauma are part of the process when they are referred to you? Do you think there is a good understanding within the service or do you think it needs work?

**Ms MITCHELL:** I think there still needs to be a lot of work done in regards to those services that our clients come into contact with.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** For example, people have said that when they present to a hospital emergency department the way in which they are asked a lot of questions can bring up personal issues about being questioned by authority. It is just something the Committee is considering on a broader scale in relation to how departments operate on a day-to-day basis in those sorts of situations. I do not want to put you on the spot.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Would you recommend a program for correctional workers, for example, to understand the issues around the Stolen Generation?

**CHAIR:** You might not have been here when I gave the opening statement and said that if there are any questions that would like more time to think about or to gather other information you can take those questions on notice and send information to us that the staff will follow up.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I would just be interested in your view either way.

**Mr TONKIN:** We will take it on notice.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you focus on minimising the occasion of reoffending by your clients and do you have results or statistics on that for those who you work with?

**Ms MITCHELL:** We have a database that we have for each individual client. During an assessment process information is gathered from that and compiled on the database. The clients are aware of that and sign consent forms so that the information is gathered.

**Mr TONKIN:** But when it comes to reoffending we have through the program at least 70 per cent that would finish their parole period, which they have never done before. That is a tick not for us but for them. That is just their parole period. Like I said, there are clients that we have had that have been in and out for 30 years. I am not saying that our program is so great that they have not reoffended but what they have done is actually got through their parole period. That is an achievement for them.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thank you for coming today. You mentioned the 80 clients in Broken Hill. I assume they are mostly men?

**Mr TONKIN:** It is probably a 40-60 split.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Have any of them identified that they were a Stolen Generation child?

**Ms MITCHELL:** I think because of myself and Diane knowing the community and the families I think they know that we are aware of those issues. Like I said, it is a sensitive area to go to.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** They do not want to tell you, I suppose?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Sometimes we do not need to ask the question, but we do have discussions around that.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** What I was trying to get at is whether the fact that they were part of the Stolen Generation set them on the wrong track and they have been unsettled in their lives, they have suffered trauma and they are then more inclined to get into some confrontation with law and order.

**Mr TONKIN:** Just from my experience, once you build rapport and trust with them then they will start to speak about those situations and the impact that has had on their life. They will start to talk about their family and so forth. But without building that rapport you will not get any answers regarding that.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Do you think the fact they were stolen children could have been a factor in their life and in them being involved with criminal activity?

**Mr TONKIN:** It would be hard for me to answer.

**Ms MITCHELL:** I think it does impact on people's lives. Look at the Bobby Veen case recently. He was taken away from Bourke at an early age, living with a non-Indigenous family. He got picked up in a car and raped and then his life took a downturn. He murdered at an early age and is just recently getting out of jail. Of course it impacts on the lives of people that are incarcerated in some way or other. I think if you start peeling away the onion you will find that.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** We have been to some centres and talked to the survivors of the Stolen Generation who are now senior men and women. They have talked about the need for what they called healing centres where they could come together and share their experiences to help heal each other. Do you have anything like that?

**Mr TONKIN:** Maari Ma has just started a program—it is actually a healing centre—for that reason.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Oh, good. It is like a self-help program, in a way.

**Mr TONKIN:** And they have done a study through all the services and clients to find out what is the best process for healing for those clients. I am probably talking out of school a little bit, but they are going to roll that out pretty soon.

**Ms MITCHELL:** You just brought up something with regard to what Warra Warra were saying. Rehab centres are something that are dear to us. We have clients that are ordered by the courts that have to go to get rehabilitation. We would like to see something like that here, because of the distance to travel and the resources that we have to use to get there. Warrakoo is close but it is male only, and then you have got Brewarrina, Cowra, Bringelly and Parracran which is 14 hours away. It is the distance to travel to rehab. And it is taking people out of country. It needs to be relevant and appropriate to this area, because Broken Hill is the centrepiece for the surrounding communities: Turton, Menindie, Wilcannia. Something that this community lacks is a rehabilitation centre—a healing centre.

**Mr TONKIN:** And most rehabilitation centres may not take clients due to their offences. There are particular offences that they will not accept. We have been talking quite strongly about building our own rehabilitation centre approximately 50 kilometres out of town. That is probably all I can say for now about that, but that is our goal.

**CHAIR:** Just to provide some context, the reason we are asking these questions is that we are trying to find recommendations that we can give to Government. We want to understand where the common ground is about issues in different areas where we think the Government can provide the reparations that are needed—reparations being about the provision of services and the recognition of the past wrongdoings to be able to step forward and provide those services. That is why some of this is so valuable to us—the point about whether or not they know how broad the need might be. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think what you were saying is a clear message that it affects the whole community. A number of people may have been taken but the impact is much broader.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Much broader—that is right.

**Mr TONKIN:** Regarding rehabilitation centres, we need them to be family friendly as well. It is not just the client that is being rehabilitated; it is the family itself as well. That would probably be the better approach.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** You might want to elaborate on that in your submission.

**CHAIR:** Are you aware of the Bringing Them Home report and the recommendations and some of the issues that were addressed in there? It is okay if you are not. It seems to have dropped off, but some of the points you have raised—

**Ms MITCHELL:** To me it is a 524-page document with a lot of stories from a lot of people that have been affected. I got lost in it a little bit. I have not really seen any differences in the community, because to me these things that we were asking for and the issues that people are facing have not been addressed. I am sorry, but it reminds me of the deaths in custody recommendations sitting on the cupboard collecting dust. We got close to that, but what else is there? We need to see evidence of projects and programs that are going to cater to the needs of the community out this way and address a lot of these issues.

Employment is up there with housing, as is education. In places like Wilcannia there is no industry there for families. We have 58 services that go in and out. They need consistency. With these recommendations that have been put in these books we need to see evidence of what is actually being done—physical evidence: housing, better education, better support in the education system. If you need to employ three or four Aboriginal people to go into the schools with the children as aides, let's do that. Let's look at these recommendations and let's find out if they have been implemented or rolled out into the communities. We need to see physical evidence.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. That is what we are trying to do. It is important that we hear from people about whether they feel that things have changed, because that is what we are looking at. I thank you so much for the work you do and for coming and meeting with us today. If you walk away thinking, "I should have said that," we encourage you to tell us. We would love to hear what is relevant and what is needed for you on the ground. It has been fantastic to be here to gain local experience. We hope to see that translate into our report and our recommendations.

**Mr TONKIN:** I hope we have helped in some little way.

**CHAIR:** You have given us great information. It is fantastic to know what is going on. Thank you.

**Mr TONKIN:** No worries.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Thanks very much for doing that.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

CORRECTED

**LANCE JONES**, Community member, and

**SUZANNE HALL**, Community member, sworn and examined:

**Mr JONES:** Before we start, we are actually brother and sister.

**CHAIR:** Did you grow up in Broken Hill?

**Mr JONES:** I did, yes. I was part of the stolen generation. There are actually 13 of us in the family but one died as a young child. There was 12 of us and 10 of us were actually removed in the stolen generation. Myself and two other brothers were brought up here in Broken Hill at the Salvation Army boys' home.

