



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Proof Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER AFFAIRS

Language learning in Indigenous communities

(Public)

WEDNESDAY, 4 APRIL 2012

ALICE SPRINGS

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS
Wednesday, 4 April 2012

Members in attendance: Ms Grierson, Mr Haase, Mr Neumann and Dr Stone.

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The Committee will inquire into and report on Indigenous languages in Australia, with a particular focus on:

- The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages
- The contribution of Indigenous languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture
- The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education
- Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second language
- The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities
- Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services
- The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages, and
- The effectiveness of the Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy in delivering its objectives and relevant policies of other Australian governments.

WITNESSES

BAARDA, Mr Frank, Private capacity	36
BAARDA, Mrs Wendy	42
BOX, Mr Lance Alan, Curriculum Coordinator, Yipirinya School Council	24
CAMPBELL, Ms April, Private capacity	6
CAREW, Ms Margaret, Project Officer, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education	6
CASTLE, Mrs Dominique, Principal, Alice Springs Language Centre	46
CATTONI, Ms Rita, Manager, Indigenous Community Television Ltd	17
CAVANAGH, Ms Louise, Director, Indigenous Community Television	17
CHARLES, Mr Dennis, Member, Indigenous Remote Communications Association	17
EGAN, Mr Matthew Jampijinpa, Private capacity	36
FEATHERSTONE, Mr Daniel John, Interim Manager, Indigenous Remote Communications Association	17
FISHER, Mr Simon Japangardi, Board Member, Indigenous Community Television	17
GALLAGHER, Mrs Enid Nangala, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc	42
HARRIS, Ms Janice, General Manager, Institute for Aboriginal Development; and Director, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation	13
HAYWARD, Ms Karan, Chief Executive Officer, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)	27
HEENAN, Mr Noel, Chairperson, Indigenous Remote Communications Association	17
HUGHES, Mrs Linda Florence, Communications Officer, Indigenous Remote Communications Association	17
JAMES, Mr Lionel, Board Member, PAW Media and Communications; and Member, Indigenous Remote Communications Association	17
KATAKARINJA, Ms Elizabeth Napaljarri, Member, Indigenous Remote Communications Association ..	17
KOPP, Ms Bonita, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development; Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation	13
MARTIN, Ms Barbara Napanangka, Chairperson, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc	42
MORRIS, Mr Hamilton Japaljarri, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc	42
MORRISON, Mr Ronald, Chairperson, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)	27
MORRISON, Mrs Sandra, Language Centre, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)	27
NIXON, Mrs Judy, Cultural Officer, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)	27
OLDFIELD, Mr Riley Jupurrurla, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc	42
OLDFIELD, Ms Janine Gai, Lecturer B, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education	1
PHILLIPS, Ms Penelope, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)	27
RICE, Mr Donovan Jampijinpa, Literary worker, Bilingual Resources Development Unit, Yuendumu Community	36
SMITH, Miss Margaret, Assistant Teacher, Alice Springs Language Centre	46
SPENCER, Mr Jacob Jungarrayi, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc	42

WITNESSES—continuing

STOKES, Ms Fiona Rose, Director, Management Committee, Institute for Aboriginal Development	13
TURNER, Mrs Margaret Kemarre, OAM, Elder, Central Arrernte, Institute for Aboriginal Development; and Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation.....	13
TURNER, Ms Amelia, Apmereke-Artweye for Irlpme Estate, Central Arrernte People, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation.....	13
TURNER, Ms Patricia, Chairperson, Institute for Aboriginal Development.....	13
WALLACE, Mr Peter, Kwertengerle for Antulye, Central Arrernte, Institute for Aboriginal Development; and Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation.....	13
WAYNE, Ms Maisie Napurrurla, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.	42
WILLIAMS, Mr Ross, Deputy Chairperson, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre).....	27
ZERK, Miss Tanya, Assistant Principal, Alice Springs Language Centre	46

OLDFIELD, Ms Janine Gai, Lecturer B, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education**Committee met at 10:01**

CHAIR (Mr Neumann): Welcome. I declare open this Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities. I welcome those few people who are present here today in Alice Springs. The committee would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay our respects to their elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be in the room as well.

Please note these meetings are formal proceedings of parliament. Everything said should be factual and honest, and it can be considered a serious matter to attempt to mislead the committee. I do not yet know what punishment is meted out, having said that many, many times. This hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the internet, and a transcript of what is said will be placed on the committee's website.

Janine, before we proceed to questions, would you like to tell us about the Batchelor institute, how long you have been working there, where it is up to, how viable it is, what the future holds for Batchelor and what work is being done at Batchelor.

Ms Oldfield: I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners as well. I have been at Batchelor for 11 years, so I have seen quite a lot of change. It began in the 1980s, from what I can gather, as a teachers college just outside of Melbourne. It has grown from strength to strength. A couple of staff members were in the original teachers degree, which was called the DBATE or DRATE—I cannot remember now—program. It was done in conjunction with Deakin University. For many years the only higher degrees were the teaching degrees and I think there was a health worker degree as well and a couple of others. In about 2005 or 2006 there were some dramatic changes at Batchelor. The director and board decided to make it more focused and extend the university arm of the college. So quite a number of different degrees were on offer. At the time our enrolments were quite healthy. In our course alone, which was a teaching course, we had about 100 students at any one time. I am not sure of the entire higher degree enrolments. Then there were some issues about funding. From what I could gather, funding had not changed in real terms from about 2001.

CHAIR: From where—state, federal or local?

Ms Oldfield: Federal, I think. The state gave the VET funding, so this is the higher ed—the federal funding. The college became bankrupt, basically, and the government moved to manage the college. That happened in about 2007 or 2008. In the meantime there was a dramatic drop in student numbers. The minister for education at the time, Julia Gillard, said that the Batchelor was to amalgamate with CDU to create an organisation called ACIKE.

Mr HAASE: To amalgamate with whom?

Ms Oldfield: Charles Darwin University.

Mr HAASE: Thank you; I did not recognise the acronym.

Ms Oldfield: The Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education was created. This happened this year. Last year we were still working as Batchelor institute, with Batchelor's own degrees. We still had a drop in numbers. Many students have actually left all the degrees and some of the degrees have disappeared altogether. The health worker degree, which is one that is extremely needed in the Northern Territory and Queensland, is not there at all now because CDU did not want to take it over.

So there is a big hole there for people in the Territory, of course, in particular. There has been a big drop in numbers. Many of our existing students decided not to carry through with a CDU degree—quite a few did; quite a few did not. We do not appear to have any new enrolments; we think there is a complication with the enrolment status. People have to do online enrolment, which is quite difficult for remote people. It is a very complicated enrolment process. I find it extraordinarily difficult; I can barely get through it myself. It is not well advertised. People do not know anything about ACIKE, so it is not attracting people. People do not even know Batchelor is still doing higher ed. Remote areas are being told by schools and principals that there is no Batchelor higher ed anymore. So at this stage we are seeing a drastic reduction in numbers. There is the possibility of a couple of new enrolments in second semester, but we are looking at probably a redundancy of 30 staff in higher ed because the numbers are so low. We do not think we are going to get the funding to keep going. This is the rumour. We cannot be certain of this, of course.

CHAIR: Was that in language learning as well, and education?

Ms Oldfield: Yes. That is in linguistics, education, creative writing and social policy and studies.

CHAIR: Tell us what happens at the Batchelor institute that is relevant to our inquiry here into language learning.

Ms Oldfield: Batchelor institute is a both-ways institute. What that means is that we use the culture of our students as the basis of our learning. That is where we start. It does not start from a white perspective; it actually starts from Indigenous genres and Indigenous language, including Aboriginal English and languages of people. Some people can make their oral presentations in all courses, if the lecturer so chooses, in their first language. It is acknowledging the experiences and the knowledge that come with people and using that as a means to educate and acquaint people with Western ways of doing things—but with an Indigenous bent. The way we see education in Batchelor is as a site of discourse or contestation, which means we see it as a site where discourses can be argued over, fought over and changed so that it does accommodate marginalised and, in this case, Indigenous people. That means they are included more fully in our society generally. They have much greater say, much better health outcomes, much better social and emotional outcomes, and much better employment outcomes. In this way it does impact directly on the language community. The language community is not just about language; it is about culture. Language is culture. Language is identity. This is what we preserve at Batchelor for our students.

Dr STONE: You said that in 2007-08 the first dramatic drop in students was observed. What triggered that? Was it just the enrolment process?

