

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

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

At Sydney on Friday 24 September 2004

The Committee met at 2.15 p.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. J. C. Burnswoods (Chair)

The Hon. Dr A. Chesterfield-Evans

The Hon. K. F. Griffin

The Hon. R. M. Parker

The Hon. G. S. Pearce

The Hon. I. W. West

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CHAIR: I declare open this public hearing and acknowledge that we are conducting this hearing on the traditional land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

DEREK WILSON, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Redfern Local Area Command, and

PAUL JAMES WILKINSON, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, Marrickville Local Area Command, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: The Committee has held a brief deliberative meeting at which it decided to make your previously confidential submission open to the public. The Committee decided to black out a couple of the names mentioned in that submission, because we try, as far as possible, to discuss issues in a broad sense. You may want to give evidence in camera or in a private hearing.

Mr WILSON: I appear as an individual.

Mr WILKINSON: I appear as an individual. Previously I was attached to the Redfern Local Area Command.

CHAIR: Have you both received the prepared questions that were sent to you as a guide for this afternoon?

Mr WILSON: Yes, yesterday afternoon.

CHAIR: You may wish to make an opening statement and after that the Committee will use the prepared questions as a guide. You may have prepared written or formal answers to them. The Committee usually finds that other issues arise as we go through the questions so we do not necessarily stick to that order. Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr WILSON: Yes. About this time yesterday I received a copy of this NSW Police document.

CHAIR: That is the Task Force Coburn Report?

Mr WILSON: Yes. That was the first time I had seen it. It is a pretty weighty document, and I have not had time to digest it. I was quite surprised and alarmed at some of the claims made about ACLOs [Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers].

CHAIR: Did you receive that report from the Committee?

Mr WILSON: Yes, that is right, yesterday afternoon. I was quite upset, but I am very grateful that I was given the report. If I had been handed it today it would have thrown me. After having the night to reflect on it, I am not responsible for what other people have had to say. I am here to tell the truth about my involvement.

CHAIR: Yes, and that is what we want to hear from you.

Mr WILSON: I am not here to do a hatchet job on police. I have worked at Redfern for four years and it is like any other workplace: there are a number of wonderful people in that place, there are some who are not, and most people are somewhere in between. I am not here to put the boot into them by any stretch of the imagination.

CHAIR: Do you think you will want to comment about the specifics of the Coburn report as we go through the questions? I imagine some of the comments would have been in our minds when drafting the questions. If you want to do that, we can do it as we go through.

Mr WILSON: Yes, I would like to refer to it.

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Mr WILKINSON: I read with great interest the final Coburn report, the analysis of the Redfern local area command in the civil unrest on 15 and 16 February 2004. Under the heading "Awareness and Preparation" on page 16 there is a finding:

Inability of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers at Redfern local area command to identify unrest in the "block".

The recommendation is:

The State Co-ordinator for Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers to liaise with the Redfern Local Area Commander to upgrade the performance and direction of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers.

In regard to the finding, I personally spoke to the duty officer on the 14th that there were going to be problems down at The Block as a result of what took place with TJ.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That is Inspector Emery?

Mr WILKINSON: Inspector Emery.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What did you say to him?

Mr WILKINSON: I told him that I was informed by a community member down there that there were going to be problems and for the police to stay out of The Block because they were unhappy about what took place earlier that day.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Was that a community member who lived there, one of the locals?

Mr WILKINSON: Yes, a local.

CHAIR: We will obviously get to these issues, but I think it would be sensible for us to start from the beginning and get a bit of a background about your role. We have specific questions about the relationship between the police and the community, and so on. We will do some of that first so we have a bit of a framework for your specific comments. You have got specific comments to make. Can you both tell us a little bit about your role and how long you personally have worked as ACLOs and where you have worked, and so on? Do you want to start off, Derek? You said you have been at Redfern four years?

Mr WILSON: I have been there just over four years. Prior to that I worked with the needle exchange program, so I did a lot of work down at The Block itself. It is an AIDS prevention program. So, I have been there for four years.

CHAIR: Four years as an ACLO?

Mr WILSON: Four years as an ACLO.

CHAIR: And some years before that in other work?

Mr WILSON: That is right. I went to preschool in Redfern. I have lived there most of my life. I grew up in the area. That is where most of my social network still exists. I think I have got a pretty good idea of what happens in Redfern.

CHAIR: How do you see the role? What do you see as your involvement?

Mr WILSON: It is a terrific job. It can be very stressful and demanding at times but it is not uncommon for me to leave work having felt that I had been really useful. I like the job. I have access to the police and I am able to sort things out for people with the least possible—well, with as little distress as possible from time to time.

CHAIR: Does that mean there is a fair amount of flexibility in the role, that the actual duties are not laid down in great detail?

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Mr WILSON: They are laid down. I have got a copy of my duty book I would like to table as evidence. That gives an outline of the different types of tasks that I have engaged in for about three months.

CHAIR: That would be very useful.

Document tabled.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Will that contain names of individuals?

CHAIR: We are not making it public at the moment. It is tabled so we can look at it. We will make a decision about whether we should make it public.

Mr WILSON: There are one or two things in there I wish I had not written but they are things I am not going to hide from.

CHAIR: Would you like the document to remain confidential to the Committee members?

Mr WILSON: No. I am quite happy to go along with what you guys think.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would you like to delete that bit, or cover it?

CHAIR: We do not need to have that discussion now. There may be other documents as well.

Mr WILSON: I do not have any problems, but I will leave that in your hands.

CHAIR: Paul, do you want to tell us how long you have been an ACLO, your history in the job, your history before the job and how you see the job?

Mr WILSON: I have been an ACLO since 5 May 1975. Within that time I have also taken up secondments within the Botany Bay Local Area Command, the Kings Cross Local Area Command and I took up a permanent secondment on 14 August 2003. I have had 28 years experience with the Block. My grandmother lived on the Block all my life. I am in touch with the people down at the Block and with the issues prior to starting as an ACLO up until the present date. I am well aware of the problems that there are at the Block. I am also aware of the problems between the police service and the Aboriginal community at Redfern.

CHAIR: Do you agree with Derek about the worthwhile and satisfying aspects of the job?

Mr WILSON: Yes, that outshines the bad side of it. Over the years there have been many good things that we have done. We have also got praise from the Aboriginal community in the things that we have done. I have gone home quite satisfied with the things that we have done whilst on duty.

CHAIR: What is the bad side?

Mr WILSON: You cop a lot of flak from the Aboriginal community when things do not know go their way out in the charge room. We have copped a lot of problems from those who are in custody. But in saying that, there is what I call a 10-minute cool-down period. When they first come into the charge room for the first 10 minutes they are irate and all they want to do is knock your head off. They realise after that 10-minute period that they are not going anywhere, so then you can start communicating with them. It gets frustrating, but that is just the way it is.

CHAIR: What has been your experience when you are out of the station, say, walking around Redfern, whether it is on the Block or somewhere else? Are there stressful aspects to that as well?

Mr WILSON: A good part of the time there is not a problem. We will have the core group of people that throw flak at us, but we just let that go.

Mr WILKINSON: In our job, basically, the community wants you to be on their side. They expect you to be on their side and the police expect you to be on their side. So it can be uncomfortable but, as I said, I socialise in Redfern. That is where I do a lot of my socialising. I have never had problems. I have had people come up to me and complain about this and that, but I feel safer in Redfern and Waterloo than I do anywhere else in Sydney. That is not just because of the number of friends that I have in the police; it is because of my long history with the area and I know a lot of people. I played footy with various kids' fathers who are in now trouble with the police. People do have shots at me from time to time but, as I said, I went to preschool in Redfern. That is my suburb and no-one can deny that. I have been a member of the board of directors of the Aboriginal Dance Theatre at Redfern for the last 10 or 11 years. I reckon I am probably one of the best people that you could have in that role.

CHAIR: Would you describe the relationship between the police and the local Aboriginal community? You might want to talk about before the riot in February and since the riot in February because we specifically asked you whether you think that relationship is improving. Would either of you like to make any comments about that?

Mr WILKINSON: Yes. I would like to say that there have been a number of successes in Redfern in terms of the mentoring program and the fact that the Redfern police have taken it upon themselves to take some of these kids away on terrific four-day camps. It allows these kids to get out of the place and to have a bit of fun, as kids, under police supervision. Prior to that happening, it was not uncommon for police, when they were patrolling the Block, to have bricks or bottles thrown at their truck. If some of these guys who take these kids away on the camps are driving a truck it is not uncommon for these young kids to run up to the truck and say, "Where is Pearce", or, "Where is Steve", because they know these cops.

So people are not throwing bricks and bottles at these trucks as much as they were in the past. There are the beginnings of a good relationship there. It is not a terrific relationship by any stretch of the imagination. That is one of the things that I mentioned in my submission. I have been approached by heaps of kids or teenagers. Teenagers are horrible; I have got one myself. They feel that they are being harassed. I have been approached by their mums and dads and they say to me, "My son is a good kid. He goes to school every day. He treats his mother with respect. He does not get into trouble. But every time he walks through Redfern railway station he gets hassled three and four times a week."

That is how it looks to them—that they are picking on their kids. I know that the crews at Redfern work two days on day shift and two days on night shift, so there are crews that are rotating all the time. I would not expect that you would have the same police officers down there day after day. I do not know whether it is the case that the police are actually picking on these kids. So when they blow up the police say, "What's this kid's problem? I have not done anything to him, I am just doing my job." Yet from the kid's point of view he is getting hassled every time he sticks his head out his front door.

That is an ongoing problem, and I do not know what you can really do about it, because you cannot really expect police officers to be public relations merchants and selling their idea. There has been a strong demand for the police to be down at the station because for years people have been coming to Redfern for their drugs, because Redfern is one of the most reliable places in Sydney to get their drugs from. So they come there. The police have been down there and they see a suspicious character—however they make that decision—and they question him. If he has not got a valid excuse to be in Redfern they tell him to get lost, to get on a train and get out of there. A lot of people like that. There are a lot of Aboriginal people who like that. They do not like these people coming and stirring up trouble. So do you call that overpolicing or what, preventive, crime prevention? These are things that are very difficult to think, like, how can we make everyone happy with this?

CHAIR: Did you want to add anything to that, Paul?

Mr WILKINSON: There has been a change within the police over the years since I started. When I first started the major problem we had down there were police from nearby commands coming into the Block. They would stir up trouble by sitting in a car and singing out, "Coon, boong, Abo" and

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take off, which would leave the Redfern cops and the ACLOs to deal with the riot or the blow-up that took place straight after. That has been nipped in the bud.

CHAIR: Who by?

Mr WILKINSON: Mr Parsons. He was the local area commander at the time. As far as I am concerned, it was Mr Parsons who changed a lot of the behaviour at Redfern. But since he went some of the bad behaviour has started to come back into the command.

CHAIR: This is into Redfern command, not the other neighbouring commands?

Mr WILKINSON: No, into Redfern. A couple of years back a probationary constable on his third shift day at Redfern was with a senior police officer who had been at Redfern for five years. Whilst out in the truck they heard a lady scream. The senior partner turned to the probationary constable and said, "What was that?", to which he replied, "I hope it was a coon underneath our tyres." They are some of the things that we had to deal with at Redfern. It comes down to poor leadership. Under Mr Parsons if there was ever a racial problem it was nipped in the bud straight away.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The example you gave of the truck is third hand, is it not? You were not there yourself.

Mr WILKINSON: No, I was not there. But I approached that probationary constable and asked him what had happened and he told me exactly what I had been told.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And who told you in the first place?

Mr WILKINSON: It was the senior partner that he was on with.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is a bit unsubstantiated, though, is it not?

CHAIR: It has been given as an example, I guess.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is a bit inflammatory without anything to back it up.

Mr WILKINSON: I approached the person in question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you put in a report?

Mr WILKINSON: I marched him up to the boss.

CHAIR: That was Mr Parsons?

Mr WILKINSON: No, at the time it was Mr Perrin.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Would there be a note of it?

Mr WILKINSON: There should be, yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who would have that note?

Mr WILKINSON: Mr Perrin.

CHAIR: Our second question is about the relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community. You have also mentioned the difficulty of a balancing act there. You have also mentioned the mentoring program, which is also in our fourth question. It is not at all a worry if we range over the different questions. If you have more specific things to say on any of those things go ahead. I will now hand over to Robyn.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I would like to ask a little about the mentoring program and some of the things you have said so far. There has certainly been some positive publicity about the

mentoring program. Mr Wilson, I think you commented that police relationships with Aboriginal youth had improved since the mentoring program and that police are not getting bricks thrown at them as much. That is sort of incongruous with evidence we have been given from records of daily events of assaults on police? Do you still support the claim that it has improved?

Mr WILSON: It has improved in that the police are not just policing Redfern now; they are actually interacting with people as individuals. So that is a real positive as far as—

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: So the police attitude has changed?

Mr WILSON: No, the attitude of some of the police has changed. The people who are involved in the mentoring program are all relatively junior police officers—

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Were all those police on on the night of the riots?

Mr WILSON: I am sure some of them—

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: And were some of the youth that have been mentored by those police there on the night of the riots?

Mr WILSON: They certainly were.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: And they were throwing bricks and other things at the police that had taken them to—

Mr WILSON: A lot of them were not but there certainly were a small number of them who were. That is right, yes. The thing is that it is all very well to be taking these kids away on camps and doing these activities with them. But when we bring a number of these kids back from the camp we take them back to the drug house that they live in.

The last time a search warrant was done on one house where a whole heap of teenage kids live they got \$7,000 in cash and there was no tucker in the place. What is the point of taking them away for a few days?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Is that then a police responsibility or a Department of Community Services [DOCS] responsibility?

Mr WILSON: It is both. The cops are very good at having shots at the Department of Community Services, and I have been more than happy to have my own shots at it. However, they cannot go on having shots at the department if they do not put in DOCS notifications when they see things like that. I know that Redfern has sent out notes time after time encouraging officers to put in DOCS notifications. Hopefully, it has improved, but if they are not putting in the notifications they cannot go kicking DOCS. I have a huge amount of respect for a particular DOCS worker called Constance. Whenever there is a removal down at the Block she is generally the one who handles it. I go with her. I find removing kids from their parents very distressing. It is very distasteful and it upsets me a great deal. However, I like going with Constance because she is a firm, no-nonsense person. I am not sure whether I like her as a person, but I have a lot of respect for her. She is a really good operator. There have been other DOCS workers I have done business with down at the Block and they panic from the moment they get there. They do not want to be there; they just want to get out; they do not want to do their job. There are some really good workers from DOCS, and some who I would say are pretty inexperienced and they let their imagination run away with them at times.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Mr Wilkinson, are you still at Redfern as an ACLO?

Mr WILKINSON: No, I am at Marrickville.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How long have you been at Marrickville?

Mr WILKINSON: Since 14 July 2003.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Why did you go to Marrickville? Was that your choice?

Mr WILKINSON: No, it was a decision made by senior management at Redfern. There were ongoing problems between myself and another ACLO at Redfern. We could not see eye to eye on things. I spoke to my superiors and told them we had a problem and no matter how many times we sat down and discussed it was not going anywhere. Based on that, senior management made the decision for me to move to Marrickville.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How many ACLO positions are there at the moment in Redfern?