**CHAIR:** You are happy to answer questions?

**Mr JONES:** Yes.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What would you like to tell us? Do you want to share with us a bit more about your story? What do you feel comfortable sharing with the Committee?

**Mr JONES:** What I can tell you is what I know growing up. I was at a young age when I was removed from my hometown of Wilcannia with my other two brothers, who are one year older than me and two years older than me and who now have passed away. I was reared at Algate House, the Salvation Army boys' home. It was actually built on an old cemetery and it was very eerie growing up in that boys' home.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** At Wilcannia?

**Mr JONES:** No, here in Broken Hill. It is now the Catherine Haven Women's Shelter. It was very hard growing up there in the boys' home. Also not knowing who you are, knowing your identity and knowing who your family is. As a child growing up I did not even meet my grandmother very well, so I didn't really know much of my grandmother. But growing up over the years and going to school and going on school holidays back home to Wilcannia to visit mum for the holidays and also visiting, bumping into some of my brothers and sisters that I did not know that I had as well.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** Miss Hall, you are Lance's sister. Were you also taken as a child?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I was around 13 when I was first taken from mum.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** Would you feel comfortable telling us a little bit about your experience?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I can talk about it, not the experience that happened to me while I was there but I will talk about—

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** We would appreciate what you feel comfortable talking about.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Yes.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** What was the experience for you?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** When I was first taken away from mum we were picked up, myself and another sister and my two baby sisters. One was 18 months old and the other one was four years old and then my other sister who is about seven years younger than I am—I am 61 now. We were all picked up and taken to the Wilcannia Police Station where we were locked up in a cell with a man that we knew, we all called him Pop Wyman—his name was Jim Wyman but we all called him Pop Wyman. We were locked there in the cell until the welfare, which was Mr Wilson from Broken Hill here, came over the next day and they took us by mail truck to Ivanhoe where we were locked in another little place on the side of the railway track until the train came. Then they took us to Sydney.

While we were locked in the cell at Wilcannia mum was running up and down outside screaming, wanting her kids back, wanting her babies back, and they would not let mum take us. I remember that; I was 13.

That was the beginning of my life being taken away from mum, from Wilcannia there. They took us to Sydney and they put me in a home with my two youngest sisters so I could look after them until they found foster carers for them. My youngest sister was 18 months old. On our welfare reports it says we were all uncontrollable and that our mum was unfit to look after us.

How could a two-year-old girl and a four-year-old old girl be uncontrollable? This is what the Aborigines Welfare Board did to us. We are actually not a family. I can tell you that; we are not a family. There are 12 of us and we are not family. We do not speak to each other; we do not visit each other's houses. I am sitting here today because Lance asked me to. He does not come to my house and I do not go to his house. We were brought up different.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** You wanted to say something earlier when you were sitting in the audience.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I want to tell my story about what happened to me. But I would never be able to tell it to anyone here in Broken Hill. Not because I do not trust them. It is because of my trust and who I feel comfortable talking to.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Have you ever spoken to someone you felt comfortable telling your story to?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Only my husband. I have told him bits.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** When you did that did you feel that if you did it more with others they might be able to help you?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** How will they help me? They took my whole life away. How in the hell is anyone going to help me or help my family? We all grew up not really knowing our mum. I suppose out of all of us I am the luckiest because I got to spend 13 years with mum. After I was not a State ward anymore I came home and I got to spend more time with my mum and my grandmothers. I would like to acknowledge my Auntie Isobel Bennett. We have only found out in probably the last 15 years or 16 years that she is my aunty because she was taken away. Her and my dad are sister and brother. I did not know that and neither did she. But that is her story.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** We understand that you can never be compensated for the pain and suffering that you went through.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Not so much me; I am still here. My mum is not here. My mum died very young of a broken heart. She died of depression. I have her death certificate at home and it says she died of depression.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Our inquiry will make recommendations about reparation to those still living and their families. What do you think we should recommend to the Government about reparation or compensation to assist you and others in the community who have suffered? You heard earlier people talking about places for healing.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We do need them out here, but we do not need counsellors. They do not really know what we went through. We need our older people—the likes of me who have been in the homes. They are the only people who can understand us—other people from the stolen generation. They have been through the same thing. If you can get them in to help us as a stolen generation, teach them to become counsellors and put us in a place that is beautiful and, that would be good. They are the only ones who can help us—the people who were there and suffered.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** I heard Lance say that 30 children have passed away. You are not in contact with the rest of the family.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We see them.

**Mr JONES:** We just do not talk. We are not family anymore.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We have never been a family since we were taken away from mum. We never got the opportunity to grow up as a family.

**Mr JONES:** I have had letters from the stolen generation mob in Sydney and stuff like that. I have sat down and had a talk with them. Things have not changed. The younger generation today are going to be two times worse off than we are. It is still going on—stolen generations never die. It is even through our younger generation today. It will not stop. You have too much government "BS" going on. There is too much of it. The younger generation are not staying with the community and their elders and learning from them. They have gone too wild. We cannot control them, again because of government "BS". You cannot say what you want to say to your children because it is abusive and stuff like that.

I was brought up in the Salvation Army boys' home. There were some good Salvation Army officers and there were some real mongrels. I came back to Broken Hill about 20 years ago and in the last 10 years I have been a foster carer myself. I did not want them to go through what I went through. It has not changed. When I found out who was in charge of the local Broken Hill Department of Community Services [DOCS] office I was really disgusted. The person in charge of the Broken Hill DOCS was one of the Salvation Army officers who was in charge of me when I was in the boys' home. When I saw him I just lost it. I felt like going up and knocking him. We have never seen eye to eye and we still do not.

Growing up as a child he, and there were a couple of others that were denying me my aboriginality; denying me from going home, seeing my mother and my grandmother. School holidays, my other two brothers went home but not me, until I was about 14. And I was in care, I was with the ministry until I was 16. And just growing up in that place, it was not a good place. I still have bad memories of it, still today.

I am also a local tour guide, at one of the local national parks here in Broken Hill, working with the local Mutawintji Aboriginal Land Council and I do tours there and people ask me about my growing up as the Stolen Generation. I am not scared of talking about it, I'll talk about it. And we have young school groups coming up, and I talk with them. And a lot of them just laugh at it, type of thing. And I say to them, "Well, if you really want to know what the Stolen Generation is about, go and watch the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. And a lot of them do go home and watch it.

But growing up, not knowing who I am and not knowing my identity—I know more about Barkanji language than what I do of my own language, my own culture, which is Ngiyampaa, which is the Cobar district. It is the way that I was brought up.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Do you feel that the government organisations, local governments and others understand the Stolen Generation?