Ms Oldfield: There was a financial crisis at Batchelor, so I think people got a bit scared about enrolling. Also, we had not had funding for a number of years for marketing, so people were not aware. Batchelor was off the radar.

Dr STONE: Is your campus here in Alice Springs?

Ms Oldfield: We used to be at Bloomfield Street campus and that is another issue for Batchelor. Some of us are here; some of us are still in town. Batchelor has to maintain two campuses and it just cannot do it—it is going broke. They have asked again and again for money for residential facilities here and for the library to be placed here—they have been asking that for the last 10 years—and still have not got it.

Dr STONE: You had a residential facility in downtown Alice Springs?

Ms Oldfield: It is still there. The buildings are falling apart.

Dr STONE: How were students financed? If they got into a teacher training course or health worker course, for example, did they have a stipend to help them survive during their course studies?

Ms Oldfield: They get Austudy.

Dr STONE: So it is just the same as mainstream study.

Ms Oldfield: Yes, although there are some particular scholarships around now for teacher education for Indigenous teachers. I am not really sure about the health side of things. There could be scholarships for them as well. Some people have managed to tap into that.

Dr STONE: You referred to some students making all their presentations in language. Was a part of the training also to have the students competent in Australian standard English?

Ms Oldfield: Yes. I think it would depend on your content area. For instance, when I teach science we do Western science plus I get the students to bring in their own culture. So of course it is their own culture and their own language that they have to incorporate. When they are designing lessons, they are actually using their own stuff as well, which they have to for their students. It is engaging their students. Maths is not about standard English, so they can do oral presentations in language if they so choose, but for English obviously they have to do standard Australian English. There are certain things in the degrees of teacher education that are nationwide now. There are national benchmarks, so Batchelor conforms to those benchmarks as well. But they do have a bit of leniency outside that to make things very focused on empowerment and focused on Indigenous ways of doing things. We also use Indigenous learning methodologies here at Batchelor, which you do not get in the mainstream.

Dr STONE: What would you call Indigenous learning methodologies? Are men and women separate?

Ms Oldfield : It could be, depending on how they feel. It could be the way you present information. There are a lot of graphic diagrams.

Dr STONE: Visual and written.

Ms Oldfield : Visual stuff. Yes. There is perhaps a lot of oral—probably more oral. Our students are very strong on oral skills and because they are marginalised there is a certain intellectualism that they bring to bear on

that. In designing the teacher education degree, we knew the first-year students would not have the standard English of normal first-year students so we scaffolded them from first to fourth year so that they actually exited with the same standard English outcomes. We do not do that now with the CDU degree. It is just not in there, so students are finding it extremely—

Dr STONE: Which might be part of the reason for the exit of students from the course.

Ms Oldfield: It probably is, yes. At the first or second year it is crucial to do that, and it has almost completely gone.

Dr STONE: How many graduates have you achieved during the time that you have been up here and are they now progressing in the schools or have they shifted to somewhere else? Can you identify your graduates as teachers, or are they all teachers' aides?

Ms Oldfield: To be honest, I do not have the numbers, but I suppose we were getting between five and 10 graduates a year—and it could have been more, because we have two campuses that graduate. Everybody I know that has graduated has got work in schools. Many of them were going remote, to the Top End islands. One we have in Yipirinya School down here.

Dr STONE: As teachers or teachers' aides?

Ms Oldfield: Teachers. We are higher ed, so they are qualified teachers when they leave. There are hundreds of IEWs, Indigenous education workers, out there. It is quite a healthy—

Dr STONE: sector.

Ms Oldfield: Yes, quite a healthy number of students. They always overenrol in VET bachelor by about 30 per cent because they have such high demand, but for the last few years the VET allocation funding has not increased.

Dr STONE: So is VET in a state of collapse as well as higher ed?

Ms Oldfield: People are saying that it is going to be at risk too because there is no growth in terms of the demand and other organisations coming into remote areas that are not experts in delivering to Indigenous people. They come in for a few years and they cannot sustain it because it is a particular way of doing things, and we have been doing this for 30 or 40 years. That is really not of benefit to remote Indigenous people either.

Mr HAASE: Janine, the accommodation aspect of bachelor you say is in poor repair. Do you know what the charge to students being accommodated is?

Ms Oldfield: That comes through a different bucket of funding. It is to do with particular travel funding that the federal government provides. The students do not get charged for that.

Mr HAASE: That might be a source of the problem. Are the courses that are being run that you have had experience with full-time, normal, mainstream, semester courses?

Ms Oldfield: Yes. Some people are part time, but, yes, ours are full time.

Mr HAASE: Is there any extension of courses online? Are your courses available online?

Ms Oldfield: We have made a move to make ours available online. I see what you mean. The delivery mode is a workshop mode. People come in for an extensive period of study, maybe for one week, to do one to three different units—usually no more than three.

Mr HAASE: With what frequency? I am just trying to get an impression of how often one has to come off country and live in Alice with the possible domestic disruption—

Ms Oldfield: It could be about four to six weeks a semester. It has been reduced. It used to be eight weeks a semester; it has been reduced to about four to six.

Mr HAASE: Taking a different tack now, in relation to delivering work in language, what language skills do lecturers have and what languages are spoken by lecturers?

Ms Oldfield: From what I could gather, the education lecturers were not Indigenous language speakers. I have a smattering of Lhere Artepe and Arrernte, but that is it. The students' Aboriginal English, or standard English, is quite good. They can interpret what the lecturers are saying. But the thing is that when they are presenting or when they are designing something they can use their own language first.

Mr HAASE: How would an assessment be carried out by a lecturer if there were no language skills and a student chose to present in language?

Ms Oldfield: Often there would be a written component that went with the oral component. It could be a PowerPoint presentation, a couple of written paragraphs or an essay.

Mr HAASE: Just more. Going directly to our issue—the teaching—you are saying Batchelor is running and accepting language, but having no part in teaching language.

Ms Oldfield: No, the linguistics do teach the language. Linguistics degrees and the linguistics VET are teaching the languages.

Mr HAASE: They formalise the native tongue?

Ms Oldfield: Yes.

Mr HAASE: So they teach grammar?

Ms Oldfield: Yes.

Mr HAASE: Is there any evidence of Batchelor getting involved in teaching interpretation?

Ms Oldfield: Linguistics is not my area.

Mr HAASE: That is fine, if you do not know.

Ms Oldfield: I know that the Institute for Aboriginal development were doing that. I think we have a linguistics degree which could lead onto interpretation, but I am not sure whether it allows you to be an interpreter, to be honest. I am not 100 per cent sure on that. I know it is definitely connected, but you would have to ask someone from linguistics.

Mr HAASE: And your Indigenous education workers?

Ms Oldfield: Yes?

Mr HAASE: Are they taught how to interpret—how to be the conduit between language and Australian standard English?

Ms Oldfield: They have particular competencies that they have to complete. To be honest, I do not know whether they are taught that. But they are also very good English speakers, so the interpretation is not an issue generally when they are interpreting for their students.

Mr HAASE: I think the officers of the committee are conscious that there are real skills in being impartial and interpreting from one language to another. It is quite a skill.

Ms Oldfield: Yes. Maybe that is something—to be honest, I am not 100 per cent. I have not see it. I used to teach that course, but I have not taught it for a long time. It certainly was not there when I was teaching it. So maybe that is something to consider.

Ms GRIERSON: You are suggesting that under the Batchelor model that was existing you could do that support and transition in the first couple of years to get them to the final point, which is an acceptable qualification at an acceptable tertiary standard. Are you suggesting that that would not be possible under an amalgamation with Charles Darwin?

Ms Oldfield: Batchelor lecturers have been doing it, because we are used to doing it, but it is not defined yet as a curriculum. That is what we are concerned about.

Ms GRIERSON: So you need the curriculum to be written in a way that acknowledges the starting point for Indigenous learners and the gaps that they need to enrich what they already know.

Ms Oldfield: That would give a clear direction to the lecturers of what they are to do. At the moment, you could get a new lecturer coming in and if they have got no experience with Indigenous students they would just start teaching mainstream stuff and it would not work.

Ms GRIERSON: Does Charles Darwin have a campus in Alice Springs?

Ms Oldfield: It does. It has an Alice Springs campus.

Ms GRIERSON: Are you going to combine the centres or are you aware of what is going to happen?

Ms Oldfield: No, we have ACIKE students coming through this Batchelor campus. They do have Indigenous students too—they could be internal or external and they would go through Alice Springs and Casuarina.

Ms GRIERSON: I guess that you are suggesting to us that the Batchelor Institute has had a lot of experience in working with Indigenous communities, that you have been well known and well understood and that your success rate is such that people want to come and do these courses. How do your students get to do your course? Do all the schools in the remote communities know about you?