Mr WILKINSON: There are four positions.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How many are filled?

Mr WILKINSON: There is only one there at the moment, but I believe they have just advertised a position at Redfern.

CHAIR: The fourth position is a newly created position. I think there were three positions until recently.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Mr Wilson, you must be the one.

MR WILSON: No, there are four positions at Redfern. One of them was moved to Marrickville. I do not know whether they have created another.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: There were three.

MR WILSON: At the moment there is one. I am off on leave. I will return to work, but I am not sure when.

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

MR WILSON: Yes.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How long have you been off on leave?

MR WILSON: Since about March.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You were there on the night of the riot.

MR WILSON: Yes. I worked the Saturday when that boy suffered those injuries. I started at 3.00 p.m. The incident occurred at about 11.00 a.m. on the Saturday. I signed in and the duty officer and the two supervising sergeants were in the office when I signed on. None of them told me that anything significant had occurred. I returned to my office and a member of the community came in and asked what had happened to TJ. I said I did not know and that I had just started. She swore and said, "What's the good of you?" I have to agree with her. I was a bit peeved that no-one had mentioned this incident.

I had already made arrangements to take a group of kids to the Charity Shield that night—South Sydney were playing St George. Paul and I took those kids to the footy. My son was one of the kids. We got the kids home and I knocked off at 11.30 that night. I spent the next day with my son and returned him to his mother's house on Sunday afternoon. While I was there I saw on the news that the boy had died. I got on the train and went to Redfern. When I was leaving the station I noticed all the police at the other end, so I walked up to them. Bob Emery was there. I had come in to see whether there was anything I could do.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What time was that?

MR WILSON: It would have been 5.00 p.m. or 5.30 p.m. When I approached Bob Emery he asked to see my rail ticket, which I took that to mean, "Get lost and mind your own business." Nevertheless, I went to the police station and stuck around for about an hour. But I may as well have been the invisible man.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Did you say that a member of the NSW Police—

CHAIR: Can you repeat that last bit?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: —asked to see your rail ticket?

MR WILSON: It was the duty officer, Inspector Bob Emery—the same duty officer who was there on Saturday.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: He asked to see your rail ticket.

MR WILSON: Yes, that is right. These documents mention that I turned up intoxicated. That is impossible. I finished at 11.30 p.m. the night before and I spent the following day with my son. I do not drink when I am with my son. It is not true.

CHAIR: I asked you to repeat the last bit. You went from the train station to the police station at about 5.00 p.m.

MR WILSON: It was probably getting on for 6.00 p.m.

CHAIR: What happened after that?

MR WILSON: I walked into the supervisor's office. Sergeant Landry was on duty. I said hello to him. I wanted to see Darryl Pace because he had been blamed for chasing TJ by a member of the community and he had not been. I had found out that he was at Redfern RSL investigating another case at the time. He went down to the scene about half an hour later, but people in the community were blaming him. We both started at Redfern at about the same time. He is a bit of a gung-ho copper, but I get on with him okay. I was concerned for him because I knew that he knew he was being blamed. I wanted to see him. I do not know whether he had been sent home or had already finished. So I got his phone number from the supervisor's office and I called him on his mobile, but he had it turned off so I left a message. I knew I was not wanted there by the duty officer. Nevertheless, I still wanted to speak to Darryl to make sure he was okay. I stuck around for about an hour and tried to get in touch with people. It is all in my duty book and it has been signed off by my supervisor. I have tabled it, so members will have the opportunity to—

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: When you said you turned up at work and no-one told you about TJ. Is there no handover system when you arrive at work? Does someone not tell you about incidents?

Mr WILKINSON: Can I just jump in on that? I started at 3 o'clock on that day as well but we do have a call-out system at Redfern Police Station. When I first started at Redfern we were not getting paid for the call outs and it was not uncommon to get phone calls at 2.00, 3.00, 4.00 in the morning to come into the police station just for the mere thing of making a cup of tea for the prisoners, something that the police could have done themselves. But we had a major incident on the fourteenth and not one ACLO was called. No-one explained to us upon our arrival as to what took place that day. After what Derek had heard from the community member, we took it upon ourselves to go down to The Block in Redfern 90, which is our vehicle. Not knowing really what took place that day we could have walked into an absolute debacle down there because no-one at the police station would tell us anything.

CHAIR: Why is that the case? Is that a general problem in terms of police and ACLO relations?

Mr WILSON: I find it very difficult to understand because if I was a duty officer and something significant like that happened I would be wanting to lay as much responsibility off as possible. I would be saying "Yes, I spoke to the bloody ACLO and this is what the ACLO said."

CHAIR: Why?

Mr WILSON: I really do not know. I can only assume that they were still getting their stories straight.

Mr WILKINSON: I was speaking to Senior Constable Hollingsworth shortly before 3 o'clock. He informed me that there had been an incident with TJ. He started to go into graphics of what he did at the scene by placing his right hand into the neck wound of young TJ. Inspector Emery came up from behind us and said to Mick "Don't f'ing say a thing to him."

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was that on the Saturday or Sunday?

Mr WILKINSON: That was the Saturday, 14.

CHAIR: That section is in your submission. We probably need you to spell out some of this for the committee. You are making some definite statements about the lack of communication between police and ACLOs—or between some police and ACLOs—maybe at Redfern? Maybe Marrickville is totally different. Given the inquiry we are doing it would help the committee if you would go a little bit further. As I said to you at the beginning, if there are problems with individuals the committee can go into a private hearing if it would help.

Mr WILSON: There are five different teams at Redfern which are headed by five different duty officers. I get on fine with several of those duty officers. I think they are fantastic blokes. I have a great working relationship with them. One in particular, when he is out of the station doing his job he general asks me to jump in the car with him and so we get around together. I have a better relationship with some. Some I feel use me effectively, others do not, and that is fine.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you say there is no uniformity between the five duty officers and the way you interact on their shifts?

Mr WILSON: No—well, yes, that is what I am saying. You are talking about five different individuals. Now there is one inspector who goes down The Block by himself, he wanders around, he talks to people. He is an old-fashioned cop and people respect him. He is a hard person to like. A lot of people respect him because he is upfront with them and he is very helpful. There is another bloke who I have a great deal of time for. He is very matey but he does not get out of the station much. There is another bloke who I would describe as withdrawn. I get on with these three blokes fine.

The Hon. IAN WEST: What training did you receive when you started as an ACLO?

Mr WILSON: There was a course down at the Police Academy that I went to. It went for 4-5 days. It was more or less an intro to the Police Service. There would be one session on domestic violence. So that was basically an intro to it. But it was not particularly effective at the time because I did not really know what they were talking about. Since then I have done the same course again as a refresher and it was more valuable in terms that I was able to understand it. But then I was able to pick a lot of holes in it as well.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In regard to this extremely important job that has such large obligations as opposed to the job satisfaction that you receive, the training was 4-5 days. When is the rough division of time when you are on the job on preventative measures as opposed to crisis control?

Mr WILSON: I have not had any training. They are the only two courses I have done in four years. I have asked if I could do the custody management course, which custody managers do at the police station, so that I can learn the procedures and I know when things are legit and when they are not. But I have difficulty getting training. I would like to learn how to use the computer that sits on my desk. I can read memos and that is about all I can do on it, and I can send memos.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In terms of the difficulties faced in trying to maximise your job satisfaction when you go in each day, how do you allocate your time in terms of preventative and crisis management?

Mr WILKINSON: I used to spend most of my time down on The Block with the people. They would never come to the police station. If there was ever a problem it would stay down The Block because they do not trust the coppers. They would never come to a police station so I made sure that I was always down The Block. There was always someone down there for them to speak to and whatever problems or grievances they had they would pass them on to me and I would take them back to the station.

The Hon. IAN WEST: How did you do that?

Mr WILKINSON: I would go back and speak to the duty officer at the time and say "Look, this is what I have been told down The Block. The person doesn't want to come to the station" because they rarely do. It is up to the duty officer if they wanted to come down to The Block and speak to the person. You would never have an Aboriginal person come up to the station. On training, when I started in 1997 my initial training was with the two ACLOs that were already there prior to me starting. It was not until 2001 that I actually attended the academy to get any formal training about the position.

The Hon. IAN WEST: How do you go about debriefing following critical incidents?

Mr WILSON: There is no debriefing.

Mr WILKINSON: There is no such thing.

Mr WILSON: There is debriefing for the police. There is no debriefing for ACLOs.

The Hon. IAN WEST: From what you say there is no briefing either?

Mr WILSON: No, on occasion, it all depends on who is on. Some people will say, "Look this has happened today" or "We would like you to go and—". I get some really strange requests. You will find a great variety of stuff in the copies from my duty book. I have been approached by chief prosecutors that need to find a witness. There is one who is mentioned there, his name was Green. There are three Greens who have an association with Redfern: one is dead. I ended up finding him. Some of the things we do are strange, but it is a very rewarding job in other ways. I take the good with the bad.

The Hon. IAN WEST: If you had a clean slate, what would you propose to us in terms of who you should be employed by, the training you should receive, the time allocation, and so on?

Mr WILSON: The training I would like to do, do you mean?

The Hon. IAN WEST: If you were able to do the job in the way you want to do it, how would you go about it?

Mr WILKINSON: I think we need proper training at the academy, with more time allocated to the position of ACLO. Everything is jammed into those four days.

Mr WILSON: I think the most important thing is to have a complaints mechanism available for Aboriginal people—in fact, all members of the public, including white people. At the moment, if someone has a grievance against the police, I can ask them to speak to the duty officer, and it is then up to the duty officer to take appropriate action, or I can advise them to write to the Ombudsman's Office.

If they do that, the Ombudsman's Office sends the complaint to the Police Service, which investigates it. The Police Service sends the complaint back to the Ombudsman's Office, which photocopies it onto its letterhead, and sends it back. So people do not think that their complaints are

taken seriously, or investigated, or given any weight. I accept that a large number of the complaints I hear are mischievous complaints, but I know that sometimes when you see smoke you will find fire.

CHAIR: Is there a career path of any sort for ACLOs?

Mr WILSON: No.

CHAIR: So it is a relatively junior job that is attached to the Police Force but not part of the Police Force? Where do either of you go from here?

Mr WILSON: I am quite happy in my job. I do not know that I wish to leave.

CHAIR: But is there a need for some sort of career path for other ACLOs?

Mr WILSON: That would be good, because I am sure there are other ACLOs who wish to pursue a career path within the Police Service. But, as I said, I like my job. I have the opportunity to help people when they are in crisis, and I love it.

CHAIR: Mr Wilkinson, do you have a comment to make about that?

Mr WILKINSON: No.

CHAIR: Or about the training, the way the job works, and so on?

Mr WILKINSON: No.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you see there being any possibility for a break-up of the role into those who deal with crisis issues and those who deal with the broader preventative issues?

Mr WILSON: The crisis stuff is the stuff you have to respond to. I would love to give a lot of support to the Aboriginal Children's Service. They have been struggling to try to establish a safe house in Redfern for years, and they just keep hitting brick walls. I think a place like that is so vital to the area—a place where kids can go when they are found by the police roaming the streets at 2, 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning. I am talking about six- and seven-year-old kids. The police go to take them home, only to find that mum or dad is drunk, or they are not there. So what do they do? They are babysitters, and they do not like it. It is not their role.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is this not a job for DOCS, or a non-government organisation that is funded by DOCS to do some sort of child prevention work?

Mr WILSON: I imagine so. But the thing is, there is no place like that available, as far as I am aware, where you can take kids. That is what I mean about a safe house. I imagine DOCS would be the ones to fund it. That is one preventative thing I would love to have.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would there be resources within the Aboriginal community to staff something like that? It would not have to be DOCS, would it?

Mr WILSON: No. I am sure that the Aboriginal Housing Office—I have spoken to them myself, and they are very sympathetic. I think they would do their best to come up with a premises, but the stumbling block is the recurrent funding to run the place. I want to say that I really do not know what I am talking about in terms of how you would prepare a submission to do that, or the planning and detail that goes into it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is not your field?

Mr WILSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are ACLOs sworn police officers?

Mr WILSON: No, we are civilians.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: There were three ACLOs at Redfern at the time of the riot in the middle of February, is that correct?

Mr WILSON: There were two based there. But Paul came across on that Saturday—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I want to get the basic facts clear. Three ACLOs were allocated to Redfern, is that right?

Mr WILSON: That is right. Two of the positions are currently filled.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who is the second one?

Mr WILSON: Her name is Lesley Townsend.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And the third ACLO is Mr Wilkinson, who is seconded to Marrickville.

Mr WILSON: That is right. And there is a vacant position there, and that has been vacant for about three years now.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: On Saturday 14 February you came on duty at 3 o'clock in the afternoon?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: According to your notes, Mr Wilkinson was at Redfern on that day as well?

Mr WILKINSON: That is correct.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When you came on duty, was ACLO Ms Townsend rostered on duty?

Mr WILSON: No, she was not rostered on until that weekend.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You finished that night at 11.30 p.m.?

Mr WILSON: That is right.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And you were not rostered on duty on the Sunday?

Mr WILSON: No. I came in on my own time as soon as I heard the boy had died.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Wilkinson, were you rostered on—?

Mr WILKINSON: I was rostered on for a 3 o'clock start, until 11.30 that night.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And you were not rostered on duty for the Sunday either?

Mr WILKINSON: No. But prior to us leaving that night, we spoke with the duty officer, Inspector Hancock, and asked, "In the event of a blow-up, can we please be called in as part of the callout system?" It was left in the station instructions for the duty officer the next day that, in the event of a blow-up, ACLOs Wilkinson and Wilson were to be called in.

Mr WILSON: He said that he would leave those instructions. I do not know whether he did or not.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was Ms Townsend on duty on the Sunday?

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Mr WILSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: There were no ACLOs rostered on duty for the Sunday?

Mr WILSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Wilson, you went back to the station some time before 6.00 p.m.?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you go to the Block?

Mr WILSON: No, I did not.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You caught the train, though?

Mr WILSON: That is right.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What time did you get to Redfern station—about 5.30 p.m. or something like that?

Mr WILSON: Yes, it would have been around that time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What was happening then?

Mr WILSON: At that stage the shutters had been pulled down in Lawson Street and there were a heap of cops around with the railway security guys in grey—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Were rocks being pelted, and were people running amok at that stage?

Mr WILSON: Not at that stage, no. But I understand that had been happening—

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, we have had this difficulty before. The Committee's terms of reference do not include an inquiry into the riot itself. We have been given terms of reference concerning the broad underlying issues. I ask you to restrict your questions to more general issues—for example, the role of ACLOs and their relationship with the police and the community. Details about what happened minute to minute are specifically excluded from the Committee's terms of reference.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I do not think anyone has objected to what I have been asking.

CHAIR: I am trying to remind the witnesses, in particular—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You are taking a point of order to yourself, are you?

CHAIR: No. I am trying to remind you and the witnesses that specific details about what happened are outside the Committee's terms of reference. That is particularly the case given that you have established that neither Mr Wilson nor Mr Wilkinson was on duty on that day. I simply ask you to return to the broader issues that the witnesses are here to help us with.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Thank you. I will do that. At about the time we are talking about, the Coburn report says that at 5.42 Inspector Emery said that the crowd was intoxicated but that they were not causing any trouble at that time.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Point of order—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And that is when Inspector Emery sent you home.