**Mr JONES:** No, no. When Mr Rudd apologised to the Stolen Generation, I was on my way out to do a tour of Mutawintji national park. I just turned the radio off. I turned the radio off because, to me, an apology is not enough, it is not enough. It is history that needs to be told and it happened. It is no good splitting it apart and saying it didn't happen.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just following on from that, that is certainly a sentiment that has been expressed by the people who have come before the Committee who were directly affected, in terms of, there needs to be better education around what happened and why, particularly for the younger kids and not just for the aboriginal community but for the non-indigenous community as well. Maybe in schools there should be more of a focus on absolutely telling the truth about some of these stories because—I do not mean disrespect when I say "stories".

One of the things that has certainly come up is that, when we look at reparations in 20 years from "Bringing Them Home", it was about how to try not to repeat mistakes of the past and a lot of people feel that younger generations do not understand what happened and why it happened and it needs to be something that is told more openly, do you think? Like, it should be something that is more part of our education system and even in terms of educating people who work in government departments and that sort of thing, we talked about it before, there needs to be more awareness of what people went through and how horrific it was so that past practices are not repeated?

**Mr JONES:** I reckon we need to go right through the whole—not just the Government—from schooling, everywhere. As a tour guide I also was doing some training with the local hospital here in Broken

Hill and when new doctors and also national parks, the new park staff, came out they had to do a cultural awareness training course, which was part of the procedure of coming out here—an understanding of the aboriginal culture and the history, the medicines and everything what we know, we were passing on to the new staff that were coming into Broken Hill and the surrounding areas.

Going back to the "Bringing Them Home" myself, and I think Suzanne was involved with that as well, to me, I didn't really get anything back from the "Bringing Them Home" thing. Like, I was promised things that never happened. Just like any government organisation comes to Broken Hill and wants to speak to the local indigenous people, what happened in the past and what can be done now, well, a lot of it we don't hear anything back. They promise us things but it doesn't happen. Not just here, it happens in Wilcannia, it happens in Menindee, it happens in Wentworth.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** When you say with "Bringing Them Home" you were promised things that would happen, actions, what sort of thing?

**Mr JONES:** A counsellor—they promised me a counsellor to try and help me but it never happened. So to me, with a lot of local governments and that, they promise a lot of things and you just sort of shrug your shoulder, "It will never happen"—and it doesn't happen.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** The Committee has been investigating the official homes for the Stolen Generation—Kinchela Boys' Home up at Kempsey and the girls' home at Cootamundra. But the way you have spoken, that Salvation Army one at Broken Hill was almost operating in the same way as those other government-run centres through that particular Salvation Army officer.

**Mr JONES:** Yes.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** So did you feel it was really like a government, rather than a religious or church home?

**Mr JONES:** It was both. To me—I have just got to be careful what I will say because at the moment I am going through a few things about that. But to me, you were going to church nearly every day of the week, it was getting knocked into you but you weren't getting treated right, you were getting bashed. And like I said earlier, it was built on an old cemetery, so when you were playing outside in the grounds, you were falling down in the old grave sites because the ground kept sinking all the time. You would hear these horrible knockings on the windows late at night and you were checking under your bed every night. So yes, even today just walking and even driving past that place I still feel real sick, every time. Because I don't live too far from it and it just makes me so sick every time.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Do you remember any government representatives coming from the Department of Welfare, asking how you had been treated and so on?

**Mr JONES:** I do remember one time when I did misbehave and I did cop a good hiding with the back of a pool cue, rapped on the back of my legs and across the road here, the government building there is where the Department of Community Services was at the time. I went and reported it and they turned around and said, "Well you shouldn't have misbehaved and mucked up". They rang the boys' home back up and they came and picked me up, took me home, and I got another flogging. So DOCS didn't protect us. They don't protect us. To them, they put you in care, you are out of sight, out of their mind—"We don't really care".

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** But from your report they did know what was going on?

**Mr JONES:** No.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** No, when you told them but they ignored you?

**Mr JONES:** They ignored me, yeah. And even still today, like there is a lot of people that I grew up with and a lot of staff members out there, I still bump into them. Like one young lady, Anne Maree's stepmum, I still talk to Anne Maree's stepmum all the time. She was one of the cooks and cleaners at the boys' home. She remembers a lot of things. And across the road from the boys' home where I was living there were a couple of kids that I went to school with, growing up through primary school and high school. And I remember one time in the boys' home when I was in primary school, these young kids at school asked me, "You've got two



aboriginal brothers, why aren't you black?" And I couldn't answer them right there and then. So when I came home from school, I went and saw what I call a step-mother type of figure to me, I went and asked her. She turned around and said to me—it still sounds real funny to me, the way, how she put it—"You know, when you were growing up, and when it was time for God to paint you, he sneezed and missed you, so that's why you are white, not black". To me, I laugh at it all the time.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** He is white because he has got a grandfather who was a German.

**Mr JONES:** And in the whole family I am the whitest one.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** You believed you were painted white?

**Mr JONES:** Yes, just from that story. But also, growing up, she also was telling me that when mum did come to Broken Hill, she used to come around to the boys' home and she kept yelling out for us. And the Salvation Army staff held us back from seeing our mother. And this same lady who I grew up with, she heard the screaming so she walked outside and seen my mum yelling out, she was telling me, and she went over there, trying to calm mum down and mum just abused her and said something. And so, after a while of her talking to mum, she settled her down and she took mum home to her house and sat down and she promised my mum that she would look after us, as we were in the boys' home. But when my other two eldest brothers left the boys' home, I was still there, all by myself. So really, once they left the boys' home, that was it.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Are you aware of any other boys' homes like that, separate from those Government ones?

**Mr JONES:** That was the only boys' home here in Broken Hill and there was also a girls' home in Broken Hill at the one time as well. It was St Ann's at the south of Broken Hill.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** That was a Catholic home?

**Mr JONES:** Yes, Catholic girls' home.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Was that as harsh as the Salvation Army?

**Mr JONES:** I really couldn't tell you about that one, but some of the Salvation Army officers that I had to deal with, yeah, I didn't like it one bit. They were cruel as. They were put there to protect you, not to hurt you and to abuse you.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I am sorry that happened to you.

**CHAIR:** Have you connected with other people across the State who were in similar situations? Do you know of the experiences of other people?

**Mr JONES:** No, not of other places, but I still bump into some of the boys that were in the boys' home with me.

**CHAIR:** They still live here?

**Mr JONES:** A lot of them still live in Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Menindee, Wentworth.

**CHAIR:** We have heard from a lot of people, and you have said it before about not being like family, that they are closest to the people who they were in the homes with because they went through the same experience. Is that how you feel?

**Mr JONES:** With some of the young boys, yeah, some not. Like, even today, it is still hard to talk about the boys' home with those others that were in the boys' home with us, because a lot of them have passed away as well.

**CHAIR:** The Committee is hoping that people might be able to tell us what would make a difference for you, what would support you. We have heard a lot about people not feeling that Government has done

enough or not being supported. Do you have any suggestions about what would make a difference for you personally or for your local community?

**Mr JONES:** That is a very hard one to answer.

**CHAIR:** If you want to think about it you can write to us or contact us later. We would certainly appreciate that.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** You might want to talk to others who have had similar experiences and think about what would be really meaningful for you.