Ms Oldfield: Yes, they were. We were getting assistant teachers coming through us to do degrees. Yes, it was a common way of getting students through.

Ms GRIERSON: So if we saw Aboriginal education workers out in schools—and we did—could they then go on to do your course?

Ms Oldfield: They can.

Ms GRIERSON: How would they be serviced if they did not want to leave their community?

Ms Oldfield: That is a bit difficult. They actually have to. They have to do the work.

Ms GRIERSON: They have to leave the community.

Ms Oldfield: Yes, because they are finding the online environment extremely problematic.

Ms GRIERSON: Yes, it is problematic.

Ms Oldfield: That is the problem with the CDU degree: it is often largely online unless you are on campus at Casuarina.

Ms GRIERSON: Age of the people taking up the courses? Is it mostly the young ones coming straight through or is it people who have come back?

Ms Oldfield: No, it is typical of the other universities with Indigenous students. It is women who have got families. They are in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s.

Ms GRIERSON: You mentioned the health workers course. Is that an accredited course.

Ms Oldfield: It was an accredited course. There are many health centres around the Territory that use health workers. Sometimes health workers are the only health personnel in a centre. They are trained up to a degree where they are not quite nurses but they are able to give out medication, give needles and stuff like that.

Ms GRIERSON: So it is a degree qualification, not a TAFE certificate type of qualification?

Ms Oldfield: You can do both.

Ms GRIERSON: All right. We will be in Darwin. I have to say that the Vice-Chancellor of CDU is a good friend of mine, formerly from Newcastle. I will take up some of those issues with them.

Ms Oldfield: The health worker course is an extremely important one that is now missing.

CHAIR: Sharon always believes that if you were born in Newcastle or you come from Newcastle, you are obviously a good person.

Ms Oldfield: Oh, okay.

Ms GRIERSON: We like to fix things up.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming here today and providing us with that evidence. The transcript of your evidence will be placed on the website. If you want to make any alterations or additions to it—if there are some errors with names or if something else is inaccurate—please let us know.

Ms Oldfield: I would actually like other staff members at Batchelor to have a look, because there might be things that are—

CHAIR: If they wish to make a submission to us, that would be useful as well.

Ms Oldfield: Okay. Because it is subjective.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

CAMPBELL, Ms April, Private capacity

CAREW, Ms Margaret, Project Officer, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

[10:26]

CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you for being so patient and for taking the time to come here today to give us evidence. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Campbell: I am an Anmatyerr woman. I am from the Ti Tree community. Ti Tree is about 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs. I work at the school as an assistant teacher. I am also a coordinator for the language and culture program at Ti Tree school.

CHAIR: Thank you, April. Margaret.

Ms Carew: I am a linguist by training, and my work at Batchelor has been in the language and linguistic section since 1997. Also, I currently work under an externally funded project, which is auspiced by Batchelor but is funded by the federal government's MILR program. It is a language documentation project. In that capacity, I work closely with April and other members of her community.

CHAIR: Before we proceed to questions, perhaps you would like to give us a bit of background. Margaret, you mentioned the MILR program. How have you have experienced that? April, we are also interested in how you got to where you are and what your experience has been. Perhaps we will start with you, April.

Ms Campbell: I was working at the school and I wanted to be a teacher to teach my kids in language and culture. I was working really hard to do this Anmatyerr dictionary for the kids because there were no written Anmatyerr words on paper. We use a little bit less words and so we got this Anmatyerr dictionary for the kids. We started teaching language culture at the school. We take them out to the bush. And then this new program came up and we decided to do that. It was really important to teach it to the kids. It is like hand signing, the iltyemiltyem program. We have got a lot of children in our schools who could not understand, so we are always using hand signs for them in the classroom and stuff like that—even out in the bush, when we are taking them out.

CHAIR: Why is it that they 'could not understand', to use your words?

Ms Campbell: English is not their language. They can only understand their own language, Anmatyerr. Some kids can understand and some cannot, so we use iltyemiltyem for them—that means hand signs—so they can understand. Also, it is important for them to learn hand signs because in their culture we have big sorry business too. When somebody passes away we cannot talk, so we use hand signs. That is why we are teaching the younger generation that too.

CHAIR: Thanks, April. Margaret, can you tell us about your experience and, particularly, comment on the MILR program?

Ms Carew: Where to start! I came to Alice Springs as someone very interested in languages. I came from a fairly Anglo, monolingual background and I had had an introduction to the richness of language in the more remote parts of Australia through my university studies. That is the path my life took. I was fortunate enough to get a job at the Batchelor Institute and I moved to Alice Springs and began teaching. I have taught in the higher ed programs in their various manifestations since then. I had a break from work and when I came back to work in 2006 we also had VET certificate I and certificate II in Own Language Work, which was designed for the training of people who were working in bilingual schools, particularly literacy workers, and also for people who worked in language centres on various language documentation projects, where they needed to have some understanding of a range of skills—some to do with the development of literacy in their first languages—and also resource production. I taught that program for a while.

The context for the training changed quite dramatically with the demise of bilingual education, the decreasing capacity for the effective delivery of bilingual education in many places over quite a period of time and, I guess, the decline in the activities of language centres as well—the change in focus of the work of a lot of language centres. We wrote a new course, which was accredited last year, which is called certificate I and certificate II in Indigenous Language and Knowledge Work. It attempts to place the training and skills development of language work as much more in a project mode, in a collaborative kind of space where people are focusing less on written language and literacy development and more on community based intergenerational media-rich and language-rich activities that result in some kind of resource. Parallel to the development of that course, my colleagues and I worked with a number of language workers—including April, but people from elsewhere also in Central Australia—to apply to the federal government for additional funding to fund that type of work because we had noted that the language centre in Alice Springs had really declined in its capacity to support that kind of work,

particularly in the remote area. When I say 'remote', I mean outside Alice Springs township. After a couple of years of trying, we were successful in getting funding to do a publishing project based around women's songs at Utopia and also a hand sign or sign language documentation project, which is called *iltyemiltyem*, which is what April mentioned earlier. *iltyemiltyem* is an Anmatyerr word which means hand signs. It refers to the very important communication practice of using hand signs, sometimes independently of speech but more often it is aligned with speech. The model for our project is very much based around working with community language teams, with a focus on resource development and a broad range of skills related to what is required to develop a resource. Our *iltyemiltyem* project is going to have an online dictionary and resources based around hand signs. Another really important aspect of this project is that it links to the work of researchers based at universities.

We have a partnership with Dr Jenny Green, who is based at the University of Melbourne. She is a linguist who has worked in Central Australia since the early 70s. She compiled the Anmatyerr dictionary and was responsible for the development of the picture dictionary series through IAD. Since completing her PhD a couple of years ago, she has continued to undertake research into various aspects of language in Central Australia. We also have a link with Dr Myfany Turpin who is a linguist who has worked the Kaytetye language group to the north of Alice Springs. Her specialty at present is as an ethno-musicologist. She is documenting traditional songs from Central Australia. One of the areas that she works with is at Ntarrengeny with a group of ladies there. Our project is funded to produce a book and a film based around those songs.

CHAIR: Do you have numbers of children you teach who have also got hearing loss? Are the hand signals important for those children?

Ms Campbell: There are about six kids in Ti Tree School who could not understand.

Dr STONE: Because of their hearing loss?

Ms Campbell: Yes, their hearing loss. We used hand signs for them so that they could understand what we were saying to them.

Dr STONE: You are clearly endeavouring to continue to teach strong traditional language skills and culture, which is very commendable. We understand why you are saying that is so important. Is that going hand in glove with the same children becoming competent in English so that they can work in whatever area or whatever world or work cross-culturally if they choose?

Ms Campbell: Yes. Some kids learn through hand signs first and they feel confident to speak English. We have some kids who went to Sydney and did not know how to speak English, so we used to use hand signs in the classroom. Now they are really confident, and they went to a Sydney school. They are already doing year 12.

Dr STONE: So you build their own sense of self-worth and confidence through using their own language and that builds them to be able to speak English confidently. You are saying that one proceeds the other?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Dr STONE: In your course training, did you have TSL or ESL, English as a second language, type training as well?

Ms Campbell: Yes. I did training with Margaret and got a certificate for it.

Dr STONE: In TSL?

Ms Campbell: Yes. And for my own language course. I got a certificate for it too.

Dr STONE: Was that a useful course to do?

Ms Campbell: Yes, very useful and really helpful for me.