CHAIR: I am sorry, Mr Pearce; Mr West has taken a point of order.

Mr WILSON: Sent me home!

CHAIR: Hang on just a second; a Committee member has taken a point of order.

The Hon. IAN WEST: My point of order is specifically on the question that this line of questioning is outside the Committee's terms of reference, and it should not be proceeded with.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is a matter that was raised by Mr Wilson in his opening statement.

Mr WILSON: Yes. And I would like to respond to the question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am just trying to clear up a matter. Mr Wilson has already given some evidence, and if the member wanted to object to it he should have done so when Mr Wilson gave that evidence.

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, I am the Chair.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We understand that, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: If I could rule on the point of order. You cannot rule on it yourself. Mr Wilson, if you would like to deal with that matter, do so. But after that, I think Dr Chesterfield-Evans has some questions, and we will return to the broader issues. As I have already ruled, details about the riot are not the task of this Committee. But if you would like to comment on that, since it has been asked, do so. Then I will hand over to Dr Chesterfield-Evans for some questions.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Then we will have to extend the time, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Go on, Mr Wilson.

Mr WILSON: I will comment on it, because this report has been submitted to the Committee.

CHAIR: Yes, and we have a couple of questions on it too.

Mr WILSON: My name has been blackened by this statement that Emery has made: that he sent me home because I was drunk. As I said, I finished at 11.30 the night before, and I spent the day with my son before returning to his mother's house. It is not possible that I could have been drunk, because I was with my son, and I do not drink when I am with him. He's a liar.

CHAIR: Dr Chesterfield-Evans?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Madam Chair, I have been given five minutes of questions, and Dr Chesterfield-Evans has not been given any at this stage. If you are going to behave in this way again, we are going to have to revisit the way these hearings are conducted. We have been very patient today. You have taken up the majority of time yourself. Dr Chesterfield-Evans and I have a lot of important questions to ask these witnesses, and you have taken up the time—

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, I am perfectly happy that you ask more questions, but firstly, in my position as Chair, and second in relation to Mr West's point of order, I have pointed out to you that your questions are outside the terms of reference. You may certainly come back, but I have to ensure that the questions you are asking are actually questions that we are supposed to be asking. Dr Chesterfield-Evans, would you ask some questions, please?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The Coburn report to which you refer, I must confess, I have read, and I was a little shocked by the expectation of ACLOs in it. It seemed that you were perhaps expected to be spies; in other words, intelligence officers, to put it a nicer way, in terms of what was going on to report back. That would seem to put you in a fairly

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difficult situation, if you were being intelligence officers. You have said there were difficulties in the role. Could you expand on that?

Mr WILSON: That has become more and more apparent, I would say, in the last twelve months of my employment. People are wanting me to spy on people's activities down the Block. I do not see that as my role. I am not a sworn police officer, I am not a trained investigator. I feel very uncomfortable. Nevertheless, that sort of pressure has been applied. I have not succumbed to it. I have been approached on numerous occasions by members of the Aboriginal community who give me information that they want passed on to the police, and I do so. But those things are generally of a serious nature, in regard to essentially assaults, and some drug issues that people are unhappy with. So I do pass intelligence on to the police from time to time, at the request of members of the Aboriginal community. I have no intention of going and spying on shoplifters and reporting them or people who—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who has approached you to spy? Who has pressured you to spy?

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, I think Dr Chesterfield-Evans is having his turn.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am just encouraging the witness to come up with his own story. I think that is probably the best thing I can do at this point. It seems it is a bit of an Uncle Tom position, if you know that term: the police want you to be—

Mr WILSON: Some police.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Some police want you to be an intelligence officer, and others presumably take a more broad view: that you have to bridge a fairly difficult gap, and if you are halfway between, then it is pretty good that you are there to make at least two half gaps instead of one big one. Do the Aboriginal people also want you to be a leg-in to the police situation?

Mr WILSON: Of course they do.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, well, I would have thought so. So this must make it a fairly difficult role.

Mr WILSON: Yes, from time to time. But I came into this job with a very clear understanding of what I was getting into. I have two step-kids in their earlier twenties, and I have a son who is 14 years of age, and their mother is Aboriginal; she has got quite a dark complexion. So I work with the police because I want to show my kids that you can get on with the police. So many Aboriginal children have a chip on their shoulder when it comes to dealing with the police, so a large part of the reason why I work there is, number one, as an example to my children that they can expect help from the police, and in fact they can demand help from the police if ever they need it; and the other strong part is my admiration for Peter Parsons when he was the boss of Redfern. I joined because I wanted to work for him. He had a great name in Redfern.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: There must be a somewhat difficult relationship between you and the police in that, first, one of the three positions is not filled. Is it not filled because it is not advertised, or is it not filled because they cannot find an applicant? Or don't you know the answer to that?

Mr WILSON: I think it is not filled because they can use the money for other purposes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Obviously, the fact that Mr Wilkinson has been seconded to Marrickville suggests there is some disharmony in the situation. Maybe he would comment on that.

CHAIR: Mr Wilkinson did explain before—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That there had been disharmony.

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CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So the job is not filled. And also, I understand, as well as the Coburn report's expectation, there were some comments about ACLOs in one of the other submissions, I think by Inspector Reitano, or Sergeant Reitano, is it?

Mr WILSON: Frank Reitano, yes. I have got a lot of respect for him. What did he have to say?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I cannot remember exactly, but it was some reflection.

Mr WILKINSON: I read parts of the Coburn report last night, particularly in regard to us ACLOs. I think the whole thing is alarming.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That was my reaction.

Mr WILKINSON: Under the heading "Performance of Redfern ACLOs and their relationship with police", Superintendent Smith indicated that he had considered calling ACLOs out during the riot but he believed that the community does not think highly of them. That is one point. Additionally, Superintendent Smith indicated Redfern police officers were sceptical of the Redfern ACLOs. How alarming is that?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: As an overall comment, it is a worry, isn't it?

Mr WILSON: Well, why wouldn't you do something about it if you were the boss there, if that was true?

Mr WILKINSON: And I will just add on that last bit, "police officers were sceptical of the ACLOs", that would be the primary reason that I was shifted across to Marrickville, because, with the ACLO in question, I had major problems and concerns with her because of the stuff that was going on in the police station and the leaking of information from the police station to the Aboriginal community. That is why there was a problem between that particular ACLO and myself.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What, you felt there was unprofessional behaviour going on, did you?

Mr WILKINSON: Yes.

CHAIR: Are you suggesting that that was more than something just between you and one other person, that it reflected a broader problem in the command?

Mr WILKINSON: Due to the actions of this particular ACLO, the rest of the station looked upon the rest of the ACLOs as a snitch.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Could you define exactly what a snitch is?

Mr WILKINSON: I will spell it out to you. The ACLOs I am talking about were passing information to members of the community in regard to persons who were wanted. This particular ACLO would also—

CHAIR: Can I interrupt? I did say something at the beginning of that evidence relating to a particular person who can be identified. Parliamentary privilege is a powerful thing, but, if we are really going to deal with the detail of an individual, we may have to think about a short period of in-camera evidence. Otherwise, could you make your comments a bit more general? I know it is difficult, but where we are talking about people who are not here to defend themselves, it can get quite awkward.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So shall we say that the ACLO's role of passing information from one to another, the expectation from both sides was an inconvenience?

Mr WILSON: I have done things like that myself and I have let the police know about it. From time to time I will see the warrant list and see who has got outstanding warrants and I will approach that person and say, "Listen, you've got warrants. They're going to pinch you. If they pinch you on your way to your mother's funeral you're not going to make it to your mother's funeral. Come to the station on Wednesday morning when court is sitting, hand yourself in. I can't guarantee it but the odds are that you will get bail and you'll have the matter relisted". So I do that from time to time and sometimes people do come up and hand themselves in. Other times they just say, "No, I'll take my chances". Well, fine.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Does that cause a problem with your superiors?

Mr WILSON: No. It has not been commented on.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you are off on stress leave, so the total sum of what has been happening is obviously very stressful to you or you would not be off on stress leave, presumably?

Mr WILSON: I am really unhappy with a few things in the place. In my duty book for 23 February there was an incident with—

CHAIR: Perhaps we can have a look at that later, since you have tabled it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Perhaps you do not need to say that now.

CHAIR: It may be better, it is your decision. But if it involves other particular people it may be better not to talk about it here.

Mr WILSON: Yes. Question 6.

CHAIR: About the need for effective leadership?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

CHAIR: Or the unprofessional behaviour by junior police?

Mr WILSON: Just speaking in general terms, there is a certain person who has a lengthy criminal background, who was arrested for his involvement in the riot. He was arrested at 12.30, or thereabouts. It is the first time in his long criminal history that he made full admissions. He has admitted, "Yes, I was there at the riot. Yes, I was throwing rocks at you all night". This guy has never made admissions, and it actually stunned a lot of the police who dealt with him before. So what happened then was that they used the full four hours investigation time so that he could not make it before court to apply for bail, which is fair enough, I understand that. He has been a bad boy and people want their revenge: inconvenience him for the night, keep him in custody and he will get bail the next day. That's fine.

He had been in custody; he was bail refused. He was in shorts and a T-shirt, he was cold, he wanted to come out of the dog box, lay down in the cell, and he wanted a blanket. I went and spoke to Sergeant Landry, who was the supervisor; he said, "Yeah, no worries". He said, "Just tell the custody manager I said it's okay". I have gone back and the custody manager said, "No, he can stay where he is. Go and give him a blanket. It's not that cold. He's right". I do not argue with police officers in front of prisoners; it's bad form. I immediately went to the duty officer and said what has happened and he said, "Give me five minutes and I will deal with it". I gave him five minutes, I returned, he had not dealt with it and I gave him another five, then I gave him another five. Anyway, he said, "No, I'm going to the custody manager". I said, "Come on, there is no need for this. It's just spiteful, petty".

The crime manager was with him as well—that is the second-in-charge of the station—and, can I swear? I just want to quote him. He said, "No, fuck him. That will teach him to throw rocks at my fucking cars". Fine. All right. So I went up and I spoke to the boss and I told him—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who is the boss?

Mr WILSON: Dennis Smith—what had happened, and his response was, "Well, I will get him transferred to the SPC as quickly as possible". I thought that was probably the weakest possible response he could have given me. He eventually got a blanket, and Ray thinks I am a great guy. I only know this individual from when he gets arrested. He thinks I am a great guy because I got him a blanket—whoopie do. He is entitled to a blanket the same as everyone else, but to him it looks like I have beaten the coppers for him. Now that is not a good thing for me, it is not a good thing for the police and it is not a good thing for the community, and I do not like it. I feel sick about it, and I do not want to go back there if that is the way complaints about prisoners are dealt with.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I just wanted to ask about the rostering system for ACLOs. I think, Mr Wilkinson, you mentioned that you are rostered on for four days? How many hours.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: No one said anything about that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I am talking about the hours of work.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: They have not said anything about that.

CHAIR: Perhaps the witness could answer Ms Griffin.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I thought you said, Mr Wilkinson, that in normal circumstances you work four days, is that right?

Mr WILKINSON: No, I did not mention anything.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Could you just explain the rostering system and the days that you work? I was interested that you were both rostered on on the Saturday at the same time.

Mr WILKINSON: The reason we were on at the same time on a Saturday was because we both took a group of kids from the Redfern area to the Challenge Shield.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Under normal circumstances how did the rostering system work with ACLO's?

Mr WILKINSON: Since I have been over at Marrickville I do not know what their roster was but at the time when I was at Redfern you would have a person on from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and a person from 3 p.m. to 11.30 p.m.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is that every day of the week?

Mr WILKINSON: As best we could, because there were days that we were to take off, so we tried to cover the shift as best we could to ensure that there was an ACLO from the 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. shift and an ACLO from 3 p.m. to 11.30 p.m. shift.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: And there were just three people going through that?

Mr WILKINSON: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I am just trying to work out how many days in a row you worked.

Mr WILKINSON: Sometimes it could be broken up. As I say, there were days that we were rostered to take off, so you might just work on Monday, Tuesday, have the Wednesday off and come

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back for the Thursday, Friday, or you might work the Monday through to the Friday. It depends on how the roster was set out.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Three people cover those two shifts on what, a seven-day a week basis or five days?

Mr WILKINSON: Some days you worked six days straight, then you had the next four off. As I say, it is how we could best fit it. There was nothing set in place.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: So it was the best coverage using three people to cover probably the busiest times of the day and evening in most cases, and whatever other commitments there were?

Mr WILKINSON: Yes, and whoever was on the afternoon shift would be on call, but, as I say, since we started getting paid for call-outs we were never used. Never used.

CHAIR: I draw your attention to the last two or three written questions we sent you, about which you may have some comments to make. The Hon. Greg Pearce wants to ask some other questions as well. You may not be able to comment on question 13 about the effectiveness of ACLOs in other LACs, both what about the effectiveness of the ACLOs and the job in terms of their relations with local police and the local community.

Mr WILSON: I cannot speak on behalf of other ALCOs, but from my observations people more or less fit their role into the community. I know the bloke out at Campbelltown, Mark Davis, is a terrific operator. He is real good. But, you see, most of the ACLOs in rural areas and as well Campbelltown to a certain extent, you have a much more settled Aboriginal population whereas I think Redfern is a pretty unique sort of place because there is such a large amount of transient people who come in and out of the place. There are people who resettle there from other areas. If someone plays up in a country town everyone knows about it. So I think people are more inclined to keep their noses clean. I think down here in Sydney we can all be pretty anonymous.

CHAIR: Now that you are based at Marrickville, are there any differences between Marrickville Redfern?

Mr WILKINSON: I have not worked since 23 February this year. I, myself, am off on stress leave.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You are both on stress leave?

Mr WILKINSON: Yes.

CHAIR: Again, trying to look a little bit more broadly at the system, we also asked for your comments on the resources that are currently provided to ACLOs, whether you think more are needed and what you think might be done to improve relations between police and the Aboriginal community in Redfern, and whether it would help if there were more ACLOs and, specifically, more Aboriginal police officers?

Mr WILKINSON: I think there is a great need for more Aboriginal coppers in Redfern.

CHAIR: Are there any at all?

Mr WILSON: There is a bloke who has just recently transferred, Justin Lansbury. He is a nice fellow. I have a lot of time for him.

CHAIR: One out of a couple of hundred?

Mr WILSON: Yes. There have been people before. I think they can get a scholarship or something if they are Aboriginal and go through the Police Academy.

CHAIR: Would it be a good thing if there were more?

Mr WILSON: It would be terrific.

CHAIR: Or is that an impossible job?

Mr WILSON: No. There are more and more blackfellas who are wearing a blue uniform, and they are pretty good.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have three quick questions just to finish up, because we are at the end of time.

The Hon. IAN WEST: I have one I want to ask, too.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In terms of the work that the ACLOs do, on 14 February, Mr Wilson, you came in at three o'clock. You heard about—

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, I am sorry.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have not even heard the question. Just let me finish the question—

CHAIR: I have already—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: —then you will understand—

CHAIR: No. I have already ruled on two or, in fact, three occasions as you know very well, because we had this problem before. Your highly specific questions about 14 February—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have not even heard the question.