**Mr JONES:** Like a few other people got up and spoke already, a lot of them don't want to remember it. They'd rather keep it to themselves, and you can't really force anyone to say things that they don't really want to say. So a lot of it gets kept in there, and you got to live with it for the rest of your life.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I think with the new—with the stolen generation of today, we still got to call it that because it is still the stolen generation, no matter what, I think they need to build a place where they can bring the parents with their children to stay at and to teach them—have the elders there to help them understand what they've gone through and how they don't want that to happen to them, their little kids, the kids of today, which is pretty hard, because the kids of today are also into drugs from a very young age. I mean, there's a lot of things but how the Government is going to about it, I don't know. I honestly don't know what's going to bring all of us back together. There's not the closeness that there used to be within Aboriginal communities.

One time ago, if someone died in your family, I mean, the whole community got together—the whole community—and there was no drinking. As a kid, we weren't allowed to make a noise, we weren't allowed to sit around adults. When someone passed away in the family, there was no drinking, no smoking, no nothing, and now they celebrate death because that is all we got—we celebrate death. You know, I am so—I really don't know what we can do.

**Mr JONES:** To me, a lot of our elders have passed, so has the language, the culture and the identity. Everything has gone with the older generation. When the stolen generation happened, when we were put on missions, reserves you weren't allowed to practise your culture, speak your language, build your traditional humpy. You had to live the white man's way. So that's gone, so how can we pass that on to our younger generation today to teach them more about our culture and build our identities?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We have got a language group going in Menindee, I think. I mean, that'd be nice to keep going. There's a couple of young people that are teaching Barkanji language. I think, also, they've got an elders group over there, I think, where they take tourists and cook traditional foods and things for them. I mean, if they can keep the funding up for them things and get the younger generation involved with them, maybe that's a good thing.

Build a place here closer to the outback, you know, where the families don't have to travel far away, because it doesn't matter how many times a husband and a wife have a bust-up, they still love each other and they still want to be together, you know. And get the whole family counselling and a place where they can be all together as a family and get the help that they need as a family.

**Mr JONES:** Like, we used to love going down to the Darling River fishing, but we cannot because we got no water. So you can't take the families down there, teach them the traditional ways and stuff like. There's nothing there for them.

**CHAIR:** The point about culture, the State Government has introduced the language nests. Apparently there is one at Lightning Ridge. Is that something that people from here would connect with, or is that too far away?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I don't know. I don't really know too much about what's going on in the world. Youse are very lucky to have me down here, actually. I stay home.

**CHAIR:** We appreciate that.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** There's less trouble at home.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I have two questions for you. I would like to start by saying thank you for coming and sharing your experiences today. I have no doubt it must be painful for you, but it is really informative for us, so thank you. My first question is—and if this is too painful, just tell me and I will ask my other question—some of the other survivors of the stolen generations have shared with us how their experience of being taken from their families as children have affected their children or their relationships with their nieces and nephews. I was wondering if you are able to share anything like that with us today. They are some of the things that the Government needs to be able to address.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Well, I can tell you from my part how I feel. I had a baby when I was 15. I was in the Parramatta Girls Home. They took me to this other place—shelter, where I gave birth to my son. I was not allowed to hold him. I gave him a name. And that's 44 years ago. I've met him, but he thinks that because he doesn't know what happened and how he got taken away and why he was taken from me—there was no reason for them to take him from me, because I still had a mother at home at Wilcannia, but they said she'd died. The only person who'd take me was my sister, my elder sister, and she didn't want the baby. So I left him. Well, I didn't leave him; I had no choice.

When I came home and had my kids I swore to God that my kids would never go in the homes and I swore to God that my grandkids would never go in the homes, and they haven't because my grandkids, my nieces and nephews, the ones that I do have things to do with, I swore that I would try and protect them as much as I can because I didn't want them to go to the homes. My second youngest baby sister, we found her when mum died and we all pulled in money and brought her home, she met our mother in a coffin at Wilcannia Hospital. So I swore then that I would never let my grandkids, even my nieces and nephews, go through what my sister had gone through and what I'd gone through.

So I reared up two of my grandkids. One is going into the Police Force and one has just moved to Roma in Queensland and the other one is here from my daughter's side. I had twin daughters; I lost one of the twins at 15. One of my sons just finally, because both my stuff and their dad was both taken away, for the last couple of years has been going to Kinchela; he's been going down there to understand what his dad's gone through, and he's a changed person—different—because he thought we'd dumped him and left him, all sorts of things. But he's a different person because he's learnt what his father went through. I haven't told my kids what I've been through but I swore I'd never let my kids go through that, and I never. If anyone came anywhere near my grandkids today I'd kill them—I mean that; I'd go to jail, and I mean that with all my heart because my grandkids will not go through what I went through.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** We can see the incredible strength that you have shown to your family and I have to commend you and say thank you so much for sharing that with us.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I promised myself too that I would never let it put me down. I drank a bit when I first came home—I never touched drugs in my life—but I don't drink anymore. I haven't drank since I was 27 years old—that's the last time I touched a drink. I still smoke cigarettes but nothing else. But I swore everything that was done to me I would never, ever, ever let it beat me.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Thank you. Throughout this process we have heard some really personal stories and I think as Committee members, and I am a parent and I know others are, to hear your story of what you went through is just beyond anything that we can understand. I know it would be hard to talk about it, especially to us, who you do not know, so thank you for doing that. One of the things that has come up in terms of reparations, other people who have come before the Committee have said no government can ever give them anything to pay back what was taken and no money is going to solve what happened in the past.

But a witness we had a few days ago in Sydney—I am not quoting her directly—said that for her family, because she did receive some compensation, it was about taking that monetary amount that was in place of bad memories and using it with her family to make a happy memory and doing something for her kids and her family. She was of a mind that if there was going to be some form of financial and monetary reparation that using it for things like you were talking about, like healing centres, places for families to go and try and rebuild and try and make happy memories as families, even second, third, fourth generations, that that is not going to make up for what was taken away but at least it is going to help people like your grandchildren. Would you agree with that idea, that nothing will ever repay you but if you can use things to make happy memories it might be a better opportunity for your family to come together?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** For our nieces and nephews and our grandchildren, yes, hopefully, and have slideshows of their grandparents, their ancestors. It doesn't have to have all the bad memories like the holocaust, but what their grandparents looked like—photos everywhere; what their grandparents looked like and they were lovely people—just memories what they can look back on. In this day and age now people are into marrying; so there's Aboriginals becoming whiter and whiter and whiter and whites are becoming blacker and blacker and blacker—marrying. We need Aboriginality, and there are the forms we have to fill in. Even as black as I am I've still got to have one to prove who I am and where I come from. Just having the memories there, a place where they can have memories of their family before them. There's a lot of good things our Aboriginal people done and fought for us to keep us here and still are doing today—not that it gets us very far, but we're still here. I'd like to see something like that done before I die.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** And that is something that is coming through a lot with us too that time matters with this—

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Yes, time matters, especially for the older generation, the stolen generation. My children's dad has died so they haven't got their dad and their kids haven't got their granddad anymore. They've got photos, which is really good.