Dr STONE: Would you recommend all teachers and teachers' aides who work in communities where there is still strong traditional language to have that ESL or TSL background?

Ms Campbell: Yes. What is really important is that sometimes we gather at our big conference. We always encourage each other to show presentations about what we are doing in our schools. We help each other.

Dr STONE: Why do you think that men do not come forward as teachers' aides very often in schools, as Indigenous teachers' aides or teachers?

Ms Campbell: Sometimes we have a cultural background. If there are only girls working in the classes men feel shame and they are sometimes not confident.

Dr STONE: But then couldn't the men teacher aides or teachers work with the men or boy students?

Ms Campbell: Yes, they feel confident with working with young men and boys.

Dr STONE: But not with the girls.

Ms Campbell: Not with the girls.

Dr STONE: You are saying you really need about 50 per cent men, 50 per cent women teacher aides and teachers so they can work with both the boys and the girls in the classrooms. But we tend not to get the men coming through, do we?

Ms Campbell: No.

Dr STONE: Do you think that is a disadvantage then for some of the boy students, that they do not get their own community teachers coming through?

Ms Campbell: Yes, sometimes boys are missing out something important because we have not got a male teacher in our school. They still get it when we have language and culture, taking them out bush. We get men rangers. They feel confident and happy working with men.

Dr STONE: Right. Thank you, April.

CHAIR: It is a problem in other schools as well, particularly primary education, having enough male teachers.

Mr HAASE: Where did you first come into contact with English?

Ms Campbell: In 1979, I went to school in Ti Tree and it was only a caravan school. I learnt there. I was a bit ashamed to speak English, because I was really frightened in the school because it was not my language. I kept on going and my parents were just pushing me to go to school every day. Then I learnt English. I learned to feel confident to speak English now.

Mr HAASE: Can you give us a sense of the difficulties you had in dealing with teachers who only spoke Australian English and you having no knowledge of Australian English, how difficult was that for you to understand the lessons that were being taught?

Ms Campbell: At first, it was really hard for me. I could not understand English. My teacher used to sit down and do one on one with me. I learned slowly through reading books, reading out the words slowly. I was still scared, because I was scared I might make a mistake and I might get into trouble with the teacher. I tried harder. I was still trying hard.

Mr HAASE: Do you recognise anything special about your parents at the time, that they wanted you to persevere and learn English, and our understanding that there are so many Indigenous parents that do not focus on the necessity for their children to attend school regularly? Was there a difference? Is there something that you can find in essence that your parents wanted you to go to school?

Ms Campbell: Yes, my parents wanted me to go to school, because they had never been to school. They were just working at the station, but they learned English by speaking to the station managers. So they were my role model. I used to watch them speaking to station managers, going to work and speaking this new language, English. I learned by that.

Mr HAASE: Did your parents think there might have been employment for you speaking English at the station at that time?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Mr HAASE: So eventual employment might have been their motivation to push you into regularly attending school?

Ms Campbell: Yes, because the station manager used to put us on a bus. We used to go to the school in Ti Tree town—make sure we go to school.

Mr HAASE: We need more like you, April. The hand signals you are speaking of—I do not know the communication you are referring to—is it Indigenous or is it mainstream hand signalling.

Ms Campbell: It is Indigenous.

Ms Carew: It is traditional. They use it for sorry business.

Ms Campbell: Hand signs. Yes.

Mr HAASE: I thought you might have been talking about Australian—

Ms Carew: AUSLAN.

Mr HAASE: AUSLAN mainstream.

Ms Carew: It is different.

Mr HAASE: Thank you very much, April.

Ms GRIERSON: April, I am sorry we cannot go to Ti Tree school. It would have been very interesting for us. We did go to Utopia school yesterday. They had a young man who was training as a teacher aide and working as a teacher aide, but they had separate classes—boys classes, mens classes and girls classes. Does Ti Tree have gender based classes?

Ms Campbell: We used to have it for a long time. This year we have a man teacher. Those young men stayed and came back again. Last year our kids dropped down. We only had 50 or 40 kids in the school. There were no young men, no 15-, 16-, 13-year-olds used to come to school, especially boys.

Ms GRIERSON: Because there was not a man teacher?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Ms GRIERSON: That is interesting.

Ms Campbell: So this year we have a man teacher. We have a lot of kids now, nearly 100.

Ms GRIERSON: It is a bilingual school?

Ms Campbell: It is not a bilingual school.

Ms GRIERSON: It is not a bilingual school. But does the principal encourage languages?

Ms Campbell: Yes, the principal encourages us to do language and culture with them.

Ms GRIERSON: So it is not a formal bilingual school, but it does happen?

Ms Campbell: Yes. It is not a bilingual school.

Ms GRIERSON: I think yesterday when we saw Utopia School the message was: 'We are a self-contained community. We want to be self-sustaining. There are wonderful opportunities for young people if we respect their language and their want for training and employment in their own communities.' Would that be the same at Ti Tree? At the Ti Tree School and in the community do people want to stay there, do they want to have opportunities through losing their own language and culture?

Ms Campbell: Yes, well, everyone in the community is really happy because we have about six young men going to Sydney. We are encouraging them to finish their study. We want to see them working at the school.

Ms GRIERSON: Do they come back? Do they go away and come back?

Ms Campbell: Yes. They come back for Easter. In July they come back for holidays.

Ms GRIERSON: April, did you train at Alice Springs, at the Batchelor Institute?

Ms Campbell: Yes, I took my training at Batchelor.

Ms GRIERSON: Were you given support to stay here and live here while you did that?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Ms GRIERSON: Did you stay at the accommodation that Batchelor provided?

Ms Campbell: Yes.

Ms GRIERSON: Was that okay?

Ms Campbell: Yes. Sometimes it is a problem when you are bringing your family with you. You have to find somewhere else to stay.

Ms GRIERSON: I am sure it is very difficult. At Ti Tree School, can you see young people who you would want to encourage to do that, who you would want to see go on to become teachers? Do you identify the ones who you think have that potential?

Ms Campbell: There is my little brother, close to Sydney. He tried to stop back. We encourage him to go back. We keep on pushing him to be a teacher or health worker at the community. We have some of the young men working at aged care, looking after the elders and stuff like that.

Ms GRIERSON: Do you use the dictionary that you spoke about before? Is the dictionary used in the school?

Ms Campbell: Yes, we always use dictionaries—picture dictionaries and other big dictionaries.

Ms GRIERSON: And song books? Do you have a song book or do you just teach it by doing?

Ms Campbell: Yes, we have song books.

Ms GRIERSON: I think that is very exciting. Margaret, you mentioned the demise of bilingual education. What was the reason for that—policy or funding or something else?

Ms Carew: There have been a couple of critical moments that have, I guess, gone down as historical points in which bilingual education has not been supported by policy. One of those was in 1999, when the end of bilingual

education was announced. There was a bit of a fight back by a number of schools and a lot of advocacy for it. Then it was allowed to continue, however in rather strange circumstances. There was a very famous announcement by Marion Scrymgour in 2008 which came out with the four hours of English a day. This was taken as the end of bilingual education because it meant that English-only instruction was really important in the first four hours of the day. A lot has been said about that.

My own perspective is that there was a burgeoning of bilingual education in the seventies and eighties. It was a time when the whole idea of bilingual education was on the rise. There was a fair bit of support for it. I think the Territory government tolerated it and the federal government supported it. Batchelor Institute in those years really rose to prominence on the back of bilingual education. It would not really have become what it is if it were not for bilingual education, and that is because there was a teacher education program called RATEP, which was federally funded and funded quite well. Batchelor had a large number of education staff in those years who were involved in teacher training through this RATE Program. There are a number of people out there still—Indigenous women in the main, but there were a few men—working in schools such as Maningrida and Yuendumu and a number of other places which I do not know so well. They are ageing now and there is not anyone coming up behind them.

There are a few reasons for that. One is that the National Training Framework that came in in the late nineties, and that was the start of a real standardisation of education—higher education and VET. The RATEP curriculum did not have a place in the National Training Framework and it fell away. Batchelor was not able to respond with something else. Those people who once would have trained as teachers under RATEP then went on to train as Indigenous education workers, not teachers. They were doing certificate III and IV level training there and getting paid at a very low level compared to what a teacher gets paid and having much less say in the school and less status and so on. Obviously the counter argument to people who say that is a problem is that a lot of Indigenous people—while they are part of their community and fluent speakers of the language and there for the long term compared to a lot of teachers who come and go—did not have the literacy levels required to be able to do a higher education level course like a bachelor of education.