CHAIR: —are not within our terms of reference.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have not heard the question.

CHAIR: And question that starts off "When you came on duty at three o'clock on 14 February" are not within our terms of reference, how ever it is going to finish. I generally assume—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have not heard the question. Just let me finish the question and you will not have a problem with it.

CHAIR: No. I am sorry. I have ruled your question out of order. If you do not have questions that are part of this inquiry, given that we are now outs of time for these witnesses—

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I will move on to the next question.

CHAIR: —I will allow these witnesses to go. But I am going to rule it out of order because, again, it is related to these out of order questions on something not within our terms of reference, which you have already asked.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I will move to the next question. In terms of your duties as an ACLO, how often do you take kids to the football?

Mr WILSON: Very rarely. I have done it only on a couple of occasions. I, along with the former youth liaison officer, the two of us took half a dozen kids out to Homebush pool.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: But that is the sort of thing that you might do? You might take the kids to the footie in your role as an ACLO?

Mr WILSON: You can count the times that I have done it on the palm of one hand.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am not suggesting that you do it all the time. And that is what happened on the night before the riot?

Mr WILSON: That is right.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Were you the person referred to in the Coburn report as having told Anne-Marie that a busload of Aboriginal people were coming from Walgett to kill a copper in relation to the death of Thomas Hickey?

Mr WILSON: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know of anyone saying that?

Mr WILSON: No, I do not.

CHAIR: Mr Pearce.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Earlier on you said that you were being—

CHAIR: Mr Pearce, may I warn you that you have again gone into the area that you said you would not.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I said I would ask another question.

CHAIR: Would you return, please, to the more general questions rather than trying to get back to the date of 14 February?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: My question is you made an allegation that you were being told to spy on the Aboriginal community. Who told you to do that?

The Hon. IAN WEST: I would say you should not answer that.

Mr WILSON: I was receiving that impression.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who gave you that impression?

The Hon. IAN WEST: I would not answer that if I were you.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Read the Coburn report, mate.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: He has made an allegation. Who was giving you that impression?

Mr WILSON: Darren Bennett, the crime manager.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How did he do that?

Mr WILSON: It was more of an inference than anything: We want more out of you ACLOs about what is happening on The Block.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When was that?

Mr WILSON: After the riots.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: And before you went on stress leave?

Mr WILSON: Yes.

Mr WILKINSON: Because it is easier to send an ACLO down there than a uniform to go down and obtain the information that they require. So, once again, use poor old ACLOs to go down there and do their dirty work. As was the case with this.

CHAIR: Were either of you or other ACLOs asked to make a submission to the Coburn report, given the date that you went on leave?

Mr WILKINSON: They would not ask me for a start.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: They are not police officers.

Mr WILKINSON: No, the reason which they would not ask me is that they are trying to cover up exactly what took place down at Redfern that day.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What are they trying to cover up?

CHAIR: Mr Pearce.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Let him talk.

Mr WILKINSON: That the police actually rammed the young kid. I have had my house burned down as a result of the crap that has gone on. I have death threats stating to stay away from this inquiry, and you may ask who from, the police.

CHAIR: Mr West, do you have a question?

The Hon. IAN WEST: I wanted to ask Mr Wilson a question. You mentioned earlier that Peter Parsons was your ideal commander, if you like. Can you give us an indication as to what you saw that made Peter Parsons so good?

Mr WILSON: He was a terrific communicator. He really knew how to speak to people. People liked him. You cannot bottle that sort of stuff, can you? It comes down to individuals. But I found him a very engaging bloke. I admired him. And we have had some terrific commanders at Redfern over the time that I have been there.

CHAIR: Can I thank you both for attending. We will have a look at the document that you tabled and we will let you know whether we feel that it needs to be kept within ourselves. It may be that we have some specific matters to follow up and I hope that we can contact you.

Mr WILSON: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you both very much for attending here today.

Mr WILSON: Look, I want to thank the Committee for the opportunity to be here today. I had no intention of appearing here whatsoever, until I saw a copy of the police response that was delivered here and I felt that I was obligated. The more I thought about it, I think my role as an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer at Redfern really obliged me personally to appear here today to say thanks for making that possible.

(The witnesses withdrew)

MARK GOODWIN, Assistant Commissioner of NSW Police, attached to the Operations Support Command, 1 Charles Street, Parramatta, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: It might be sensible for us to first ask you, given that you are replacing Mr West at short notice, whether or not some of these questions are questions that you cannot answer and we will need to ask him later. Or perhaps you could start off by explaining your role in relation to Aboriginal Affairs within the force to give us a sense of as to what extent you can answer the questions we intend to ask?

Mr GOODWIN: Certainly. My apologies, firstly, for Assistant Commissioner West. His ill health has prevented his appearing today. It is a recurrent injury. I am appearing at the Committee on Morris West's behalf. He is the spokesperson in NSW Police for Aboriginal issues. I am appearing as a courtesy to the Committee to comply with the Chair's request.

The context of my role is that I am the Commander, Operations Support Command. That has seven commands individually attached to it, which are the crime management faculty, traffic services branch, PCYC, Operations Vikings, our high visibility operations and various programs such as volunteers in policing, police for schools response unit and education department. Most notably relevant to this Committee is operational policy and programs. Staff within that operational policy and programs branch run the corporate programs and the policy in an operational context for matters such as youth, domestic violence, child protection, sexual assault, gay, lesbian and transgender issues, cultural diversity, crime prevention, vulnerable communities, mental health, aged, disabilities and, of course, Aboriginal issues. The Aboriginal co-ordination team, represented by Ms Peters, who is appearing after me, is part of that team.

Broadly speaking, my command has operational oversight of crime and traffic policy, program and professional development throughout the organisation, although for each one of those complex issues in their own right there is a corporate spokesperson of which policy programs staff I administratively oversight, brief those spokespersons in carrying out the day-to-day doing things.

CHAIR: As we go through the written questions, which you have seen and you have told me you have come with some answers to, you may be able to indicate whether you are speaking from your own personal knowledge or experience or as someone filling in for Mr West and whether it is something that we cannot really ask further questions of you because it is just not your area.

Mr GOODWIN: No, that is fine. I have sought some briefings at the eleventh hour this morning and I think I should be right with most of the questions on notice. Anything that I am not aware of, I would ask that we take that on notice and I will provide a written report or reply.

CHAIR: Okay. I will start off pretty generally. We have asked about the main issues confronting police in their relationship with Aboriginal people within New South Wales generally and then specifically the Redfern local area command [LAC]?

Mr GOODWIN: Historically, I think that police still suffer from the issues surrounding the stolen generation and, quite frankly and honestly, with police on the street, that is used in their face in confrontational situations quite regularly. Police, by the mere fact of them wearing a uniform are a symbol of the establishment, of government, and it can be a tough barrier for young police to work through on occasions, and we deal with the legacy of that on a daily basis. That does affect relationships from the history. Some of the current high-level issues that police are dealing with, problematic issues in Aboriginal communities, are alcohol and drugs, youth and youth crime, ATSI overrepresentation in the criminal justice system, violence, domestic violence and sexual assault issues within the community and community functionality generally.

Whether that is specific to the Redfern community—I would say yes, all of the above. It is specific also to many other Aboriginal communities, both urban Sydney and also regional and rural areas of New South Wales.

We focus our programs in on those sorts of things—alcohol and drug programs, youth programs and ATSI overrepresentation. Particularly we have programs trialled and piloted in regards

to cautioning of Aboriginal young persons, colloquially termed, although I do not like the term, tag and release. Young persons who are in custody in regard to offences, rather than being pressured under the Young Offenders Act to either admit or not admit, right there and then, we have gone into partnership in an intergovernmental approach with the Aboriginal Legal Service involved. So in regard to releasing those people, we are notifying the Aboriginal Legal Service so that the pressure is not on, right there and then, to provide a definitive admission or non-admission.

We found by doing that, that the period of time when they can come back, 42 or 72 hours later in the cold light of the next day, there is quite appropriate legal advice provided. We can actually increase diversions under the Young Offenders Act by those sorts of programs. We also involve Aboriginal Elders in cautioning of youth, so some of our young programs have been quite good, particularly the PCYC programs that involve a range of addressing dysfunctional individuals but also the wider issues of employment, education, mentorship and stewardship of that person through some difficult times. I might say that a few of our PCYC programs have won national crime prevention awards, so we are quite proud of what we do in that field.

Community functionality is a huge problem for us generally. While police are very good on the ground with situational and crime prevention issues that are specific to The Block, working with councils and working with the Aboriginal Housing Commission particularly in regard to the tearing down or removal of shooting galleries and the clean-up of needles and programs that have more and more a situational context around there, they are usually pretty successful. Also the NSW Police has very much moved itself in the last number of years towards front-line semiautonomous local area commands that are staffed with the Crime Management Unit and liaison officers. And we are very, very strong—very strong—on community partnerships and looking for local solutions.

Problem-orientated policing is a term that is very well used and well known by all, particularly our young police. There is some resistance to it among some of our longer-serving members, but we have pushed very strongly in the NSW Police to resource Crime Management Units and liaise through the programs locally. They are complex social issues that we deal with. We are not a 9 to 5 agency like a lot of others are. We operate 24 hours, and we deal, particularly after hours, with the complex social issues that are all just a matter of policing.

We have to work in partnership with them on those solutions. We resource those locally. Strategically and corporately, areas that come under my command and the stewardship of the corporate spokespersons look to professionally develop those. They look for isolated pockets of best practice and spread those. There are other things such as strategic directions and reviews of what we are geared up corporately to support. It is a very much resourced for front-line Crime Management Units to deal with those issues.

CHAIR: Our next question attempts to localise, I guess. How would you describe the relationship between the local Aboriginal community and police in the Redfern LAC to others in New South Wales?

Mr GOODWIN: It suffers the same issues that I have previously mentioned, of which I am sure the Committee is quite aware. Generally speaking, the Redfern police—I can speak from first-hand experience because I was at the local area command at Redfern at one stage. The people there who work with the police are fantastic. We have had a lot of success in longer-term strategies. There are some fantastic police in The Block and on the ground generally down there. However, what I think the NSW Police struggles with is detractors who have an inbred hatred of police. They leverage on opportunistic incidence or jump on single inflammatory incidents. Unfortunately, the longer-term very good work that the police do down there—fuelled by alcohol particularly, and fuelled by highly volatile opportunistic inflammatory persons with a very long history of contacts in a negative manner with police—is overridden.

I suppose a very good example is of the kids involved in the riot who were charged. A number of those were involved in PCYC programs at the South Sydney PCYC. In speaking to the police down there, they almost could not believe some of the footage that they saw because on a longer-term basis they have dealt with these kids in camps and in structured programs and in mentorship programs, and are dealing with that quite successfully. However, they are driven and

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fuelled by these opportunistic, single unit, inflammatory-type people that occupy The Block. That is what has fuelled the incident on the night there, I believe.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Is Lyall Munro one of those sort of people you are talking about?

Mr GOODWIN: I believe so, yes.

CHAIR: We do try, as far as we can, not to individualise.

Mr GOODWIN: Sure. The Elders of some rural areas—in a lot of rural areas, police have more success, I would say, because they are established communities, not so transient. There are very well known Elders in those communities that the police can work with and who actually have a fair amount of influence over the community in the development of social infrastructure and community programs. Probably in the Redfern area, there are a number of groups. There are a number of competing interests and there are a number of competing Elders in the area that do not necessarily see eye to eye on all matters, and there is a transient population.

Certainly when you examine health figures in terms of the needle vans, which I did when I was the commander of Redfern, it is the epicentre of movement of Aboriginal population throughout New South Wales and the population there is transient. That is exacerbated by the drug dealing and the transient movement through the area also of drug addicts. Those environmental issues there break down the ability to police, and for police to deal with longer-term strategic issues—the fighting amongst different factions, the not-so-much long-term occupancy of a particular Aboriginal group with identified Elders. The transient nature does make it difficult for police, and yes, it is a more difficult area, in my view, because of those things.

CHAIR: Would you say that the police force takes steps to ensure that policing is different in Redfern? If we are talking about a relationship between the police and Aboriginal people, it takes both sides to contribute to a good relationship or to a bad one.

Mr GOODWIN: Yes.

CHAIR: I guess we are interested in knowing what the police do to ensure that a potentially difficult relationship is the least difficult as is possible.

Mr GOODWIN: Yes. I can assure you that corporately there is an inordinate amount of resources, particularly of late, that have been hooked into the Redfern areas. My Aboriginal co-ordination team has been on the ground there for a great deal of time of late. Our crime management faculty has gone out there to do a complete reassessment of the crime management capabilities, right from intelligence to deployment and so forth. Drug operations and high visibility operations use specialist resources in the area in terms of high visibility and also covert operations. There has been—and has consistently been over the last number of years to very high degree in comparison to other areas—most focused around the railway station and The Block area, and that is because of the transient drug trade. I can assure you that when I was the local area commander that there the very first thing—

CHAIR: Can you tell us when that was?

Mr GOODWIN: Sorry?

CHAIR: When were you the local area commander, if that is not an embarrassing question?

Mr GOODWIN: No. Two thousand and one, or two.

CHAIR: Were you there before Mr Parsons, who the other witnesses were talking about?

Mr GOODWIN: No, after.

CHAIR: Were you before Mr Smith, or was there someone else?

Mr GOODWIN: Before Smith. Certainly when I first arrived, the Aboriginal Elders very very strongly put to me that the biggest issue was heroin and drugs. One of the first things and immediate things that I resourced was a very large covert operation. It is a matter for the police working on many fronts. We need to be stronger in intelligence and deployment, both in high visibility. We need to be cognisant of the need for covert operations, of which there have been numerous.

We also very much need to look for longer-term solutions and partnerships through things such as the Redfern-Waterloo partnership. Certainly, one of my first ports of call there—and I know Dennis Smith is the same—was to make best friends with Michael Ramsey, who I think has personally done a terrific job in a hard circumstance.

In some respects I believe the police have been a leading light in that regard because the first issue in the requirement for the strategies of that program to work was the removal of drug dealers from The Block, followed up by issues to do with health and the van, followed by rebuilding in the Aboriginal housing commission and so on. The fundamental cornerstone of it was if the other agencies were to have faith in the ability to move needle vans and all those sorts of things it was predicated on the fact that the police took a very strong role, and I think that we have. And we have had very strong, high-visibility operations and drug operations in the area. Of course, we need to be very much cognisant of the need to be involved in longer-term solutions and partnerships and particularly referrals of youth at risk and so on.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I was impressed by one of the other police who gave evidence who said that if the kids do not go to school no-one complains, if the kids are on the streets at midnight no-one complains, but if the kids commit a crime and we do not arrest them everyone complains. To what extent do you think that the police are currently doing the tasks that perhaps DOCS or Education or some preventive non-government organisation should be doing?

Mr GOODWIN: Resources are always a wonderful thing. The hours of operation necessarily of other agencies sometimes work against us. Having said that—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If a kid does not go to school that is not a problem of hours, is it?

Mr GOODWIN: It is not a problem for the New South Wales Police. It does become a problem very quickly.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It should not be a problem of the New South Wales Police, but the problem of the hours is the education department if they are not at school in school time, is it not?