**CHAIR:** Following on from that, I mentioned before about the language nests. We are hearing a lot that people would like more support for cultural reconnection and the opportunity to go back to their own country and find out who they are, and those connections that link up who have been with them throughout this process and offer their services they do a lot of that great work too—to support people to go back and reconnect with country and have those reunions.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We've just done that recently, the Ngiyampaa people have. We just published a book on our ancestors, the Ngiyampaa people.

**CHAIR:** We will have to get that information from you.

**Mr JONES:** We just had our 10-year anniversary last year of the hand back of Ngiyampaa land. I'm one of the board members for Mount Grenfell National Park.

**CHAIR:** It would be useful to hear whether or not those sorts of things are some of the other practical things that the Government could do to help with the healing and address the wrongdoing of the past, to provide more support for those important cultural connection practices.

**Mr JONES:** To me, maybe even like how you've got the Australian War Memorial—you respect the soldiers that have fallen. What about something for us of the stolen generation that have passed on—have a memorial garden or a memorial wall with their names on it, something like that that we can go and pay our respects to.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** The idea of having a memorial has come up quite frequently. Do you think that that memorial should be here in Broken Hill or do you think that we need something in Sydney or do you think both?

**Mr JONES:** To me, because it happened everywhere, I reckon there should be one in each town—just a lawn memorial garden, something like that. It's not going to hurt. Or even sitting on a river bank, having a memorial on a river bank like out this way where we can go and sit down and remember our elders, do fishing, cook up Jonny Cakes and damper and cook a kangaroo in a hole or whatever. We could sit down and have that and that could be our gathering and paying our respect to our elders.

**CHAIR:** Do you think it would also be important for non-Indigenous people to have a public place where it is recognised and they know?

**Mr JONES:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much. Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish up?

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**Mr JONES:** No, that's all I've got to say.

**CHAIR:** If you think of anything else please make contact because it is so valuable to get the direct feedback. You have come up here and given us some wonderful ideas and have clarified the sorts of things we have heard elsewhere and that is very valuable for us.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Send that book to us as well.

**Mr JONES:** Yes.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(Short adjournment)**

**(Evidence continued in camera)**

**(At the conclusion of the evidence in camera  
the public hearing resumed)**

**DENNIS WILLIAMS**, community member, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** Thank you for coming forward. Would you like to make a representation? Would you like to tell us your experiences or something about your awareness and thoughts about stolen generation?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I came today to talk about my grandfather and grandmother. My grandfather went to the First World War, he was wounded and a prisoner, and then he came home and got married to my grandmother and they had seven children. In 1993 they took one of their sons to Sydney because he had a bad foot, to the far west. And as far as I found out they took him from there to Kinchela boys home. My grandfather and grandmother and all his brothers and sisters went to their grave not knowing what happened to him. I have tried since 1993 to find out where he has been. My grandmother was still alive but she died in 1994. I found out that they took him to the far west with a club foot and from there they took him to Kinchela boys home. What I want to know is why didn't they send him back home, because he was not stolen generation and all the stolen generation went to Kinchela boys home.

You think they would give my grandfather a bit of credit because he fought in the First World War. I remember asking him when I was a young fellow why did he go over there and fight when he had no rights. He told me he went over there and fought because it was still his country and he said if he did not go over there and help out what if they lost the war and they come over and shot all the Aboriginal people out. He was out in the bush all the time and nan was on the mission, and on the mission you get nothing, you got a bit of rations. And she brought all the other kids up and brought her eldest son up, his six kids. His wife died and she had the six kids and she brought all those kids up, so why did they take their son away. I have been trying and I cannot get any answers. I reckon they sent a lot of letters out but grandfather was out the bush all the time and my nan couldn't read or write. So, we do not know what happened to him. They went to their grave not knowing what happened to their son, even his brothers and sisters.

**CHAIR:** You said you have been looking for a long time?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I started in 93 but I got a couple of nieces doing it now. I got in touch with Link-Up and they could not find anything. The only thing they told me is that a Henry Williams was buried at Parkes and a Henry Williams was buried at Canberra but they did not know who they were.

**CHAIR:** Did not know if it was the same person?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** Two Henry Williams, but they did not know who they were.

**CHAIR:** There is no other documentation available for you?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** No. I come across the piece that was put in 1953 where he was looking for his mother and father. My grandfather could read but he was out the bush all the time and nan was on the mission, but she does not read or write.

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN:** Mr Williams, how did it affect your grandparents not to be able to see their son again?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** It affected them a lot. My grandfather always came home on holidays. He always came back to Lake Cargelligo for Anzac Day parade. He never missed a march and most of the others were around my grandmother. Uncle Bill worked at the station a bit but he always come home holidays because my grandmother brought up his six kids as well. Why did they take the son away in the first place—because he had a club foot? But they never sent him back.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** I am Sue, I am Dennis' wife. Nanna, his grandmother, and his brothers and sisters always wondered what happened to Uncle Henry and they all wanted to know where he was before they died but they are all gone now, sadly, so their grandchildren are still looking for him. I know nanna in her older age kept singing out for her baby. She wanted her baby and that was Uncle Henry, but she never got to see him. She died not knowing what happened to him, not knowing if she did anything wrong. But she did not; she was a wonderful wonderful woman. She was in her hundreds when she died. We have gone into the Northern Territory, rang people in the Northern Territory because we thought we seen somebody that looked like Uncle Bill. We rang up there wondering if this man was Uncle Henry, but it was not. He looked very much like Uncle

Bill. They all died not knowing about Uncle Henry at all. Apparently they sent letters to grandfather and nan but they never got any replies from them. They mentioned that they did not think that his parents cared about him. We do not know if there is any family. Nieces and nephews are looking into that to see if he did have a family.

**CHAIR:** Who were the letters written to?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** To nanna.

**CHAIR:** From?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** From Kinchela and that. That is what they are saying but we do not know if they got them or not.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We've never seen any letters

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** A question for Dennis. You have sat here most of the day and heard questions about reparations. What, in your view, could we recommend to the Government by way of reparations?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** What I would like to know, and my nieces are looking now, is to find out what happened to him.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** What would you like see happen to help the people now? He has had a stroke.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** My question is what compensation, what assistance, are we to recommend?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I don't know. I do not want any assistance

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What would you like to see?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I would like to know where he was and what happened to him, same as his nieces. They are looking now. You're better off asking them. I tried since 1993. I've had a stroke and lost a bit of memory and that but they are still trying to look for him.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** Do you get support? Do you get assistance from your community or the Government? Who supports you?