Dr STONE: You would suggest that there needs to be more flexibility in some of our curriculum and training requirements?

Ms Carew: It would be good to see if that were possible. I am not from an education background. I have got a dip ed but I have never worked as a teacher and I have never worked in schools and I have never been involved in teacher education. I am not really qualified to comment, but my own perspective is that I believe a lot of schools work along a kind of—sorry for the informal jargon—'alien spaceship' model: the school is in the community and school stops at the gate; kids come through that gate and they are in another world. I think there is a lot more scope for much more community development.

Ms GRIERSON: We went to a school yesterday that is not a formal bilingual school but, because of the quality of the community and the principal and their ability to work together, it has understood and respected language. The results speak for themselves. Is that the direction that should be explored and continued or should it be mandated that all schools in the Northern Territory are bilingual?

Ms Carew: In terms of an instructional model, there have been schools which were bilingual. I would suggest that the success of implementation has been patchy at best. I think there were successes in the early years of bilingual education, but bilingual education only ever reached a subset of the schools in the Territory.

Ms GRIERSON: Can I suggest to you—and I am trying to lead you a little bit—that if things are mandatory then they are usually resourced. If they are not mandatory then they are not resourced. Perhaps one of the reasons for mandating and making it formally required is that it is recognised and approved for resourcing. It is wonderful to see schools that are taking this upon themselves and doing what comes naturally to the community and therefore advancing all of the education competencies and skills of young people without language being a barrier. But I know that the resourcing of it—developing a film, a dictionary, a song book, all those things—takes a lot of effort and that it is generally voluntary from people like April, who do it as an extension of their work. I ask you again: do you think it should be mandatory?

Ms Carew: I cannot give you a yes or no answer, I'm sorry. One thing to consider here is that these communities exist in dynamic, multilingual language contact environments. There is a risk of language purism coming into play, and I think that is a real risk to any kind of effective engagement with the actual ways that people use their languages.

Ms GRIERSON: That is a good point. April, I am absolutely fascinated by signing. I am a former principal of a mainstream school, with hearing units, where the whole school learnt signing—it was not just the kids with a

hearing impairment but everybody in the school who learnt signing as a second language—so I find it strange when people resist the teaching of two languages at once, because it is a wonderful thing. Knowing the problem with hearing impairment amongst some Aboriginal kids, it is wonderful to see this signing. I have not seen it anywhere else; have you seen it used anywhere else?

Ms Campbell: Yes, a lot of schools are doing it.

Ms GRIERSON: Is it standardised or is it different in every community?

Ms Campbell: Some hand signs are similar in each language groups.

Ms GRIERSON: That is fascinating. Thank you, very much.

CHAIR: I have three questions for you Margaret, to finish up. I was going to ask two of these questions of the Central Land Council, who gave a submission to us, but perhaps you might be in a position to comment. I will quote from their submission; feel free to respond with a yes, a no or a comment. They say:

In 2008, in response to the poor NAPLAN results of students in remote NT schools, the NT Government announced that the first four hours of instruction in NT schools would occur in English. This effectively spelt the end of bilingual education in NT Government Schools.

Was it as a result of poor NAPLAN testing? Was it a fair and accurate comment?

Ms Carew: I think it is an oversimplification of the actual social processes that are involved. It is hard to say. Marion Scrymgeour in a recent response to a particular article actually denies that that is what the intent of that announcement was. I think that, politically, the whole bilingual education question is a very fraught discourse. It is not something that I have been particularly involved in. I have worked at Maningrida and have observed the school in action in the nineties and more recently, and I have seen a massive change in the capacity of what you would call bilingual education, basically where first language is the medium of instruction. I have also worked with people where there are schools in communities that have never had any bilingual education. It is a really complex area; I could probably talk at length, but I do not think that is what you want today.

Dr STONE: What were you suggesting about Maningrida: that they had poorer outcomes now than before or better?

Ms Carew: I cannot talk about educational outcomes; I can talk about the adults that I know who are language speakers who are involved in the school and the way that I have seen them operate. What I am really seeing is that back in the nineties there were a number of people who were trained teachers or about to be qualified teachers through the RATE program at Batchelor who had a central place in a school. I have also seen the—

Dr STONE: You are saying they don't have now.

Ms Carew: No. The couple there are getting almost to retirement age and there is no-one who has come up behind them except the assistant teachers. A fabulous irony that I observed involved a woman I know, who has never been a qualified teacher but who has worked for many years, since the late sixties, as a literacy worker. She is a highly fluent writer of her first language and a fluent speaker of course of a number of languages of the area. She qualified a couple of years ago through Batchelor as a Certificate III as an Indigenous education worker. I thought there was a kind of sad irony in that that is about as far as she has got, and she does not even live in Maningrida anymore; she lives in Darwin. So there has been a disenfranchisement.

CHAIR: The second thing is the Central Land Council, in their submission, talk about the fact that there is criticism of bilingual education on the basis that it is at the perceived expense of English language development but in fact the major aim of bilingual education is to improve English language outcomes. Would you like to comment on that.

Ms Carew: I can comment to a point. I think there are stated aims and how things work in practice. I think there has been very little research done on how bilingual programs actually did perform. It is easy to talk about what it is meant to do as if that is what it does. I hesitate to make these blanket generalisations. However, I do believe there is an ethos in mainstream Anglo culture in Australia, which Sharon referred to, that to learn another language causes some kind of problem in your brain and there is a conflict. What we are talking about here are multilingual environments, and a lot of the professional staff who come to work in these environments do not quite get multilingualism because they are not multilingual people.

CHAIR: The final thing I want to ask you about is the Master-Apprentice program and the merits of it. Are you in a position to comment on that? Are you involved in that at all?

Ms Carew: I am involved in it. Bachelor hosted a Master-Apprentice training workshop a couple of weeks ago here. I think the program has merit. I think it is a bit early to say now what the merits are. Again, these things need evaluation and research to really be commented on. What I saw was a roomful of people come together and

create a network. If the kind of advocacy and networking of key people involved in language advocacy, language maintenance, language idealisation can be supported then there can be success there.

CHAIR: Thank you, Margaret and April for your time here today.

Proceedings suspended from 11:03 to 11:15

HARRIS, Ms Janice, General Manager, Institute for Aboriginal Development; and Director, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation

KOPP, Ms Bonita, Director, Institute for Aboriginal Development; Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation

STOKES, Ms Fiona Rose, Director, Management Committee, Institute for Aboriginal Development

TURNER, Mrs Margaret Kemarre, OAM, Elder, Central Arrernte, Institute for Aboriginal Development; and Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation

TURNER, Ms Amelia, Apmereke-Artweye for Irlpme Estate, Central Arrernte People, Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation

TURNER, Ms Patricia, Chairperson, Institute for Aboriginal Development

WALLACE, Mr Peter, Kwertengerle for Antulye, Central Arrernte, Institute for Aboriginal Development; and Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation

CHAIR: Welcome. You were not here when we started, so we will acknowledge again the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay our respects to their elders past, present and future.

Mr Wallace then spoke in language—

Ms A Turner: I am going to interpret what he has just said. He is the kwertengerle, the keeper, of this land where we are having this meeting now and he has really a strong belief in language and culture.

CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mrs Turner: I am one of the key finders of the map that we are going to be looking at here.

Ms Harris: I am a native title holder for the Undoolya country. I regard it as being a real privilege to sit here with my family and to sit here with the owners of this land in this meeting. I welcome you. It will be fantastic for you to share the important information that we have got.

Ms A Turner: I am an interpreter in my own language and the other languages that I speak.

CHAIR: We are in your hands, and we are happy to hear what you have to say. We obviously will have some questions, but we will hand the meeting over to you to give your presentation. We are here to listen and to learn.

Ms P Turner: Thank you. We wanted to go through and explain to you the importance of our languages and the centrality of our languages—but in this case we are explaining it to you through Arrernte, which is the main language for this area, this country that you are on today—and the role of IAD in terms of wanting to reconnect our people and rebuild the language skills and the cultural knowledge and to do it properly, and to make sure that you have some insights into our world view about the centrality of language in our total wellbeing. We want to take you through this map, which was developed and articulated by MK Turner. Also we want to present you with that book and we want you to have a copy of this map. In that book is a chapter on language. At this point, Amelia will give you some insights into how important language is, the centrality of it to us and our connection to our country, what it means to be an Aboriginal person and the important role that language plays in that. If Amelia can read that out to you at this stage—MK unfortunately has a very bad chest—we can get the interaction going after that.