Mr GOODWIN: It is but there are some very strong programs down there with regard to the school bus. Police have been involved in actually making sure they get on the bus. During drug operations they are down there to make sure that the bus gets to school with the kids on it. As much as policing is about crime and arresting criminals, we have a great responsibility to the crime prevention role, and there are expectations of the police. So whether that means getting kids on the bus or assisting to get them to a breakfast program and so on, certainly we having a role down there in after hours and kids that are on the street that will get involved in malicious damage and minor petty crime after school. We have a preventive role looking for diversionary options for those kids to be involved in, such as PCYC, the youth centres and other activities in the area. We have to have that role, otherwise we end up down there anyway when they have committed crime, half an hour later.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is this really a police role? Should there not be somebody else doing this? Would that not be your position if you had the drubbers?

Mr GOODWIN: Some of these things are not definitive, that it is DOCS or Police or Health. It does not fit neatly in the bailiwick and basket of any particular agency. There are problems where agencies must work in an integrated and cohesive way on particular groups and families.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If I said they were falling between the stools would you gainsay me?

Mr GOODWIN: There are always opportunities to improve, I agree. I am absolutely convinced that the way to go is by a very strong, integrated approach, but it must be focussed across a range and spectrum of things that include drug and alcohol, family violence and sexual assault issues, education issues, a whole range of monetary poor housing, single parent and all the contributing factors that make a kid eventually on the street committing crime.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think the other agencies are pulling their weight?

Mr GOODWIN: I cannot particularly comment on the Redfern area at the moment because I would not know; I have not been there for many years. But I think there has been a very concerted effort and very strong move in government and government agencies towards a more integrated approach. I represent the commissioner, Ken Moroney, on the human services CEOs forum, and the topic of conversation for the last number of meetings has been working around the privacy Act and MOUs between agencies and how information can be better shared between DOCS, Health, Police, Housing, those sorts of agencies that will deal with the intricate social issues. You only need look at the community solutions and the areas I am representing on the working party there where problematic communities are looked at in a more holistic way as to what programs could be run that have an effect across the spectrum of areas of family intervention. Yes, the police do have a role in that, because if we do not have a strong role in it we are forever chasing our tail and picking up the pieces afterwards.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think the privacy Act is actually stopping people doing good in a co-ordinated approach to kids at risk?

Mr GOODWIN: The privacy Act is very necessary. I would not say it is a barrier. It is an absolutely necessary piece of legislation. However, it is on the ground around tables in a local area, people in agencies are concerned about what they can share, which is why very strongly at a more corporate level of the human services CEOs this has been explored quite strongly and resourced. The Crown Solicitor is advising us in regard to MOUs and so on. It is not to get around it; it is just so that ethically and quite properly that information can be shared. The spirit and intent of the Act certainly was not to prevent agencies working in a collaborated manner and an integrated manner to case manage particular problematic families or individuals.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think that problem can be solved without legislative change within your groups? Obviously your CEOs are talking.

Mr GOODWIN: I am not an expert on the intricacies of the Act but from my understanding it is down to the Attorney General's Department at the moment, and it has been subject to Crown Solicitor's advise and the Privacy Commissioner has been involved.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We have heard that two of the ACLOs working at the moment are on stress leave. Can you outline what you see as the ACLOs role? There seem to be some problems with them at the moment. What is being done about that?

Mr GOODWIN: I am not aware of the individual stress-related matters. The role of the ACLO or any liaison officer is to assist the police in development of local community partnerships. It was interesting that I heard a comment just as I arrived about them being used to seek intelligence on behalf of the police. That is not the role to seek individual intelligence. They do come across those issues, people providing information in a confidential sense. The appropriate thing to do is to introduce that to the police officer. They are supervised by a crime co-ordinator police officer and the instructions are to hand that over to them. We are talking here about more of a role of looking for opportunities for police, the troubleshooting issues. That ranges from problematic issues at the counter, misunderstandings between police, through to seeking representation from that community in consultation over a whole range of issues on the local area command community consultative Committees.

When you talk about information and intelligence I would say that it is an ACLO's role to know about the community and about brewing problems in the community, and in this particular instance about an issue that was brewing in the community. ACLOs should have networks, should have contacts in the community to be forewarned and pre-warned about rising problematic issues. ACLOs should be involved in cultural awareness training with the local police as well, and be a conduit or advocate for Aboriginal issues to both the police and also by working with the police and in a police station, dispelling myths, rumours and misunderstandings of over-arrests, assisting youth and youth programs and kids in training lectures and those sorts of things. Individual incidents of intelligence about who did a break and enter and all that sort of stuff is not the requirement of ACLOs, and they should not be asked to do those sorts of roles.

CHAIR: We are very conscious of our time problem, which is not your fault. We got very behind before. The Hon. Ian West wants to ask some questions. We may ask you to give us your notes in relation to some of the questions which are pretty much factual, detailed questions about police policy documents and so on. Perhaps the Hon. Ian West could ask some questions about the strategic direction document.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In relation to the Aboriginal Strategic Directions document could you provide written responses to questions Nos. 6 to 9, in particular? I understood from your previous answer that the role of ACLOs was specifically related to preventative issues and liaison with the community. It appears from evidence, anecdotal and otherwise, that ACLOs seem to be very much bogged down in individual crisis issues. Is that seen as a problem?

Mr GOODWIN: It can be both. There is an expectation on every police officer. In the heat of the moment in a crisis, certainly if there was a blue in the front foyer of a police station, one of the most useful tools for police would be the ACLOs, to quickly dispel the myths, rumours and misunderstandings about the legislation, or why a kid is under arrest. That is the most sensible-tactical versus strategic use of their role. As well as that, on a day-to-day basis when there are not people in the foyer, there are other expectations on their use in developing community programs and looking for opportunities, networks and so forth. That is expected of in their role, as it is of every other police officer.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Do you have an understanding of the Aboriginal Strategic Directions document of the NSW Police Force?

Mr GOODWIN: I do.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In that document there is reference to an audit conducted by the University of Sydney. Are you familiar with that audit?

Mr GOODWIN: Of the Sydney university?

The Hon. IAN WEST: The audit commissioned by the University of Sydney?

Mr GOODWIN: No.

The Hon. IAN WEST: You are not familiar with that audit.

CHAIR: Could you take that question on notice and respond to the Committee later?

Mr GOODWIN: Yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: In the cultural appreciation diploma course offered at the police academy, do you believe there is adequate training of new recruits in that area?

Mr GOODWIN: It is not my area of policing, but I will give you what information I have. The training is conducted as part of the Diploma of Policing Practice to all recruits, by Barry Williams. I understand that information has been placed before the Committee about what that training consists of.

CHAIR: If not, we will certainly ask for it.

Mr GOODWIN: That is the information that I have, Ma'am. It is in the Diploma of Policing Practice. On top of that the education services have identified 22 priority LACs throughout the State. Barry Williams, the Aboriginal lecturer at the academy. As well, he conducts workshops to all recruits in the academy and has targeted 10 or 15 local area commands per year. He has organised to run four workshops in Redfern in October and November, which will involve community groups also. We encourage, and this is in the Aboriginal Strategic Directions document, local area commands to run their own community police workshops, cultural workshops. The importance of that is that at the academy, police can be given generic information that looks at social issues and social justice issues, specific to Aboriginal communities.

When they get on the ground—and this is important and we are pushing it, and there are some very good examples of it—we will have the community groups as well as the ACLOs and any Aboriginal police address those particular recruits about local environment issues, social issues, where the local Aboriginal middens and things may be, who to contact in the community, where they are, what programs exist, and so forth. We push very strongly locally as well.

The Hon. IAN WEST: When you took over from Peter Parsons in Redfern LAC, what debriefing did you receive from him as to the NSW Police directions document at that time?

Mr GOODWIN: I did not take over from Peter Parsons.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Whomever you took over from—

Mr GOODWIN: There was no commander there at the time I arrived.

The Hon. IAN WEST: What briefing—

Mr GOODWIN: There was no briefing provided to me, there was no commander at the time. There had been a gap, someone had left and I started.

The Hon. IAN WEST: And that was when?

Mr GOODWIN: 2002.

CHAIR: Mr Goodwin, a number of specific questions can be taken on notice, particularly questions about the document. I draw to your attention question 10, which relates to the recommendations of the NSW Alcohol Summit of last year. What strategies do NSW Police have in place to follow up on what was said in the Government's response to increase the recruitment of Aboriginal police officers, both male and female?

Mr GOODWIN: NSW Police has implemented a number of marketing strategies aimed specifically at indigenous persons having a career in policing. The Aboriginal access to further studies course, a bridging program, has been developed to support the indigenous applicants in meeting academic entry requirements into the Diploma of Policing. Development of the program has moved into a distance education or TAFE program, which is offered by the Open Training Education Network. Police career days specific to indigenous communities have been run at various locations across New South Wales. A very large and the most successful one was run recently at Mount Druitt. There has been development of promotional material, specific to the indigenous community, which I have tendered to the Committee.

It has information on the Diploma of Policing Practice, as well as on being a NSW Police officer, administrative officer, Aboriginal liaison officer or a security officer and information on Aboriginal access to further studies and about our internal Aboriginal employees support network, which is a retention strategy. I table that document.

Document tabled.

There is also participation at indigenous career markets and festivals, including Croc, GRODE, NAIDOC, and other regional career markets. There are mail-outs to community groups, which include the land council, the Commonwealth Development Education Program, government and non-government employment agencies and Aboriginal liaison officers. NSW Police recently secured \$60,000 in funds from Treasury to provide five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with a \$12,000 guaranteed scholarship to study. Regarding Numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [ATSI] recruitments, advice from our recruitment branch is that our current target for 2003-05 is 20 Aboriginal police officers per annum, which we are meeting.

An initial strategy was developed from 1995 to 2000, which was a target of 10; so that is now up to 20. \$20,000 was spent on research and external consultants to devise some recruitment strategies. The most current class in the academy, which studied three weeks ago, has three ATSI students, some classes have more or less than that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: This question may need to be taken on notice. How does the police service determine how many ACLOs would be attached to a local area command? I suppose it would be similar to other commands where there are ethnic liaisons officers?

Mr GOODWIN: I am absolutely certain that the next witness will be able to answer that question. She runs the ACLO program for New South Wales under my command and is the policy program officer and supports the spokesperson.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you believe there should be more ACLOs?

Mr GOODWIN: I believe we have enough. I think it has to do with the deployment and the use of them, which is an always developing concept.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: At the moment you have three. Two positions are not filled and I gather two of them are on stress leave, is that right?

Mr GOODWIN: I am not aware of the specific issues. I was not aware of the stress leave issue until I just walked in the door here.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So, it is difficult for you to say in each area whether there are enough or not?

Mr GOODWIN: I do not have in front of me an analysis that would show that, no.

CHAIR: Given our time problem and given that, as you have said, Ms Peters will be able to answer some of these questions, we will treat our remaining questions as questions on notice. Could we ask to provide answers within a couple of weeks?

Mr GOODWIN: Certainly. I will have most of the information at my fingertips.

CHAIR: We may also need to get some advice from you or from Mr West himself, when he is better, as to whether we should talk to him as well. That is probably something the secretariat could discuss with you.

Mr GOODWIN: Not a problem.

(The witness withdrew)

DOREEN PETERS, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer State Co-ordinator, Police Headquarters, 1 Charles Street, Parramatta, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: You have had a chance to look at the questions we sent?

Ms PETERS: Yes.

CHAIR: The obvious question is the one we asked you first. Can you explain to us what your role is as State Co-ordinator of the ACLO scheme?

Ms PETERS: Yes. My role is one of strategic policy advice to NSW Police on the ACLO program. Also to undertake an analysis and review of the ACLO program and also to do that by reports, submissions and briefs up the line, and also to provide support to the ACLOs in the field as well as provide advice and support to the local area commands as well.

CHAIR: How long have you been in the job?

Ms PETERS: I have been in this position since 2000. That was when it was first established.

CHAIR: Can you tell us a little bit about the history of the ACLO program in New South Wales?

Ms PETERS: Yes.

CHAIR: Does it run in other States, or something similar? What are its aims, and so on?

Ms PETERS: The ACLO scheme was first established in 1986 as a result of unrest out in the western area of New South Wales. It was first piloted in Bourke and Walgett. That was in consultation by police with the Aboriginal community, who really hoped to have a link between police and the Aboriginal people to help to improve relationships but also to have a voice in the police department. It is also as a result of the deaths in custody recommendations. First up, it was to be in a reactive role rather than a pro-active role. So, if any issues concerning Aboriginal people that caused, say, public uproar or if there were any issues at all that the police needed to address, the ACLOs were asked to go out to that area.

However, over the years the ACLO program has been reviewed three times. We are focusing more towards the proactive role. So, we are looking towards preventative maintenance rather than waiting for something to happen. Also, to help the ACLOs to come into the role and focus in one direction, we have developed a two-week, local induction program for the ACLOs so that they are getting hands-on training in the police station they will be working from. Attached to that is a 12-month training and development plan as a guide for ACLOs and also for the local area command.

CHAIR: So, when you say it has moved from being reactive and is now shifting more towards a preventive role, can you put a date or a time on that? Is that something that is about to happen or it has already been happening? Does it vary from place to place?

Ms PETERS: It varies from local area command to local area command. It comes back to the team-building exercise with ACLOs and the crime management unit. Also, there is a supervisory role and having consistency across the State as in line of command. Since I have been in the position, since 2000, we have probably moved ahead in leaps and bounds in the sense that we have the ACLO induction program being trialled and also now implemented across seven local area commands to help the ACLOs so they understand their role from the word go. They have ACLO annual conferences. Every year they can get together to help each other to see if there is a problem. If a program is working in one area and is not too good in another area they can support and assist each other.

That has focused the ACLOs in the sense that from our last conference they go away and not work in isolation but work across regions, so they all work on the same sorts of programs. The one program that these regional commands are working is a reward program. That is like taking troubled children but also children who have been good, who attend school, to give them another look at life.

They may come from an area where all they see is alcohol and drugs or where there is no employment, and we get them to look at other areas across the State. So it is not just doing something within that town but to go to other areas. They bring country kids to the city and take city kids to the country. They are getting networked across working with the police community youth clubs.

I can say that the program, focusing on pro-active now, is starting to take effect but there are still some more steps we need to take to make sure it is consistent across the board but also to support those commands and ACLOs and how they can do it. From my particular area, the Aboriginal co-ordination team, they are not working in isolation but there are partnerships across, even internally.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: I am interested in how many ACLOs currently are women?

Ms PETERS: Seven.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How many ACLOs are there across New South Wales?

Ms PETERS: There are 56 positions.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: How many are currently filled?

Ms PETERS: There are 52 filled.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Does every local area command [LAC] have ACLOs? I would not imagine that to be the case.

Ms PETERS: There are 80 local area commands and 27 of them have ACLOs. They are across every region. We have ACLOs within the five police regions. Some local area commands have one ACLO and some might have two, three or four.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The previous witness said to us he thought there were enough ACLOs, but the problem related to where they were in the State. Do you have a comment to make on that?