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** We are both pensioners.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** We are both pensioners, that is all.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** That is it. That is what we get.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** Do you know what year Uncle Henry was in the Kinchela Boys Home?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I am not actually sure, but they took him in around 1933 to the Far West. He was there for a while and then they took him from there to Kinchela Boys Home.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** They took him from there because they said they could not find his parents.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** But the parents never left anywhere. Grandfather still worked on the station, Trida station, and my grandmother never left Murrin Bridge mission.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** She was still living, so they did not look for them at all.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** But that is what they said. They reckon they sent out letters and everything. I do not think Nan got any letters because she could not read or write anyhow.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** There is an organisation called Link-Up. Have they tried to help you?

**Mr WILLIAMS:** No, I tried them first. They told me there is a Henry Williams buried at Parkes and a Henry Williams buried at Canberra but they do not know what Henry Williams it is.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Yes, they did try to help. Link-Up did try to help.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** But they do not know who is who.

**CHAIR:** We have met with the Kinchela people. They have quite a good organisational system. If you would like us to we can pass on a request to them to see if their organisation has any record. We could connect you up with them.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I am pretty sure I talked to them and they were the ones that sent letters out to my grandfather and nanna.

**CHAIR:** But the current organisational committee of Kinchela Boys has someone working with them now who is doing their administration and trying to get all of the history in order. Maybe they have uncovered something. We can give you the contact for them.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** Yes. Another thing too, I think he was a gardener in Sydney when he left Kinchela.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** Maybe they will have photos.

**CHAIR:** They have a group that operates out of Redfern.

**Ms SUZANNE HALL:** My son goes down there because of his father. That is where his father was. He goes down every year to Kempsey for the reunion. Maybe we can get him to look for some photos.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for coming forward and taking the time to speak with us. If you think of anything else that you would like to submit when you leave or if you have any ideas—

**Mr WILLIAMS:** No, I would just like to find out where he was and if he has got any family or anything like that.

**CHAIR:** A number people have said that it has been difficult to track people down. One of the things we will consider is whether or not more resources need to be made available to help people. Thank you for raising that really important issue.

We have now come to the end of today's hearing. Thank you to everyone who has been here with us and who has come along to provide information. I do not think we have had any information tabled but we will be following up on some matters with some of you, so you will hear from us again. It has been fabulous to be here and to hear from you. I hope that we will be able to provide you with a report that properly reflects your concerns about this important issue.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(The Committee adjourned at 4.03 p.m.)**



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RESOLVED TO BE PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE ON 11 MAY 2016

**IN CAMERA REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3**

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

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**At Broken Hill on Wednesday 17 February.2016**

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**The Committee met at 2.50 p.m.**

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**PRESENT**

Ms J. Barham (Chair)  
The Hon. B. Franklin  
The Hon. C. Houssos  
The Hon. S. Mitchell  
The Hon. N. Maclaren-Jones (Deputy Chair)  
The Hon. S. Moselmane  
Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

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Evidence in camera by **ISOBEL BENNETT** and **MARSHA FINES**, sworn:

**CHAIR:** First, I need to get agreement that Committee members accept and support the additional people being at the table as support for Auntie Isobel. I see that Committee members are in agreement. Thank you all for being here. Auntie Isobel, thank you so much for making the time to come before us. We appreciate that you requested a confidential session. We are glad that we can provide that opportunity for you. Would you like to make a presentation and then, if you are comfortable, we might proceed to questions.

**Auntie ISOBEL BENNETT:** What do you want to know about my story?

**CHAIR:** We would like your story. We are providing an opportunity for you to tell us what you would like us to know. That includes the experiences that you have had and the things that you think might need to be done because of the wrongdoings of the past. We are here to listen.

**Auntie ISOBEL BENNETT:** I was taken away from the old Menindee mission, nine miles up on the other side of the river from Menindee town. I don't know why it happened. I was about 12½ or maybe 13. I remember they took me and my two cousins, a baby boy and another girl who was about a year younger than me to the courthouse at Menindee town. At court, I remember them saying that I didn't have a father. I thought that my stepfather at that time was my real dad and I just broke down and cried and said, "I have a dad." He was a very caring man. That is what I remember at first.

I don't know how long after that they took us back. They only had one big truck on the mission so we had to ride in the back of that truck to go back to the mission. I cannot remember how long it was after that. I know it was at the end of the war in 1945 we left to go back and catch a train in Menindee town. There was two nuns. They travelled from Queensland with two other little girls. They brought them around to Sydney and then picked us up there. It was on The Ghan, I remember. We went into Broken Hill. My eldest sister was there with their little boy at the railway station waving goodbye to us.

We came to Broken Hill, here. I remember staying—I think it might have been at the convent here. After a night here we left on The Ghan. I don't really know whether we left on The Ghan to some other place. Before we got to Carrington there was another town where this Catholic priest picked us up, the two nuns and the five of us. We went to Carrington, South Australia. It's only a little one-horse town. That is where the nuns from Melville Island, Northern Territory, were evacuated to during the war.

The nuns and the girls from the island were there. They had also picked up other children along the way from outstations and Alice Springs and other ones. There were about seven senior girls they had there. And girls my age were the next ones; there were six of us. There were two nuns with us, who stayed in a little house between the big house and the church in Carrington. I remember missing my family because I hadn't seen my mum for a while. I remember sobbing every night. I was sobbing every night for my family, for mum.

The nun in charge said to me one day, "Isobel, the girls and the nuns are feeling it for you." She took me into the room on my own and put her arms around me and she said, "We are feeling it for you, love. If you are not happy here with your own kind I'm sorry but I have to get in touch with the authorities." These are the words she said. I am telling the truth. She meant the child welfare board and the Commonwealth. She said, "You might have to go to Sydney." When she said that, I was crying. I said, "No, Sister. I don't want to go to Sydney." She calmed me down, and after I calmed down I was okay.

I did love the nuns. I am a Catholic and I used to go to church. I made my first Holy Communion and got confirmed. I was used to the nuns and I loved them. It was just the feeling that I missed my family at that point in time. I calmed down. Then I got used to some of the girls. A lot of them were from the island. I fitted in all right. My cousin was okay, and the little baby boy; it was only me. We were not there that long. I remember the nuns sent me and another girl from the island to the railway station. We had to walk because they didn't have cars.

The nuns sent us to what we used to call the big red house. It had a big red hall. They must have had dancing and things there at the time. People let the nuns have it. We walked from there to the railway station. We had to take a little note. I think it was to book our seats on The Ghan. I'm not sure, I didn't ask. The stationmaster gave us a ride straight back home to the big house. We never had Christmas there. Not long after that we went on The Ghan to Alice Springs.

The soldiers were travelling too. There were places where we had to pull up, to have lunch and so on. After lunch we went on our way again to Alice Springs and got off the train there. I'm not sure whether there were two big Army trucks or one. There must have been two because there were quite a few of us and the nuns. They picked us up from there. The soldiers had a place out at the bungalow for us. There were bedrooms for the nuns and the girls and the little ones. They looked after us out there. We slept out there, had showers and ate breakfast. The soldiers were all there, looking after us. They took us back. We had to leave our winter clothes and shoes at the convent for other people who needed them because we did not need shoes or winter clothes on the island. I remember all that.