Ms A Turner: This is a book from my mum. It is just written down in English at the moment because it is all done in Arrernte, but some of it is all in English as well. Our language is sacred to us. Every Aboriginal language is sacred for those who speak it. Words are given to us by the land and those words are sacred. What does it mean to an Aboriginal culture? The land needs words, the land speaks for us and we use the language for this. Words make things happen—make us alive. Words come not only from our land but also from our ancestors. Knowledge comes from Akerre, my own language and sacred language. Language is ownership; language is used to talk about the land. Language is what we see in people. Language is what we know of people—we know of him or her. If they speak my sacred language, I must be related to their kinships. Language is how people identify themselves. Being you is to know your language. It is rooted in your relationship from creation—in your kinship that cycles from then and there, onwards and onwards. It is like that root from the tree. Language is a community—a group of people. Not only do you speak that language but generations upon generations of your families have also spoken it. The language recognises and identifies you, who you are and what is you. Sacred language does have its own language. You can claim other languages through your four grandparents. Know your own language first before you learn other languages—to know it, to understand it and also to relate to it.

Ms P Turner: Thank you, Amelia. Our view was very well placed in this map by MK. Bonita, do you want to explain any more about the map and the connection of language through everything coming from the land?

Ms Kopp: We come from Maranunggu. That is the ground country of ours—in the middle there. As Aboriginal people who belong to that land, our children must be taught in language to understand all those things that come out in that country area. They got to have knowledge for it to know who they are and what it means to them and also to learn more and get a stronger understanding. They need to be knowledgeable of it they are going to talk in our way—in two ways—to translate all this and how we see it. This is not just to see on the map; this is for everywhere else. No matter where they are, all aboriginal people in every country have got that; all indigenous people have that. Indian people have that. They all have that. But if those children want to learn the curriculum in school they must know the language from the ground, where they are from and who they are. If you are an aboriginal person, you have got to know about your language; you have got to know about what land you are from and what language you speak—your grandmother's language, your grandfather's language. It is going to be of use in the future to your children. You must get taught that language in two ways. You must be a strong person, a strong child, a strong man or woman, an adult going to school, a teenager learning. You have got to understand this stuff.

Ms Turner: IAD has a strategic vision: 'Strong people, strong culture, strong future'. What we have found is that through the effects of colonisation, assimilationist policies and so on, a lot of our people, including me, are very familiar with the government system—I have been a senior bureaucrat for many years—but are not as studied in their own culture. That has been caused by policies and practices such as assimilation policy and the effect that has had on the new generations. While we have many of our people in Central Australia—and we are fortunate that we still have elders that understand all of this and are happy to share this knowledge—we have a lot of people who have been disengaged. We think that a lot of the social issues today stem from the weakness of our people's identity and their lack of knowledge and understanding of this total connectivity and our world view of how things work. We have many people who supposedly have been educated in schools but are still illiterate and innumerate even after they graduate from school.

We believe that bicultural education is a very important way for our kids and our young people to get ahead in the education system. IAD is very firm in wanting to adopt this as our curricula and for this to guide us in the future work that we do with all of our people who have been disengaged because of their lack of identity, their lack of understanding and their lack of knowledge about our true cultural heritage and language. We want to start with Arrernte. If other groups would like us to assist them, we are happy to, but we have to start with Arrernte because we are on Arrernte land.

In relation to what the government are doing with their policies in this area, we have only one chance a year to apply for funding through the Office for the Arts. There is a total bucket of only \$9.6 million for languages, and that is totally inadequate. We need to re-build and re-establish our language centre. You cannot do culture without language; you cannot do one without the other. We also need to work with our people to ensure they have bicultural competencies. On that note, I will ask Janice Harris to explain that to you a little bit more.

Ms Harris: For you to have an understanding of what bicultural competencies concern, I have written up a couple of pages here. They give you an understanding of why we are going to approach our teaching and learning programs the way that we are going to approach them. All programs will be taught within an Aboriginal cultural context, which is provided by this model. This approach will make our language program more than bilingual; it will make it bicultural. There is a clear distinction there. The language program developed and delivered will be founded on the areas that you see there. We regard those as fibre learning areas: country, ground, ceremonies, relationships, people, animals and plants, and ancestral spirit.

Ms P Turner: They are shown on the black circles on the map.

Ms Harris: We have developed a learning statement. In our language program, the participants will develop a critical understanding and appreciation of cultural techniques and technologies related to the Arrernte language. They will investigate, understand and communicate about the language and how the language works. They will also develop a sense of personal and cultural identity which will equip them for lifelong involvement in and appreciation of not only of the Arrernte culture and language but also the western culture. This approach in teaching has survived for 60,000 years. Even though there have been amazing struggles, it continues to survive.

The everything comes from the land approach is unlike current approaches used in teaching a language. At present, the Cartesian, mechanistic, ontology approach used has failed Aboriginal people in their language development. In this approach the mind and the body are separate, and rationality and emotions are seen as antagonistic. A subjective and objective fragmented view makes reality very difficult to perceive. The everything comes from the land model is a different teaching perspective from which the participants can expand their understanding of a range of human possibilities. Mrs Turner's model is not unlike a lot of other models that have

been trialled and used throughout the world, where languages are taught in a multi dimensional way, and that is what we see here in front of us.

The everything comes from the land approach will align the content of the language to the learning style of the individual. In order to speak well in a language and to learn that language, there must be an alignment with learning styles. At present, the western learning styles really do not and are not appropriate to facilitate learning in our Aboriginal people. This map gives us an opportunity to develop a learning program that is suitable for Aboriginal people. It is contextual learning and we all understand what that involves. It is a way of learning and a very successful way of learning because it brings together the culture and the language. It is not teaching language in isolation of culture.

During its 40 years in operation, IAD has developed a profound catalogue of Aboriginal cultural material and maintained significant contact with very important Aboriginal people. IAD has always been in the best position to provide individual and group experiential learning situations that promote traditional Aboriginal teachers and assist people in learning the language. Learning experiences also allow for self directed learning and incorporate the values of non-interference, non-competitiveness, sharing and a sense of personal community responsibilities, which are something that is lacking in our present society. The inclusion of Aboriginal role models enhances a person's understanding of Aboriginal people's perspectives and enhances the self-esteem of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. That is why our program will be taught by Aboriginal people taught by Aboriginal elders.

CHAIR: Is this a new program that you are talking about? Because you already offer certificates at the moment, don't you, in a number of courses?

Ms Harris: That is a good question. We do offer a number of—

CHAIR: I am sorry, I will ask that again. Is this a new program, because you already offer certificates I, II and III in a number of courses at the moment?

Ms Harris: Now those certificates, I, II, and III, are accredited certificates, Western certificates. What we do is enhance that Western approach with the cultural approach. By doing that, we are adapting our training and our learning styles to the learning styles that Aboriginal people have inherited over years and years by having that bi-cultural approach.

Ms GRIERSON: Having spent 30 years in education, I have seen many curriculum frameworks and I have never seen a more comprehensive framework for Indigenous learning and Indigenous knowledge than this one. It is a most amazing document. Have you a copyright for it?

Ms P Turner: Yes.

Ms GRIERSON: I think it is something that our education minister in Canberra needs to look at too. To put that all down and synthesise it into hierarchies is an amazing achievement. What a wonderful tool. I have never seen something as well done as this. And for it to be graphically presented as well is just wonderful.

Ms Harris: Do you want to say something about that, Bon?

Ms Kopp: Thank you.

CHAIR: We are giving you a pat on the back.

Ms Kopp: That is good. We were teaching languages to students and other children going to school and also to people coming into our workplaces. We have just been teaching the language to them but we have not got this out to them. We have been giving them the names of plants and trees but we have not really expanded the connection of this to the people that we have taught in the teaching area.

Dr STONE: Who are the students at the institute, at your centre? For example, could a non-Indigenous trained teacher come along and overlay their teaching with a course using this curriculum? Do they get a certificate? Is there certification for this course? Are there some elements of this which should only be learned by those who actually come from this particular country, Arrernte?

Ms Harris: The first question that you have asked is: is there a formalised program that would assist a Western person in being able to teach a bilingual program? No, we are in the stages of developing that. The answer to your second question is: yes, it is possible and we encourage Western teachers or non-Indigenous teachers to teach with a bi-cultural approach. I have worked very closely with all of these and I am gaining an understanding of the connection of this. And to work alongside a Western person who wants to learn that same sort of connection is a dream come true. The IAD would relish it being formalised so that we could develop a program so that it is formalised, it is financed, so that we can develop it in an effective way or how it should be developed.