Ms PETERS: Through community consultation, through local area commands and through a consultative process we sought advice on the number of ACLOs to be increased and whether their roles should be a bit different to what they are. They all wanted to increase the number by 12. We looked at where they should be. The priority was to look at Aboriginal Strategic Directions and the LACs that were identified in that for the rollout of the strategic directions. We also looked at the statistics of court attendances and we looked at women in prison. They represent 31 per cent of women in prison across the board. We looked at the priority of those commands, where the LACs might have put in a submission to say, "We really need an ACLO because of this and this." We collated that information to say, "This is where we need to prioritise."

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: The Government, in its submission to the inquiry, states that the effectiveness of the ACLO program in Redfern was a matter of concern and that it was subject to an ongoing review. Do you know who undertook that review and what its outcome was?

Ms PETERS: I understand that the local area command undertook that review. It provides monthly reports to the deputy commissioner's office. The Aboriginal co-ordination team also provides monthly reports to the deputy commissioner's office. A six-monthly review is also undertaken. The review was done in September and the next one is due in February 2005.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: We heard today that there are three positions at Redfern and that currently only one of those is filled. Are you concerned about what is happening in Redfern in relation to ACLOs?

Ms PETERS: Yes, I am. I have been concerned for some time. I have been across at Redfern meeting with the ACLOs and also the command. There are four positions allocated to Redfern. One position was on loan to Marrickville, one position is vacant and there are two positions that are operational in Redfern at the moment. Two of the ACLOs are on long-term sick leave at the moment.

We have been working across the State through the community development employment program [CDEP], which is a three-way approach. Unemployed Aboriginal people would like to become an ACLO one day, if a position comes up, so we provide training and induction. They can stay in for three months and then an assessment is done.

Also, by using the community development employment program, we have successes in that some of the participants have joined as sworn officers, a couple have gained positions as ACLOs, and some have gone on to other organisations in very well-paid positions. The CDEP is also supportive of the ACLO's role. I am concerned about the understanding of ACLOs and also about the understanding of police and their direct supervisors of the role of ACLOs. So we have workshops throughout the regional areas on professional development days for ACLOs and crime co-ordinators, their direct line of supervision, to make sure that they understand the role of the ACLO and to make sure that they understand the supervision of non-sworn officers. They have different conditions of employment but they also come under different awards.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I asked a witness earlier how many ACLOs go into a command. How is that done, given that at the moment we are talking about four ACLOs in Redfern and a different spread elsewhere? I understand that different area commands have different populations and so on. Could you expand a little on that?

Ms PETERS: Yes. Initially, it was based on the Aboriginal population. So if there is a large Aboriginal population, the commander in the community will put a submission and say, "We need an ACLO." Sometimes they are given a position and they will probably focus on Redfern a bit. Up until 1993 there were two positions. But because of the political and media focus on Redfern, in particular, and because people were saying it was an Aboriginal problem, another position was created in Redfern and the fourth position was also created because of what they were calling the so-called Aboriginal problem.

In other areas, for example, the Barrier local area command in Broken Hill, there are seven. But they are stationed at different police stations. They are stationed in three areas—Wilcannia, Dareton and Broken Hill. They have seven ACLOs. It depends, first, on the population and, second, on the statistics that are shown. As I said earlier, with the imprisonment of Aboriginal women we need a gender balance. Having 56 ACLOs and only seven of them women makes it unequal. There are big issues with domestic violence and sexual assault in Aboriginal communities. Could I just go back to a question that was asked earlier about the States and whether they had similar programs?

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms PETERS: Every State, including the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, have an ACLO or an Aboriginal liaison officers program. Victoria and Tasmania do not have one at the moment. Tasmania has an Aboriginal unit. Victoria is about to introduce the program. They did a nationwide research and they conducted a survey to determine the best program. They are taking the New South Wales model and will introduce it in Victoria early next year. In Western Australia, if they are in uniform they have certain powers of arrest while they are on duty. They have handcuffs, batons and mace, similar to the position in the Territories. They call different areas different titles. Queensland is similar in that it has uniforms similar to the police.

South Australia is the same. Normally, they are selected on their language groups and the community that they need to service. In the Territories ACLOs who have a different language might not be able to go to the community to which the police require them to go. They can do other duties, like police officers, such as issuing speeding tickets and tickets for traffic offences. The program in New South Wales is purely a liaison program to improve police and Aboriginal relationships. They are gathering people together and they are trying to encourage them to interact with police and vice versa. So they are getting the police to go into the community as well to meet people. It is a very difficult role. It will take time to improve it to what the community and the police department require.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Are all the ACLOs employed by the police department? In the ACT are they employed by the police department?

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Ms PETERS: Yes, they are. We are all employed by the police. We are civilians and the others are sort of semi, if you can call it that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In relation to statistics about turnover of staff and the women ACLOs, is there a big turnover in the number of staff right cross New South Wales or do people stay in those positions for a substantial time?

Ms PETERS: There has been some turnover. It is not considerable turnover of staff. There are a lot of reasons why people are leaving the role of the ACLO. They may have moved on to another position they might like better. It could be a promotion. Some feel that they have done enough to try to improve the relationship and that they need to move on again. There are personal reasons why they leave. A lot of the ACLOs—I have got a pretty good rapport with the majority of them—enjoy the work. They need guidance, direction and to be part of the team. So the teambuilding exercise which we are carrying out now is helping them a lot more. They welcome the idea of having a line of command with the crime management unit because it is an operational area but also an area where you can have programs to improve those relationships. So they feel part of the team now.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have you read the Coburn report?

Ms PETERS: Not fully, no. I have not read the whole report.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have you read the part referring to ACLOs and their role.

Ms PETERS: Yes, I had a quick look.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I thought you might. It suggests that the police are wanting ACLOs to take an investigative role. Is that how you read it?

Ms PETERS: No. I read it as part of going out—I think I mentioned this earlier—to encourage Aboriginal people to be part of the policing issues that surround or affect Aboriginal communities. If, for argument's sake, an incident happens the ACLOs, having the connection with or networking within that community, would probably know. One of the ACLOs this morning said that they went down to Redfern, for argument sake, to come back and advise the police on the best way to handle certain instances. If they get information like "I am going down to break into the shop tonight", to tell the police is not their role. Their role would be to say to that person, "If you are thinking of doing that I think you better think again. If you do that and you get caught in you can be arrested."

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You think in the Coburn report there is an expectation of police suggested, which is that they should take a more intelligence role?

Ms PETERS: No, I do not read it like that, probably because I know the role of the ACLO and I have been out with the local area commands. The majority of local area commands do not request that or require that of the ACLO at all.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: And if they were requiring that you would say that it is an abuse of the ACLO position?

Ms PETERS: Yes. I advise ACLOs that if they believe that it is not their role then they should say that it is not their role. So they can say that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is fairly significant, though, that one of the four positions is not filled; one is on secondment to Marrickville under somewhat tense circumstances and two of the three remaining are off on stress leave.

Ms PETERS: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That would suggest that the ACLO positions in the Redfern LAC are not working very well, would it not?

Ms PETERS: It could suggest it to people that probably do not know the role of the ACLOs, first. In the past ACLOs did not have a proper line of command. So they are not part of a particular unit within that command.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But whether you understood the ACLOs—

CHAIR: And now?

Ms PETERS: Now we are working towards improving that with a line of command so that the ACLOs, through the professional development days that we are running. And the line of command knows what the ACLO role is. We talk about the Aboriginal people being able to help all Aboriginal people. What I would like the Committee to understand is that we are a very diverse group. Within a particular area, township whatever you like to call it—this is past history—Aboriginal people were just plonked into an area with a different language group, different ideas and different tribes. It is no different today. Even though we speak English, the Aboriginal language is our first language, of course. Some of us do still speak that language. The demands of different diverse Aboriginal groups can impinge on the role of the ACLOs. Expecting them, because they are Aboriginal people, to look at all Aboriginal issues shows a lack of understanding of the makeup of the Aboriginal people. That is one area.

Another area is gender issues. If you have a female and three males then the issue would come to gender where the female would feel isolated from the rest. That is another area. Supervision of ACLOs is another area. There is demand from people from all areas—the Aboriginal community and organisations that deliver services also to the aboriginal people. The Aboriginal background is in our makeup in the traditional sense that we still bring into our contemporary lives and all these other things need to be taken into consideration. There could be reasons that there is a bit of a split, if you like to call it, between ACLOs if there is a large group of ACLOs working together.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But the problem is not necessarily between the ACLOs. It seems, cultural issues notwithstanding, that the problem is the role the police are asking the ACLOs to do in the Redfern LAC at the moment. Would you concede that?

Ms PETERS: It is a problem in the sense—I did say this twice before, I think—that the management and the professional development base say to the ACLOs, "This is your role" and say to the crime co-ordinator, "This is the ACLOs' role. This is how you need to be supervising the ACLOs." So there is a misunderstanding in the supervisory area, in the position that the ACLOs are required to do from their statement of duties—the sworn officers supervising a non-sworn officer.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the Redfern LAC?

Ms PETERS: In all LACs.

CHAIR: Could I interrupt for a second? We have these questions here.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, 9, 10 and 11 are the ones I am asking. This is right on the button. This is what I am talking about.

CHAIR: Over the page, actually, 11 and 12.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That too.

CHAIR: You have asked parts of them but not all of them. I think there was a prior question that we did not ask. Did you have any input into the Coburn report, given that some of these recommendations that Arthur is asking you about quite specifically involve you and your role? Did you have any input at all into it?

Ms PETERS: I did, into the traditional grievances when a death occurs in an Aboriginal community.

CHAIR: But not in relation to the questions about forging community links or what you have just been saying about the management and the relationship between the police and ACLOs and so on. Were you consulted about those recommendations that appear on page 91 of the report? For example, one states that local cultural awareness programs, including issues associated with the grievance process, be continued with your assistance. You had an input into that.

Ms PETERS: Yes.

CHAIR: What about the broader issues about the performance and direction of the ACLOs at the Redfern LAC? Did you have any input into that?

Ms PETERS: No, that is a local issue for the command. I provide any support and assistance that is required by the commander or the ACLOs.

CHAIR: Has progress been made on these recommendations?

Ms PETERS: Yes, I will be working from Redfern for two weeks as of next Monday looking at the program and what projects could be introduced to support the ACLO in her role in Redfern. We will be attending the Aboriginal cultural awareness program in partnership with Tranby College at Glebe.

CHAIR: We visited Tranby College this morning and heard a bit about the plans.

Ms PETERS: I will be the facilitator at that course next week, on Tuesday.

CHAIR: What progress has been made in filling the one or two ACLO positions at Redfern that have been advertised?

Ms PETERS: There is one position. We held interviews two or three months ago. There was no suitable applicant, so it has been re-advertised.

CHAIR: It is still in the advertising stage.

Ms PETERS: In the regrouping process, yes.

The Hon. IAN WEST: What is your status in terms of the Police Force? To whom do you report?

Ms PETERS: I report to the manager of the Aboriginal co-ordination team, which is part of the operation policy and programs unit and is under the operation support command. I report directly to the manager of the team.

The Hon. IAN WEST: Who is that?

Ms PETERS: Peter Laylor, who is an unsworn officer.

The Hon. IAN WEST: When you are dealing with an ACLO—providing support and supervision—what is your relationship in the command? If there is a difficulty are you able to speak to the commander with some authority?

Ms PETERS: I have done in the past across all commands. Sometimes problems fester and we do not hear about them until they are really big. I have the confidence and also the support of my own command to be able to talk to the commander frankly and to come to some agreement or, not necessarily to fix the problem, but to work towards an understanding.

The Hon. IAN WEST: You would expect them to listen to you.

Ms PETERS: They do.

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The Hon. IAN WEST: Can the Committee obtain a copy of the program for the professional development course?

CHAIR: Is there something in the system?

Ms PETERS: Yes.

CHAIR: Perhaps you can take that question on notice and provide it to the secretary. I refer back to questions six and seven. You may have checked this for the Committee or you may have to take the question on notice. We referred to the recommendations of the alcohol summit, which suggested an increase in the number of ACLOs, particularly women. Have those recommendations been acted on? In the Government response to the alcohol summit recommendations it was stated that the Government would be commissioning an independent review of the ACLO program and so on. Have you been able to check what progress has been made on those recommendations?

Ms PETERS: The 12 positions we put up for a Treasury bid were to be targeted for females.

CHAIR: That is the answer to question six.

Ms PETERS: Yes.

CHAIR: Are you aware whether the independent review has made any progress?

Ms PETERS: The ACLO program?

CHAIR: Yes. That was announced in the Government document on the alcohol summit dated May this year.

Ms PETERS: My understanding that that is about how we identify areas for ACLOs in certain commands.

CHAIR: Are you aware of whether someone else has been commissioned to carry out a review?

Ms PETERS: No.

CHAIR: Perhaps you can get some information from the police about that, or we may have to ask the Cabinet office staff who serviced the summit. I did not ask whether you wanted to make an opening statement. Do you wish to make a closing statement?

Ms PETERS: Within my role, while I am the ACLO State co-ordinator, I am spread thinly because we address other issues. I would like to be 100 per cent with the program because it is so big. It has been around for a long time. It could be better and more effective in the local area commands, particularly in the Aboriginal co-ordination team. We look at all issues involving Aboriginal people and police. There are big issues. There are large community and police expectations about improving Aboriginal relationships in general. We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

CHAIR: There is a lot of pressure on you.

Ms PETERS: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee.

MARY ELIZABETH GILLESPIE, Vine and Hugo Action Group, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Have you received the questions the Committee sent?

Ms GILLESPIE: Yes.

CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms GILLESPIE: No.

CHAIR: Why was the group formed? When was it formed? How many members are there? What is it all about?

Ms GILLESPIE: We are all generally long-term residents of the area. Our group was set up because of intolerable circumstances. We were intimidated, threatened and harassed by children as young as six or seven on an ongoing basis. The event that triggered the group's formation occurred in March 2002. A group of young children effectively rioted at the bottom of Hugo Street, Redfern. They smashed car and house windows along the bottom of the street one weekend afternoon. That triggered a group of us who had known each other well enough to say hello or perhaps to have a chat to get together and compile a contact list for the neighbours. It was a list of telephone numbers and email addresses. If you were at home by yourself and you were not certain what was going on outside your front door, or were too afraid to open it, or your front window had been smashed, there was someone you could call.

And they would either talk you through it, call the police or even come and see and check that you are okay. That then developed into a more formal group, a organised group of probably half a dozen of us, where we decided that if we wanted to continue to live in the area we had to get involved. If that involved fronting up to council meetings, trying to meet the right people, trying to get in contact with the right people at the police to get more action that was what we needed to do. We actually felt underrepresented. We were told time and time again that "Yes, we have consulted your area, we have spoken to the AHC" and more than half the residents in the area are non-AHC residents.

CHAIR: In your submission you go into more detail about the range of your concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour in the area. Would you give us a picture of what you see is the major problems in Redfern and Waterloo?

Ms GILLESPIE: With crime and antisocial behaviour?

CHAIR: Yes, but you can go beyond that and look at other factors that contribute to that.