We travelled in the Army trucks from Alice Springs because there was no train. We stopped at the Devils Marbles and they took photos of us. There is a little place this side of Darwin, not far, we got on a train there. I can't think of the name of the place. We got on a train from there to Darwin. We stayed at the convent. Darwin was in a mess then. There were holes everywhere from the war. They said they thought they had sighted a submarine, so we had to stay the night there. There were soldiers everywhere.

The next day we got on the boats. I think there were two boats that took us over to Bathurst Island. Because at that time they couldn't use radios, they had tame pigeons. When they sighted Melville Island, which was the biggest island, they sent a message back to Darwin with a pigeon. That was the first time I had ever seen it, and the last. We went to Bathurst Island. Men came down with their spears and boomerangs, wearing nagas. I had never seen anything like that in my life; neither had a lot of the others. We got under the table. We were bawling our eyes out, crying. The nuns said, "No, come on."

Some of the girls from the island said, "Our mothers are here, coming down to see us." When they said that, we got up and we were okay. We waved to them. The nuns came down too. They had a convent there for the little full-blood girls. When I say "full bloods", I mean the real Australians. The two islands were together and you had to go further up to where we had to stay. It was called Garden Point, Melville Island. That is where we stayed.

I was a seamstress. The nuns taught me how to sew. They taught me everything I know. They taught us all the basic things, and the boys too. My husband was taken up there from Arnhem Land. They taught us everything we know, all the basics: how to cook, how to sew, how to clean, how to wash, how to iron and how to look after little babies.

We helped them because they were our teachers. I don't blame the nuns, or the priests or the brothers. They are not the ones who took us. They worked and helped us. It was the child welfare board and the Commonwealth that did the wrong thing in the first place. I was happily married to a man who was brought up there by that priest. He knew everything. He used to build boats and everything for people there—little rowing boats to go fishing around the bay there at Fort Dundas. We were here and Fort Douglas was there. We used to go fishing.

When the Army left, when the war was over, they left a boat there. They called it St Joseph's boat. It was for the children, the nuns, the priests and the brothers. They left all their clothes there for us. They left all their food and the little packages that they used to have to take with them—dried fruits, chocolate and everything. They left it all there for us. We enjoyed it. I ended up being happy there, because I had a wonderful husband. I only had three children at the time. Then we had to leave to get out into the big, wide world.

The nuns taught us everything. They even told us about what is going to happen in Australia, because they had friends and family in Australia too—that is where they were from. They took us and they told us, "Be careful, because there are going to be drugs introduced. Don't ever touch it. Don't ever let your children touch it. They're going to be disrupting the peace." It is all happening now. It was the truth they were telling us.

I was up in the Northern Territory, on the island and in and around Darwin, for 20 years before I ever saw my family. We did make an attempt to come back. My husband made an attempt to bring me back when I only had the three children and I was pregnant with my fourth one. We got as far as Alice Springs. We only had an old ute but he built a canopy over it and it had seats and a mattress in the back. We got as far as Alice Springs. We stayed there with some of our friends who were brought up with us on the island. They went back home there to live. We had trouble with the vehicle.

We went to mass the next morning, I think it was a Sunday. There was a Catholic priest who we knew from Melville Island who had moved to Alice Springs. He spoke to us. He asked us how we were doing and where we were going. We gave him our story and said that my husband was taking me home to see my family and that. We had trouble with the vehicle so he helped us. He gave my husband some money and my husband said to him, because he was also a crocodile shooter on the island in those days—when they weren't working he used to go crocodile shooting in dugout canoes, tree canoes not bark canoes—he would send him a crocodile skin from a 13-footer. They were the best ones. The priest had sisters and nieces and that. The priest said, "No, you don't have to do that, Fred." My husband said, "But I want to do it." So that is what he did. So they got it cured and he had shoes, a bag and a belt made for his niece, I think.

So anyway we had to turn back to Darwin from Alice Springs. We had to go back because we weren't going to risk it. He got the vehicle fixed but he was not going to risk it. So we went back to Darwin. Then he took sick. He was working at the big powerhouse as an electrician at the time that I lost him. I had seven children. I was lost. Everything was empty. All my friends were there to support me. They wanted me to stay. I said I couldn't. I said, "My children have never seen their family. They have never seen my mum or my grandmother." A lot of my uncles and aunties had passed on while I was there. I got to go home and to take them home. So with the help of my friends up there and family and the bit of money that I had I came home. We flew home.

We stayed in Broken Hill for a little while with my niece and her husband. And I went out to Menindee. I wanted to go home to Menindee. I tried to get a place out there. I went out there looking, and the fifth time I found a place for me and my kids. It was not easy. I had a very rough life. They were growing up, but they were there to help their mum. I stuck by them and I am still here today with them. I have never left my kids. I have that many grandchildren and great-grandchildren—they are the fifth generation. I don't believe in leaving little kids stranded. Children are my life—they always have been and always will be. It does not matter what colour they are or what their nationality is. Children are children and we all have to take care of them. I am still at Menindee today, and I am not leaving—it doesn't matter what happens. Now they took all our water from us. We have no water in the river.

They never punished us enough? They're still punishing us. We can't go and catch a decent fish or yabby. I want you people to talk up for us, you people from Sydney, high-up people that's working for the Government. I want you to speak up for us. We are still struggling; we are still struggling and nobody listens. I have been to meetings after meetings for over 20 years at Menindee trying to stop them from building dams and things. I was a kid seeing the water clear, drinking water. Of course, every river in Australia should be running free. There was parts of the river that went dry, but there was pools that were there with clear water, where we could get the fish out and the yabbies. But now there is nothing.

They emptied all our lakes out at Menindee; we got nothing. And we are getting rations for the water. They have been boring for water out there. We tried to tell them we don't want that happening; the artesian water should be our last resort. But they never listen. So I am asking you people: Will you try hard to see the Government, to talk to them? They live in big, flash houses in their cities. They don't know about people out in the sticks. We love the country; we love the land; we love our open fires, our ashes damper, our meat that we cook in the hole—you know, the kangaroo, the emu.

My grandmother, she learned to use a shotgun. When we was kids she used to shoot—there was plenty of birds around, plentiful. Galahs everywhere, she used to shoot them down for us to eat. We used to pluck them and clean them and then our aunties and them used to cook it for us. We had a hard life and we want it a little bit easier now if we can get it. It is up to you people to help us. You are from the government department; tell them what we need. We want them to get Cubbie Station back. There should be no rice or cotton grown in Australia—it is not the land for it. We have been saying it all along, ever since they started. What was wrong with the sheep? You want to know more about the stolen generation, about me?

**CHAIR:** We would like to hear what you think the Government should be doing so we can put that to the Government—your history, your experience, what needs to happen to make it right. We cannot make it right but we can at least make it better than it was.

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** What part of it? What are you talking about?