Ms P Turner: We are currently doing our new strategic plan at IAD. We have raised this with the local bureaucrats and briefed them on it. Some of them get it and some of them do not. It is an extremely complex issue to get their heads around, because it is not in the silos of normal program and project funding. In order for us to do this properly, we need to be able to employ our own people first. We need to take our own people who need this knowledge and understanding and for them to immerse themselves in our cultural heritage and then become proud, upright standing people rather than being overwhelmed by the barriers that they encounter every day. We want to start with our own people in terms of reengaging them in our cultural heritage. We think that by teaching them by cultural competencies and giving them strong roots in our own worldview they are then better able to engage with the broader community. There has been a big gap in services and policies provided by governments. We will need government funding to do this properly, but it has got to be done the Aboriginal way. We know who our elders are. We know who our leaders are. We know who is competent in teaching this and who has the authority in our group to teach this. Then we can teach them how to engage.

For example, when we teach numeracy and literacy, at the moment, it is done in a bicultural context. We asked Aboriginal people who were involved: 'What does literacy mean to Western people and what does literacy mean to Aboriginal people?' They are totally different concepts. Then we tried to get them to understand the other side. IAD itself, as an organisation, is a great supporter of bicultural education. At the moment, the Northern Territory does not even really embrace bilingual education. The Aboriginal teachers, who are the holders of the knowledge and have the authority to teach that, should be as equals in the classroom with the white teachers, or the Western teachers. There are all these sorts of things that we want to do, but we need to do it to engage our own people first so they can then be proud and strong and stand tall to participate in other things.

The emphasis of government in the last few years has been jobs, jobs, jobs. We cannot even have our people literate and numerate to engage in jobs, jobs, jobs, because they have not had the basic knowledge to enable them to engage in a bicultural world. We need to get back to basics in relation to the proper way for our families to do this. We can teach them at IAD. We have the proper people who are our advisers and who will guide us through this and make sure that our teachers properly understand all of this. Then we can do the other stuff with teaching others. But at this point the emphasis has to be on our own people first. Because we are on Arrernte country and I can tell you, the Arrernte people here are the poorest and have the least services and the least return on sharing our country with everybody else. That includes other Aboriginal people from other areas of central Australia, who do not even belong to this country.

CHAIR: Pat, we will finish up soon because we are running over time. Peter, would you like to say a few words before we finish up?

Mr Wallace: Thank you.

Mr Wallace then spoke in language—

Ms A Turner: I would like to rephrase that in English. Kwertengerle said, 'It is good how it is all set up and I think it is really good to pass it onto the next generation, so they too can learn it.' As I read out earlier on, it is really true what he is saying. We Aboriginal people have always passed our knowledge down. Today, it is a world that has been corrupted by white man's things, but we have still got to look back to this model—to our ways.

Ms A Turner then spoke in language—

Thank you.

CHAIR: I think that is a great way to finish that presentation. We really appreciate your taking the time and we wish you well. This was an excellent presentation. I think it is outstanding. I love the comment: 'Language is the custodian soul of the land. Language identifies who we are and what we are.' That is a fantastic concept. It is outstanding.

Ms A Turner: When we talk about language and culture, we always, as you see in any meetings, sit in a circle. That is how we share our language and culture, share our stories. It is not just straight life. That is not right for our people. Always in a circle. It is for a better understanding. If we talk in circles there are a lot of things that are going to be viewed and heard.

Ms P Turner: We would like to tender as part of our submission this map and a book by MK Turner. There is a chapter in here on language.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. We appreciate that very much.

Proceedings suspended from 11:03 to 11:15

CATTONI, Ms Rita, Manager, Indigenous Community Television Ltd

CAVANAGH, Ms Louise, Director, Indigenous Community Television

CHARLES, Mr Dennis, Member, Indigenous Remote Communications Association

FEATHERSTONE, Mr Daniel John, Interim Manager, Indigenous Remote Communications Association

FISHER, Mr Simon Japangardi, Board Member, Indigenous Community Television

HEENAN, Mr Noel, Chairperson, Indigenous Remote Communications Association

HUGHES, Mrs Linda Florence, Communications Officer, Indigenous Remote Communications Association

JAMES, Mr Lionel, Board Member, PAW Media and Communications; and Member, Indigenous Remote Communications Association

KATAKARINJA, Ms Elizabeth Napaljarri, Member, Indigenous Remote Communications Association

CHAIR: Welcome. On behalf of the committee, I pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, past, present and future, and thank you for welcoming us here today. We are doing an inquiry as you know into the language in Indigenous communities. Thank you for your submission. We would like you to know that everything you say here must be factual and honest. It is important that you do so, as this is a formal proceeding of the federal parliament and it is important that we speak honestly, frankly and sincerely. Would anyone like to make a brief introductory statement before we proceed to questioning? It is not going to be hard questioning. It is not like in a court of law or anything like that. We will ask questions because we want to provide recommendations to the government which will enhance language learning in Indigenous communities from the Torres Strait to Tasmania and from Palm Beach on the east coast to Perth on the west coast. Would anyone like to tell us what you are doing and where you see language learning is up to?

Ms Cavanagh: I would like to welcome you all to the Arrernte country and also from the Warlpiri and Anmatyerr I would like to welcome you.

Mr Heenan: I wear a lot of hats, as you mob will know. I am the ICTV chairperson. I am a director for PAW Media, a duopoly media, as you guys know.

Mr Charles: I am a broadcaster for Warlpiri Media and I broadcast in language.

Ms Cavanagh: I am a board member for IC TV.

Ms Katarinja: I work at PAW media and I do video in the language.

Mr James: I am from the Eastern Warlpiri tribe. I am a Warlpiri Media member and also a community elder.

Mr Fisher: I am a Warlpiri person. I am on the board and I also am a PAW public officer and do cultural liaison.

Ms Hughes: I am the communications officer for the Indigenous Remote Communications Association.

Mr Featherstone: I am manager of Indigenous Remote Communications Association. We have a close affiliation with Indigenous Community Television and have representatives from both here today.

CHAIR: Would anyone like to make a statement before we proceed to questioning? Lionel, would you like to say something?

Mr James: Most of us believe that language is a part of us. It also is part of our identity and who we are. Today, when we see a lot of young kids that are growing up, most of them do not know their language so they are lost and they have no respect for anyone other than themselves. With language, if they come to know themselves as a person they respect themselves and they respect others.

CHAIR: How is language important in terms of your culture but also in terms of health, education and other employment outcomes? How does it help you? We have heard a lot today about how language is part of the soul, that language is part of you as an Indigenous person and the land. What about education and employment outcomes as well?

Mr James: When you talk about language I am only talking about respect. Once they gain their respect and self-esteem, it helps them build their character and then they move on to other stuff. You see now a lot of our people, because they don't believe in themselves, they don't respect themselves and their self-esteem is low, they don't want to move on.

CHAIR: Do you receive any government funding? Do you receive any territory or federal government funding for your organisations?

Mr Featherstone: I will speak to that. The Indigenous Remote Communications Association receives funding through a program called the Indigenous Broadcasting Program, and then we get small lots of funding to run a national remote media festival and other programs. We are the peak body for eight remote media organisations spread out across Australia, which are mostly funded through the Indigenous Broadcasting Program, under the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, and they in turn represent about 150 or so remote Indigenous broadcasting services.

CHAIR: Do you have any knowledge about the extent or the numbers of programs that are taught in Indigenous languages in your association? Do you have any figures that would show how many are taught?

Mr Featherstone: We do have some figures for Indigenous Community Television, and Louise has a copy of those, which basically give the number of languages that are broadcast on Indigenous Community Television. About 70 per cent of the programming that goes onto Indigenous Community Television is in language.

CHAIR: Louise, we would appreciate it if you could give us that information. That would be very helpful.

Ms Cavanagh: This is about the ICTV. It is being broadcast each weekend on Channel 23, on the Optus Aurora satellite. There are 60 hours of programming. There is a video streaming site with over 400 videos available. Broadcast delivers video content in 23 different languages from around Australia. The program in language runs approximately 70 per cent of ICTV.

CHAIR: Thank you, Louise. We will take that as part of your submission, if that is okay. Thank you very much.

Dr STONE: You are moving very much into the area of communications via television, radio, DVDs and the like. Lionel has referred to languages as being lost—young people not necessarily learning languages like they would have some time ago. How do you see your medium, the different technologies you are using, being made available perhaps to schools, early childhood education in particular, to make sure that Indigenous children have their community languages strong but also have English so that they can work cross-culturally and not be locked out of jobs because their English is not good enough but at the same time have strong community language? How does what you are doing give us some new tools or strategies?