Ms GILLESPIE: I suppose the immediate issues that we have to deal with are generally crime and antisocial behaviour. Clearly drug dealing is a huge issue in that whole area at this particular point. That seems to bring hand-in-hand with it, property theft and crime. We see antisocial behaviour where I cannot walk along Caroline Street and up Eveleigh Street to Redfern station at 7.00 a.m. without being referred to as a "white fucking cunt" which quite frankly is more than I really need at that hour. We have had death threats. We have had vilification. We have had residents open their front door after it has been knocked on, only to get spat in the face by young children. We find that this sort of behaviour seems to cover most age groups. Young children, as was the core of our submission, are very much a large part of our problem. There seems to be widespread vandalism and general lawlessness and I suppose that is typified by the fact that if someone wants to run from the police or the authorities, they run to The Block.

I do not technically live on The Block. I live two streets away but I can clearly see it from my front door. We see regular harassment and intimidation, arson—attempted and successful—widespread vandalism. There is no escaping the feeling if you live there that the rules and laws that apply to the rest of society do not apply to that area, and that is a sweeping statement. I would expect to be fined if I dropped my rubbish out the front of the house and not in a garbage bin. It does not seem to worry anyone else. It does not seem to worry some residents or some people living there.

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Light a fire in the middle of a vacant block? Why not? And that is just part of the sort of thing that we see day-to-day. Obviously our submission goes into a lot more detail.

CHAIR: Do you believe the problems experienced in the area are worse than they were five years ago? If so, why?

Ms GILLESPIE: Definitely yes. I actually moved into the area 11½ years ago and quite frankly when I moved in the drug problem on The Block was alcohol. There could well have been some heroin taking on some level, and possibly even some dealing, but it was certainly not at the level that we have seen come up. Five years ago things were certainly better than they are now. We had a long, hard think about it when I was called for this and we decided that really about two years ago—and it was the ongoing group of events that triggered our formation—we really decided was probably some of the worst times that we had seen.

There was widespread dealing. There were easily identifiable drug houses. The police appeared to be powerless or not making a great deal of the impact at that stage. It was not unusual to walk down the street and see a taxi just stopped in the middle of the street with all its doors open and no-one to be seen. What do you do? You phone it in. Yes, it certainly was better five years ago than it is now. In fact, 11½ years ago to 5 years ago things were gradually improving. But also we sought additional situations such as, approximately two years ago the AHC made an offer to residents who wanted to be relocated out of the area. The majority of those residents took it—I think the facts are maybe 70-80 per cent of the AHC residents took it—and what that left was a whole lot of empty houses which itinerants moved into, which turned into shooting galleries, and were left to fall into even further disrepair providing bricks and building debris which was used as ammunition against police. There were a whole group of circumstances that really made things probably at the very worst a couple of years ago. Obviously some things have started to improve since then.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Were they Aboriginal residents on The Block being moved by the AHC or were they non-Aboriginal residents and the AHC was buying extra land?

Ms GILLESPIE: I meant the AHC residents on The Block were, I believe, given an offer a couple of years ago which was "Would you like to be relocated?"

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That left empty houses that have been a much worse problem than when he lived in them?

Ms GILLESPIE: Yes, and certainly it seemed to be the families with young children who were concerned about what the children were being exposed who were the ones who wanted to move out. That again, further skews the socioeconomic and cultural mix in the area, I felt. We would often say "Who are the people who want to stay?" Why did they want to stay? And that was certainly a question we were asking.

CHAIR: If you had to sum up these problems in one word would you say heroin?

Ms GILLESPIE: I would say heroin is a very large part of the problem. The Block is often regarded as an indigenous problem but, quite frankly, I see it as a socioeconomic one. I am sure you have toured the area. I am sure you have seen the state of the area, the environment and the buildings. You cannot tell me that that is a positive environment for people to live in.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In your submission you talk about the truancy of children?

Ms GILLESPIE: Absolutely.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You say that six-year-old children should be at school and they are either not in school or they are unsupervised to all hours of the night?

Ms GILLESPIE: Absolutely.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would you say there has been a complete failure of education to get them into school and for the DOCS to look after them at other times?

Ms GILLESPIE: We have repeatedly phoned in situations, such as unsupervised young children out the street at 2 o'clock in the morning, children who are repeat truants, et cetera, to the DOCS and the Department of Education and we do not see any adequate response. Obviously there is privacy legislation which means that they cannot tell us what they are actually doing, if anything, but we certainly have not seen a change in that situation. It is a cliché, children are our future, but they are.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are there any NGOs that you would think might be doing something or is the structure of the NGO something with which you are not familiar?

Ms GILLESPIE: I am familiar with some of the NGOs. My understanding is that Barnardo's are running a family liaison program that seems to have been making some sort of impact. But we see a lot of the roles that I would expect the DOCS and the Department of Education to step in and deal with often dealt with by the police. There are youth liaison officers to pick up the kids. They go on the school bus to try to get them to school of a morning because there are a couple of buses that come and pick them up in the morning to go to either Darlington or down to Alexandria and we see them take them up to the pool or Nippers in summer. As you are aware from our submission, we have had ongoing quite serious problems with young children. We have seen them respond to our call and attempt to engage these children who may not have been at school all week. They are bored and next thing you do you see a pile of rocks, you chuck it at people or houses, whatever, or you set fire to trees.

We see the police actually turn up, and they appear to engage the children in an attempt to talk to them. I know they are clearly powerless in terms of charging people who are under 10 years of age, and I understand they have limited powers to take children to a so-called safe place if they cannot go home.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If they take the children to school, do the children come straight back, or do they appear to stay at school?

Ms GILLESPIE: To the best of my knowledge, they generally go for the day, but certainly not all of them. But there are the two school buses that come around every school day morning and pick up the kids. I know that one of the police liaison officers often rides with the police and will go in and see if they can get the kids into the bus and on their way to school.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: You commented on the situation when things have gotten worse. Clearly, the impetus for this inquiry was the riot in February. Since then have things gotten worse or better, or have they stayed the same, in the area?

Ms GILLESPIE: Clearly, the time immediately after the riot was fairly sensitive; everyone seemed on edge in the area, regardless of who they were. Since then there has been one significant issue as far as one of our large problems with some of the children is concerned, where those children are no longer in the area. That, together with many of the instances we refer to in our submission, has made a visible difference.

There may have been more intervention, of which I am not aware, with families to ensure that the children who remain in the area will remain with their parents, and will be more closely monitored by either government or non-government agencies. But the removal of those four children from our area has made a very significant difference. That is just with that area.

I know there have been ongoing drug raids—you cannot miss them—and that, too, seems to have depleted some of that. Sydney City Council seems to have stepped in to ensure that the area is cleared of rubble. A lot of very basic things that contribute towards a better environment—for example, painting over the graffiti on the AHC housing—have all helped.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Last week I suggested to the Minister for Community Services that DOCS had failed families in Redfern. The Minister denied that, and she said the community had failed families in Redfern. What is your view?

Ms GILLESPIE: What happens if the families are failing? Is that not where DOCS is supposed to step in?

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: DOCS has stepped in with one family. This Committee—although I can only speak for myself—wants some outcomes from this inquiry, and to be able to say we have contributed in some way to the welfare of people in Redfern. What do you see as some of the solutions to the ongoing problems with people, particularly in your area?

Ms GILLESPIE: With regard to the children, personally I feel that DOCS and the Department of Education—because education is important to everyone's future—should be taking a considerably more proactive role. For instance, regarding the situation with the family with the four children who were eventually removed, two years prior we had started reporting them as what we perceive as children at risk. So if it takes two years, imagine the damage it must be doing to these children. And that is just with these children.

Dennis Smith's command, Redfern police, have made a huge difference. As we have outlined in our submission, we found them more proactive with crime. Visible policing works. It certainly has been making a difference. They are taking a very active approach with the drug dealing in the drug houses. I am sure they are as frustrated as we are with the ongoing presence of the needle van. They have made a huge difference. Quite frankly, we have seen the police step in where I would perceive it should have been DOCS' role.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: One of the Government's responses to issues in Redfern-Waterloo was the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, which received an enormous amount of funding and continues to receive funding. Do you know anything of that project, and if so what is your view about it?

Ms GILLESPIE: Yes, we are aware of it. We have had a fair number of dealings with the Redfern-Waterloo partnership, because they were in start-up stage just as we decided that we really needed to get together and really get involved. Obviously, one of our first places to call was the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project.

We have been dealing with Michael Ramsay and his team on and off for the past couple of years. I think they have an incredibly difficult job. We communicate with them endlessly, and we are a tiny fraction of their population in the area they cover—obviously, we would be one of the more fractious ones. A lot of their time seems to be consumed with battling bureaucracy and red tape, and trying to get various agencies to work together. We have always had fairly open communication with them, and we have found that they have been able to help us out within their ability.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: When you say help you out, what do you mean?

Ms GILLESPIE: For instance, prior to Mark Goodwin, and then Dennis Smith, we were having problems being regarded seriously by the staff at Redfern police station. That was one of the key issues we raised. We said, "We can have families in their backyard and there are kids lobbing half bricks over the fence. Is there something we can do?" We want to be taken seriously. We do not want to be asked, "Why do you live here" when the police eventually turn up. We want them to understand that it is a problem for us and that we live here as well. That was one issue we took to them.

Once Mark Goodwin was installed—although he was not there for very long—the first thing Michael Ramsay's office did was organise for us to come down and have a meeting with him and his team. Also, once Dennis Smith was involved, that helped us communicate more clearly with the right people at the police, and that has helped improve our relationship with them. Having said that, I cannot speak highly enough of Dennis Smith's dealings with us.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Do you have any comments to make in relation to the Committee's interim report?

Ms GILLESPIE: Just a couple. We obviously applaud your recommendation that the needle van be moved. Regardless of other evidence given in the interim report, I have personally seen dealers walk their customers up to the van to get needles. I have seen dealers use the van's phone, which is supposedly for community use, to do whatever. Obviously, now not only is it positioned in a residential area, it is directly opposite a children's playground.

The other thing I would specifically like to comment on is the AHC, which I know has been covered thoroughly in your earlier hearings. As I think we have made quite clear in our submission, we see that they have really failed their community and the wider community. They seem to be quite happy to let the houses fall derelict, with rat infestations, mice infestations, derelict buildings left for years and years until another agency steps in and says something must be done about it. For instance, Michael Ramsay and his team may work with council to ensure that those houses are demolished.

What typifies it is the back of their own building, which is on the corner of Eveleigh Street and Lawson Street. A downstairs wall was partly opened, and was open for years, and the back of the building was used as a squat and a shooting gallery. This is their own building in which their offices are contained, one floor up, and they did not seem to want to do anything to improve their own building, let alone that of their residents. We see that they have continually failed in their mandated mission to provide accommodation for people. We think that perhaps other options could be explored for a redevelopment of the Block. For instance, Tranby and Eora are apparently looking for extra space. Why not break the cycle, expand their colleges there and perhaps put in some accommodation as well for students who come from interstate or from out of the metropolitan area?

CHAIR: So, cease to have it as an ordinary residential area?

Ms GILLESPIE: The Block has failed in various forms and ways, to the best of my knowledge, for 30 years. I really do not see how they are going to make it work this time.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What would you like to see happen in the short term and then in the long term in relation to Redfern-Waterloo?

Ms GILLESPIE: In the long term, I suppose what I want to see is an area that is vibrant and diverse and one which we are all happy and proud to be part of, regardless of who we are. Short term, there are some fairly obvious things, about continuing to tackle drug dealing in our area; move the needle van; and try to work out some redevelopment plan for the Block that will bring something back to the community and be a positive thing, rather than what it currently is. Active policing and active involvement or intervention of agencies such as DOCS or non-government organisations such as Barnardos could help with the work with families. In one particular family that we know Barnardos are already working with we have already seen a difference. They provide support to the family unit as it is, so why not see if that support can be extended further than it currently does to the Department of Education and truancy issues? If children do not learn to read by the time they are 12, surely that has to impact on their future. In the Block as it is, the positive adult role models are drug dealers. We come back to the cliché: Our children are our future.

CHAIR: As we have no further questions, and you have covered the issues that we asked you about, we thank you very much for your attendance and for your evidence to the Committee.

(The witness withdrew.)

GEOFFREY JAMES TURNBULL and

LYN MARGARET TURNBULL, private citizens, sworn and examined:

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

Mr TURNBULL: As a private individual.

Ms TURNBULL: As an individual.

CHAIR: The Committee sent you some questions, and you will have had time to look at those, and we have received your submission. Most of us are regular perusers of your e-mails and your web site, so we have a fair idea of the kinds of things you have been doing. You might take this opportunity to make an opening statement to tell us why you are interested in Redfern-Waterloo, and who you believe you represent if anyone other than yourselves, so that we know who you are.

Mr TURNBULL: We have included an appendix to our submission to give you a little bit of background. We have been in the area for about 26 years. We have been actively involved in a range of activities that have taken place in Redfern over that time and seen lots of changes. I originally came to Redfern as a person who was at university and became involved in an ecumenical organisation that was working in the area on broader justice and human development issues, and decided to live there. I went on to work in aid and development areas, and in particular looking at issues of equity and social development in Australia and in the third world. We have brought up children in the area who have gone to Darlington Primary School. They have grown up with people on the Block and gone to high schools outside the area. We have been absolutely appalled at the lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues by many people who do not grow up in a situation where they are mixing daily with Aboriginal people. In general, we come from a philosophical position of being concerned for people who are not able to make their voices heard, and historically we have tried to be involved in lending support where we can.

CHAIR: Whom do you believe you represent—just yourselves or do you think you speak on behalf of others?

Mr TURNBULL: When we put our e-mails around we do not try to speak on behalf of anybody else. We are involved in a couple of different organisations. Most recently, I have become involved in Red Watch, a group that has been trying to keep tabs on what the partnership is doing in Redfern-Waterloo. Lyn has been involved for quite some time in Redfern Residents for Reconciliation, has been involved on the Settlement Management Committee, and has been involved in a range of different things, including discussions on the setting up of the Redfern Community Centre and the early discussions about the Wilson brothers site. So, in general, we have been involved in the area, and we find that our views are shared by a lot of people. In particular, we came to put out the e-mails primarily because we discovered that many people did not have access to regular information about what was happening in the area, not even those in agency circles. So it now goes out to 300-odd different people who have an interest in some way in Redfern, whether in terms of agencies, residents, people on parliamentary committees, people at the partnership, consultants employed by the partnership—anybody who has an interest in the area—so that everybody knows, as far as we can find out, what is happening.

CHAIR: You say in your submission in relation to the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project that many of the problems in the area will remain unless the partnership project finds out how people who live in the area see the different problems and the solutions. Can you fill us in a bit more on that? Tell us about the contact you have had with the project and whether the consultation process that has been carried out has been adequate, or what they should be doing?

Mr TURNBULL: To start off with, it is probably useful to note that when we put our submission together, and when most of the other submissions were put together, we did not know as much about the partnership as we now know. From our perspective, one of the successes has been that there has been a whole-of-government report, and that report has told people a lot more than we were able to get out of the partnership before this. In fact, if you look at our submission, you will find that

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we were pulling information from the web site, information which in some cases was very different from what was put in the whole-of-government inquiry—

CHAIR: The submission to our inquiry.