**CHAIR:** The stolen generation.

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**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** The Government can do more for the stolen generation and for our younger generation, too, that is coming on. Things seem to be worse now than they was because of all the drugs being introduced and things like that. Our future generations, we're losing them. We want things to be better. How can you do it? Can you tell me that? Is there a way that we can do it or you can do it for us from the government department? I am questioning you now.

**CHAIR:** You have raised the issue of what is happening today. We have heard from other people about having more government people who deal with child protection issues or people in trouble with the law. They need to have a better understanding of Aboriginal people, their experiences and what happened with stolen generations so they understand the pain of the past. You are talking about other issues for young people, drugs and that. I think quite a lot is being done by government to deal with some of those things, and that is separate from what we are doing. We would like to hear from you about the sorts of things to stop a repeat of the stolen generation and those problems from happening again. Is there a need for cultural training for government workers so they better understand Aboriginal people?

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** That's it, yes. We want all that; we want things to be done by the Government. We want our Aboriginal young people, our future generations, to learn to be able to sit with the elders and that. We have been doing it with our children and everything.

**CHAIR:** More support from government for those things?

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** We need more support from the Government, yes. We need a lot of support from the Government.

**CHAIR:** Do you know about the OCHRE program?

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** Yes, I know about it. I have two sons; they are artists and they use their paint, like ochre colours. Is that what you are talking about?

**CHAIR:** No, this is a program. The Government has supported Aboriginal people in trying to develop a program that they want, not telling them what to do. OCHRE represents Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment. Is that working for you out here? Are people from your community involved in that? It is fairly new so it might not have come here yet, but that is one of the things happening to support communities to be stronger.

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** We don't have it out here. We need it, and we need it bad.

**CHAIR:** We can find out where it is up to. That is a good message for us to take away. We can send you some material and take back to the Government that OCHRE is the sort of positive program needed here.

**Ms FILES:** I would like to add that Nana has got a story that is a play. It is actually a play that is throughout the communities here of Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Menindee. It is called *Weeping Cloud*. You guys might want to familiarise yourselves with the story because it goes more in-depth about her story and the heartbreak stuff that happened along the way. That might be an opportunity to hear more about the personal side without time constraints.

**CHAIR:** Has that been filmed?

**Ms FILES:** It has been at a couple of the schools. They have filmed it at the schools while the play has been in production, so it is actually the schoolchildren that are acting in it.

**CHAIR:** Would it be possible for us to get a copy?

**Ms FILES:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Is there a transcript of the play?

**Ms FILES:** Yes, there is. There is something else I want to put in context for Nan. Her passion around our river is Barkindji, which is our tribe, actually translates to "river people".

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** What is that?

**Ms FILES:** River people. It is one of the core essence of our culture out here and of our tribal culture so that is why the passion is so high around our lack of water and our river not being well which then makes our people unwell too. That is the cultural connection comes from Nan being upset about our river.

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** I was upset about what happened with the Gillard-stolen Cubbie Station. The Government should have bought that because she sold it to the Chinese, and cotton and rice are not supposed to be, you know, it is not the land for it. They're only thinking of the dollars, they're not thinking of the people and the fauna and flora. Do you get me?

**CHAIR:** I do get what you are saying absolutely. I know that my colleague, Jeremy, has been out and has met with some of your people and given a sticker to you.

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** Without water we got nothing. We got the land but we need the water.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to ask a question as well. Members of this Committee are really interested in learning all we can. Some members are based in Sydney but others like Ben and Jan are from the North Coast. I am from Gunnedah so we are not all city-based politicians and a lot of us live in country areas and do understand what some of the regional communities need. I hope that gives you a bit of a good feeling to know that we do understand some of the issues.

I do not want to put you on the spot, Marsha, but I notice one of the things we are talking about a lot is not just the survivor's life, Aunty Isobel, but also family members a few generations down. Obviously it is quite emotional for you when you hear your Nan tell her story. Do you think this Committee and this Government could make recommendations to support future generations, the second, third, fourth generations and survivors like your Nan?

**Ms FILES:** I think that it is important for governments to understand the transmission reform across the generations, in particular, when it comes to people's cultural identity and where they fit into their communities, their people and their culture. That can be quite fractured for people. We see it in our own families and we see it in our communities. That sort of stuff people don't know where they belong, and that hurts people because we are spiritual people and if we can't have a connection with our people, our culture and an understanding of our identities then that becomes fractured. It then leads people to a little bit more wayward things like Nan was talking about, things like drugs and alcohol, that sort of stuff.

I think it is important for the governments to understand. Yes, there have been apologies and things for our stolen generations but there's a transmission reform across the generations as well. I guess that's what Nan and other speakers today were also talking about. For a lot of our people out here to even access places like rehabilitation centres and things, you have to go a very long distance to get there. And then usually what happens is the individual will start to be rehabilitated, they come back to their own communities and things are exactly the same there so the rehabilitation starts for them but it has not happened for the rest of the family either. I think it is important to implement different, I guess, healing programs within different communities to deal with some of the issues. I think that they need to be specific to the communities that they are aiming and targeted at because we are all different.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It is not one-size-fits-all?

**Ms FILES:** It never will be. Even within the Barkindji language, for instance, there are nine different language groups and we are all different people. Our communities look very different as well. Yes, so it is important to understand the trauma that our old people have felt by their forced removals, but also the trauma that is now passed on from generation to generation.

**CHAIR:** Do you want to say anything else?

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** So what's going to happen? Are they going to give us something?

**Ms FILES:** She is just asking what is going to happen now? What is the process from here?

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**CHAIR:** We are in Walgett tomorrow. On 2 March we will be in Nowra and that is the finish. We will have held nine hearings. We have travelled around to Wagga Wagga, Kempsey and Grafton. The Committee has tried to get around the State and let as many people know as possible that this inquiry is being conducted and it is an opportunity for them to have input. After we finish the hearing at Nowra we will then start preparing the report. We are hoping that we will have a report with recommendations, that is, taking everyone's ideas about what needs to be done, that will be put to the Parliament hopefully by the end of May. That report is made public. Everyone who has given evidence will receive a copy of the report. Then the Government has six months to respond to the report and the recommendations. By the end of the year we should have a report and a response from government.

**Ms FILES:** She is asking what some of the reparations actually look like?

**CHAIR:** That is why we are travelling around. The obvious reparation people talk about is financial but the Committee has heard from people who have said it is more about delivering to the community, the intergenerational issues around healing centres, language programs, cultural awareness training for everyone that deals with Aboriginal people and cultural identity support. We do not want to say what should happen. We want to hear what people want and need and find a common theme so that the Government can do things that make a difference and recognises the wrongs of the past. The Government wants to try to make it possible that the future is a better place for your children and the 106 great-grandchildren you have so that the world is better for them.

**Aunty ISOBEL BENNETT:** I hope it all happens.

**CHAIR:** We all hope that that happens. We appreciate you appearing before the Committee. If you think of anything else you would like to tell us, you are welcome to make contact and let us know. I am sure Marsha will follow up and provide the video and the play. Thank you for your time and your commitment to your community.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**(Conclusion of evidence in camera)**

**(Public hearing resumed)**