Mr TURNBULL: Yes, in the submission to this inquiry. I would have to say that if we were writing it now, there are some things we would change in terms of some of the comments that we would make; but, in terms of our overall impression, I guess that probably would not have changed much. In terms of place management our initial involvement in that was when Clover became the local member for the area and Lyn was involved in taking her down the back lane.

Ms TURNBULL: Caroline Lane. And her shock at the drug dealing in the area and the fact that she felt at that stage that even though she had been representing the Cross for as many years as she had, that she had not seen a situation that was as out in the open as she found in the lane that afternoon.

CHAIR: This is 1998/99, is it?

Ms TURNBULL: This was in the September before we moved into her electorate.

Mr TURNBULL: And she was talking at that point about looking at place management-type approaches, and obviously we were also aware in the run-up to the partnership, when they were stoning buses down in Waterloo, that the Government was moving in that area. But I guess we were not really engaged with the whole issue until the RED strategy material started to appear, and all the social issues that were raised as part of that were also put on a separate list across the side that says that is the Redfern-Waterloo partnership's responsibility. So Lyn made a call one day to the partnership—

Ms TURNBULL: And all I was told was, "Yes, it is a couple of bureaucrats trying to work out how government can get together to solve the area's problems".

Mr TURNBULL: But the list kept being added to in terms of what was coming out in the RED consultations, and everything people were talking about at that point was RED. So we were trying to understand what was happening on this. In particular, what we were saying was that it is all very nice to look at the built environment questions and how we can make improvements in that and how that might then eventually impact back on the situation of people living in the area, but you also need to be asking those same sorts of questions as far as what is happening on the social side.

At the December community forum we asked the question—because they had just sat down and gone through a process of identifying the major problems as far as RED—and we were saying there was a need to do the same thing for the community as far as social services in the area, and no-one at that point mentioned anything about there being a human services review that was being planned, or whatever. So we have had this involvement, I guess, in terms of trying to find out what is happening and asking questions about what has not been happening or what we have not been able to get more information on, and over that period of time started to become some of the few people around the place that really were following things step-by-step. Then the newsletter or email basically sort of grew out of that.

When the human services review started our amazement was that the partnership had been working in the area for as long as it had and yet it had not actually gone and mapped the services, that the partnership could not provide to the consultants, when they came in, a list of the services even that were in the area. We found that absolutely amazing. The other thing we found amazing was that if you were going to move in and do something in the area, the first thing I would have thought you would have done would be to go through and actually map out what the services were, map what the needs are, look at what research had already been done and then pull all that together and say, "All right, what do we need to do to meet that?" That clearly did not happen, and we are still in the process of waiting to see what comes out of that.

I guess our concern at the present moment is that we have gone through a silence for the last nine months because everything has been getting ready to go before Cabinet. We have had the human

services review material that has gone through a consultation, but that information has not come back to the community. The RED stuff was supposed to come back in February and we are still waiting to see it, and in that time the partnership is not talking to people; they are not engaging the community. So we end up with a really funny sort of structure, as we look at it, where if the Government is talking about it inside itself it goes on and on and on, but if there is a community consultation that community consultation is expected to happen within a month or two so that they can get the answers back and then go back into what the Government wants to do.

So our concern is—and I notice it is a concern coming out in what has been said here in the front in terms of they are asking questions still, as far as this Committee is concerned, about the partnership—I think there are some serious issues that need to be looked at. You have flagged the resources one. The resources one is an important one because it is not only resources in terms of what might happen as far as the services in the area, which is an important one, and when they did the human services review they said, "We are going to base it on the fact that we are not going to put any more resources into the area", that somehow problems can be solved by better organising the resources that are currently there. The issue for us is that if there has been an increase in the need within the community, both because of the rundown of the housing company and the buildings on the Block, and an increase in need in terms of people who are living in public housing because the Commonwealth/State arrangements have changed for putting people into that housing that have higher needs, if there has not been an increase in the funding and the services available to actually supply that, then there may well need to be an increase in resources that are available.

So that is one aspect of that resources question. The second part of it is if you are going to set up something like the partnership and it is going to be involved in everyday nuts and bolts sorts of things, you have to actually resource the secretariat properly. If it is going to be sitting there writing and drafting out letters for the Premier's Department every time there is a blow-up, if it is going to be involved in ongoing crisis activities, that part of it has to be properly resourced. Then, if you are going to actually have a communications strategy, that has to be properly resourced, as does if you are going to then move on and have community consultation. You look at the statement from the Premier's Department and they say that the last two of those, that is, the communications and the consultation strategy, have been pushed to one side because of the need for resources going into the other areas.

From our perspective, and this gets back to the question—I am sorry, I have gone a long way around that—if you are going to engage the community you have to make resources available to do that, and that is something that does take time and that, hence, needs those sorts of resources.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Would you think then that the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Program was funded adequately initially and is continuing to be adequately funded?

Mr TURNBULL: No, I do not think it is. It depends on what you do with the funding. Initially I think there was a need to put money into some services on the ground to immediately be seen to apply some sort of a fix. And then there was also a structural process that was happening to try and look at what could happen with Government departments.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: There has been some criticism of a lack of performance indicators and evaluation of the partnership program but continued funding commitments made to it. What is your view of that?

Mr TURNBULL: There has to be some way of being able to assess whether or not what the partnership is doing is actually achieving the aims that it set out to do. You do need to have definite performance indicators, and those performance indicators will need to be not only in terms of the services that they provide but the extent to which they are engaged in the community.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER: Do you think there are performance indicators that would suggest, therefore, that funding should continue at the level—

Mr TURNBULL: I think there needs to be something that continues. I think one of the major problems that Redfern-Waterloo has had is that it has been in the political too-hard basket. You have had a situation historically where the local member that covered the Block, who was Andrew Refshauge at the time, had a number of the hats; it was as close as you could actually get to having

different departments come together in one spot. People did not want to get involved in the Aboriginal politics; they did not want to choose sides in the exercise, and, frankly, that is still an issue as far as the Aboriginal Housing Company at the present moment, that you have got people not wanting to get into bed with the Aboriginal Housing Company for a number of different reasons.

Somewhere the Government has to be engaged, and one of the greatest things that happened in the Block over the last little while was that you have now got the Redfern Community Centre there. When that proposal was put together council did not want to actually run that, it wanted to set it up and have somebody else to do it. Now that council is actually in there and having to run it, it is engaged in the area, it has to face the daily issues of what happens there; it cannot walk away from it. That means that it then has to start looking at how it uses its resources to address the issues that it has. It is not somebody else's problem, and if it fails you blame them.

CHAIR: What do you want to see come out of the human services review? The second part of that question relates to the major issues facing the area in relation to both government and non-government services.

Mr TURNBULL: I want to see a more integrated system, but I also want to see one that is capable of maintaining the diversity. I do not think you can do something that is going to be a one hat fits all. That is one of the worries I have in terms of the pressure to try to do away with a number of organisations and put them together into single programs. But I think we also have to recognise that there is an important part to be played by non-governmental organisations, that they are able to respond, quite often, much more quickly than what government can. There is a very interesting story in the whole-of-government report about a proposal coming out of one of the meetings, or some of the meetings that were held after the incident where it was decided to provide grief counselling to children who are friends of TJ. It was thought this would be a good thing to do. So they went and asked Aboriginal organisations for expressions of interest. Two came back and made their interest known and, unable to choose between the two, the partnership then went off and asked another Aboriginal body as to who was most able to do this. Three months later, presumably when the report is put together, there had not been a response.

Ms TURNBULL: Why cannot both be used? They were two very different organisations with a completely different interface with the community. There is not one solution for this area. You are the Redfern-Waterloo Committee. That is two different communities. The issues on The Block, which, obviously, triggered what happened with the setting up of this Committee inquiry may have been specific to that area. But changes in the area relating to the pressure that is felt by public housing tenants, the pressure that is felt by people with co-dependency problems in the area are not all around The Block.

Mr TURNBULL: In this particular case they were, and it was Mudgigal and the Aboriginal Medical Service who both said, yes, we will provide the service—it is page 282 for those who are not familiar with it—and unable to do it they went to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and asked them who was best to do it. In the report to date we have not received a response to that. It was far too—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is a disgrace that nothing has happened, basically, is it not?

Mr TURNBULL: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Counselling has to happen quickly. That is the key essence of it.

Mr TURNBULL: That underlines the issue. Government brings certain strengths to providing improved services in the area, but the NGOs also do in terms of their closeness to the things on the ground. One of the things that worries me is that if we are going to have greater government involvement, which I think we do, we also need to have that being much more transparent, it being—

Ms TURNBULL: Accountable.

Mr TURNBULL: —accountable in terms of back into the community in the way in which the non-governmental organisations are.

CHAIR: Do you think the problems in the area are worse than they were, say, five years ago? We asked the previous witness this question about the changes over time. Are there more recent improvements? I know it is a simple answer to a complex area.

Ms TURNBULL: Perhaps different. And I think it really is often a shifting problem. Somebody feels that it is in their backyard so they sort of make the comment about it in a particular context, so whilst ever we want to shift it on, the issues are not being dealt with head on, I suppose.

CHAIR: From your point of view have the problems got worse, whether we are talking about the socioeconomic situation, the public housing in Waterloo or on The Block, for instance, or whether we are talking about crime and social problems, or drug taking?

Mr TURNBULL: Certainly the denuding of families from The Block caused the loss of a lot of the traditional controls that were happening. You had families who were active in the community.

Ms TURNBULL: Aboriginal families.

Mr TURNBULL: Aboriginal families who were active in organisations and in the area.

Ms TURNBULL: Actually living there.

Mr TURNBULL: And bringing their kids up there, and as the housing stock deteriorated, as problems increased, as people tried to encourage them to move out so that they could actually do something, you lost a lot of the controlling mechanisms that were there. I remember one instance many years ago with a character who used to come into the area, a great big person, ran a group of children. He was basically a Fagan-type character. He used to go around and knock in doors and then send the kids in to pinch stuff on the basis that the best that he could get done for was break-in and the best that they could get done for was entry. The police did not sort out that problem out. That was actually sorted out by some of the Aboriginal people down The Block because he was providing a bad name for them and they were being blamed for it. But those sorts of mechanisms that operated, say, 10 or 20 years ago have become less and less. Yes, alcohol—when we moved into the area many years ago, alcohol was the issue down our back lane. Then when the needle bus was there and it was used as a shooting gallery it was people shooting up. Then it became quiet because the needle bus moved. It has started to become a bit more active now that people are starting to use the lane again because there are not the vacant houses able to be used on The Block. It changes over time.

CHAIR: What would you like to see happen there? I think the Hon. Kayee Griffin asked this question before of our previous witness. What would you like to see happen in the short term and the long term?

Mr TURNBULL: I would like to see the partnership project, or something like it, work. I do not think it will solve itself. If you have an area where you increase the number of people with social disadvantages, as you do currently, under the housing agreements in public housing and if you do not solve the problem of the redevelopment of The Block—

CHAIR: So there has to be an overriding and a place space.

Mr TURNBULL: There has to be something that happens. Yes. There has to be a place space, and there will be. The Premier's comments, looking at what will happen in Redfern over the next 25 years and seeing it as a southern extension of the city and a whole lot of things that are on the agenda as far as planning means that there is going to be a huge amount of change that happens right through that area.

CHAIR: Is that what you want?

Mr TURNBULL: I think it is going to happen whether or not it is something that we want or not. I think the question is going to be managing that.

CHAIR: But our questions starts off "What would you like to see happen?" What is your answer to that?

Mr TURNBULL: I would like to see that change managed so it does not impact on the deficit now within the area, that we do not have people who cannot afford to live in the area pushed out in the way in which we have seen students over the past 20 years being pushed more out of that area, that we actually end up with a diverse community. A lot of people in the place bought on the basis that they believed that the Aborigines were going to be bussed out of the place, that the whole of The Block was going to be torn down, that it was going to become something else and they were not going to be there. And they are decidedly unhappy that it has not happened. But they are going to be there for a long, long time. And what has to happen is that that has to be produced as a strength in the area. Those issues have to be tackled. They have to be helped to find ways of solving those problems and I do not think they are going to happen if they are not involved, in that "they" in terms of not just the Aboriginal community but the broader community of Redfern-Waterloo actually involved in making the decisions that happen.

At the present moment under the structure that you have got for the partnership, I mean, you consult with the community; you go out, you ask them questions, you put a report together and then you come back and you do everything back to that report. You do not bring back your suggestions and then field them back with the community and engage the community in some sort of dynamic process. And if you do not do that, you are not going to have the community support; you are not going to tap community knowledge. In the all-of-government report there is this really nice little statement that comes out of the earlier consultation that was done by McCallum, in which she basically says that people in Redfern know the issues.

They do not want somebody to come in and ride roughshod over them. They actually want to be involved in what happens and in formulating what happens within the community, right there in front of what the partnership is talking about. But then you go through and you look at what the partnership has done in terms of its processes and it is not doing that. It is happening a bit like what happened in the initial conversation between Lyn and the project director at the partnership where she said there were a few bureaucrats.

Ms TURNBULL: A couple of bureaucrats.

Mr TURNBULL: Who were trying to better organise government departments. Okay, yes, that will do some things but unless you actually engage the community fully in that, I do not think you are going to get there.

CHAIR: I think that probably sums it up.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can I just ask one last question?

CHAIR: Yes, but it is 5.53 p.m. so it had better be a last one.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am fascinated by the difference between your submission and the Hugo Street people's. Do you have the same problems they have in this slightly Pollyanna-ish world view, or is it quite different, based on small variations in geography or personalities.

Ms TURNBULL: Some of it is small variations in geography, most definitely. For instance, there is very, very deep-seated reactions both ways. For instance, we had a reconciliation poster up in our front window during NAIDOC Week and we have had our letterbox spat on, we have had hate mail. It comes from both sides because somebody sees that somebody else is the problem.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you think that perhaps the fact that you have the NAIDOC poster means that you are not attacked from the Block but you are attacked from elsewhere?

Mr TURNBULL: Yes.

Ms TURNBULL: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Taking a side, in effect?

Mr TURNBULL: Lyn's mother has the place next-door, which she rents. We had an Aboriginal friend of Lyn's; the kids went to school together, they were involved on The Settlement board together. She moved in next-door, had problems with her partner, the police were called on a couple of occasions and we came under immense pressure to try—

Ms TURNBULL: Evict her.

Mr TURNBULL: Why are we renting a house to Aboriginal people? This is Lawson Street.

Ms TURNBULL: This is 50 metres from the Block and people ask questions about: how dare you rent to an Aboriginal family?

CHAIR: Sorry we have cut you a bit short, but we have probably, in different ways, have had quite a bit of input from you already. We are running late, obviously.

Mr TURNBULL: There is one thing just quickly to mention in terms of the report. I think you have incorrectly understood what the Government report says in relation to them saying that they have used email to let people know what is happening. The report actually says, effectively, that they have an email address, which people make contact with them. I can assure you that I have not spoken to anybody who has received material back from them by email. In fact, one of the big problems that the partnership has in terms of communicating is that because it is part of Premier's, we are continually told that that means that the director and staff cannot comment on things because things have to be cleared through Premier's. Now that also makes it very, very difficult for there to be communication and active engagement with the community, and that is something that the Committee might also like to look at, at some point.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 5.56 p.m.)