Ms Katarinja: With organisations like schools and child care or other such organisations, the bilingual is lost in those areas because the government just stopped all of those bilinguals. We need bilinguals in our schools and in our media organisations as well, because we lost all that. That is why we started media associations like radio to broadcast those languages. It is so that we can pass on all of those languages for kids to learn. It is not only for the kids; it is also for the adults—the young mothers and the young fathers, because they have lost their languages. They still cannot understand their own languages. They have to learn back more of those old languages for the future, for their children's children. They have to keep it strong, because it is coming from the heart. When they go for country visits, they go for the culture, for the language and for the kinships. They learn all that in their languages. Some of our kids go to the city to learn, and when they come back they do not have much of those languages.

Dr STONE: They have lost their traditional languages.

Ms Katarinja: Yes, they have lost a bit.

Dr STONE: So you feel that your work—the various media that you are working with—can be a critical part.

Ms Katarinja: Yes. We do a lot of documentaries on the elders. It is to make young people strong by learning it, so that when their generation grows up they can go back to media. They are not going to go to the media for one media thing; they will go for their own cultural tribal stuff. They will ask Simon, because he is an archive worker. He will just show them. It is in the archive for our children to learn the languages and to know the place that they come from and what language was there. I have got five languages but I only speak western Arrernte and Warlpiri. I can understand the other three languages but I cannot speak them. I have to go back and learn my great grandfather's languages too. All these Aboriginal people and children have to learn more languages. We never learnt our language in the proper way. We need to learn back.

Dr STONE: Who should teach those? Should it be the family or the community only or do you see those languages being taught in schools by teachers and teacher aides who are from country?

Ms Katarinja: We need teacher aides to teach them in the school too, so working together in one.

Ms GRIERSON: First, I apologise—I have to leave to catch a plane very soon. In your submission, you stress how the NBN, the National Broadband Network, will be important here. Can you explain to me how important and what difference that will make? Can you give me an idea if it has been rolled out anywhere here yet?

Mr Featherstone: The NBN at this stage is a satellite delivered model. There is a first stage satellite that has been released with the six megabit per second down and one megabit per second up. That solution under NBN will enable a better service than most communities currently get, but it will limit the types of applications that are available to a lot of communities, particularly using video conferencing systems, which enable face-to-face communication.

Ms GRIERSON: So will real time communication ever be possible under the NBN?

Mr Featherstone: It will be possible, but there will be a latency issue which will restrict that. We will also have a contention because of the number of uses within a community, so if somebody is using video conferencing it will slow the use down for anyone else in the community until that becomes a more symmetric service. We have had quite a lot of input to government on that issue. We had the Broadband for the Bush Forum held last year in this complex talking about exactly those issues. Also, there is fibre optic cable out to a lot of communities already that is not included under the NBN scheme because it was not purchased.

Ms GRIERSON: Do you know who owns that fibre?

Mr Featherstone: Telstra.

Ms GRIERSON: So it will be eventually be able to be—

Mr Featherstone: Yes. The states have invested in that, but Telstra own that fibre out to all of those communities and will continue to use that for their basic services. One of the issues is that people do not have access to home telephony in a lot of communities. They also do not have internet access in most communities at this stage within their homes. There is not last mile delivery. There is not copper cable out to all households. There will be a need for other ways of distributing and sharing the cost as well as the access to the NBN when it is available. However, under the current model, which is a direct to home satellite model, that is going to be very difficult to negotiate because they will be wanting to have someone with a billed service. So the NBN, while it will provide an increased ability to get services for education, health, justice and so forth, is going to be restrictive in terms of the types of applications that can be achieved over it. Also, we will have very limited community uptake for quite a while to come, until there are a lot more programs to provide community access, training and appropriate online applications.

One of the applications recommended under the recent Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Sector Review was that instead of having Indigenous community television delivered via the satellite, it was recommended that it be delivered using indigiTUBE, which is the website that IRCA and ICTV have worked together to develop for delivering radio and television. That site is only currently available for most communities in local access centres. Very few people have it available at their homes. In terms of a primary television service, it basically is going to be a long time before people will have access to that. It is critical that Indigenous community television has a satellite platform on the digital satellite if it is going to reach the remote audiences that it is intended for.

Ms GRIERSON: I think Lionel mentioned young people without language do not have respect for themselves and their people. I think it was Lionel who said that. We have been out to communities where there are DVDs of western music and western culture. How do you try to marry traditional language with popular culture for young people?

Do some of the outlets do that? Do some of these services do that?

Mr Featherstone: All of the remote media organisations do that.

Mr Fisher: I am an archivist. Most of the stuff is 28 years old when this first started, because most of the language and culture is recorded in language itself with the elders. My background is in anthropology research—a lot of my stuff is in language distribution for the universities. It is part of my job as a cultural liaison officer, and for western researchers too, to look at intellectual property and protocol. A lot of our stuff was taken away for archaeological study in museums overseas and not returned. A lot of stuff is in state libraries and in state museums. There was no respect and no consultation. There was illegitimate consultation with the people concerned. I am talking about material and other stuff taken. People did that stuff. You name it.

Ms Katarinja: We made all the videos in languages. In the olden days they made a lot of stuff like *Manu Wana* in counting—it is sort of like *Sesame Street*. It is alright on languages. They count in languages and speak in language. We also worked with schools to make some videos, doing a lot of animation stuff in languages too. All the kids got together to do a lot of animation stuff, as well. We lost the bilingual teaching, that is why have to

teach kids by media and radio. We have to give feedback to them with language as well, because it is really no good for our kids to lose their languages. They cannot write their own words in languages; they have to learn more about it. It is sort of like they have to get literacy and numeracy, just the same as the English school. They know English. They can do everything in English but they have to go back and learn that language as well, because that is our kids' future. We have to keep our language strong.

Mr Heenan: Backing up what Liz is saying, 30 years ago we had *Bush Mechanic*. We are going to put it into animation now and let people out there know that we are still here—we are not going to pass away. We need to show our people, especially the young people, but the old people as well, because at the end of the day if we do not do it for ourselves—for our law, our language and our land—we are buggered. That is what we are all about. I am supporting what the other speakers are saying.

Mr HAASE: Over the last couple of days we have had a lot of evidence given in relation to the breakdown of culture. We have heard a lot about the necessity of tying language and culture together and for people to be strong. The implication is that it requires government funding to do that. I am interested in hearing from you what you think has changed? Some evidence we were given was that language has been passed down for 60,000 years very successfully. Of course we have had European settlement, but I would have thought that language and culture would have been taught by parents to their children today just as it was generations ago. Maybe if we as a committee understood what stopped that from happening and why it is no longer a parental family responsibility, that it has to become a government responsibility, if we understood that we would perhaps be in a better position to make recommendations about it. Could you tell us what, in your words, why you think the process of teaching has broken down?

Mr Heenan: It goes two ways. When they are bush, they listen and learn. When they are at school, they do not want to. So how do you break that? I do not know. That is the hardest part to try and justify that, because at the end of the day they learn our language, law and culture when they go bush. When they are in the mainstream, it is just all gone. Gone away from them, but when they go back out bush, it just comes back naturally. So we need that education and all of that. At the end of the day, we have to respect the old people because at the end of the day we have to learn from our old people. Without them, we would be buggered.

Mr HAASE: But why are parents not teaching children language and culture?

Mr James: A lot parents now—before the contact of white people they had just one language. Once they came into contact, the kids had to go to school and they picked up another language. Since then, it has become the main language at home. Then, the parents cannot even teach their kids their own language because they have not learned their own language. Slowly, it is going down, from generation to generation. It is not being passed down.

Mr HAASE: Does anyone else want to express a view?

Mr Featherstone: Something you were all talking about this morning when we were preparing was the reason remote media got started in the first place back in the early 1980s. It was because the Aussat satellite was being launched. It was going to bring mainstream English based language in via radio and then TV and remote communities were very nervous about the impact that having English on their media all the time was going to have in their communities. It happens in their schools, in their offices. There are white staff who do not understand language who they deal with on a day to day basis. That normalises English as the primary communication in order to gather services, in order to gather information. The development of remote media was a response to that, where having language heard on the radio and on television was seen as critical by communities in order to keep their own language regularly heard. Now, that has played an important role and will continue to play an important role into the future, but it is against a massive tide. We now have 16 channels of mainstream TV about to arrive on the new vast digital platform. We are still struggling to find a place for Indigenous languages on that platform.

Ms Katarinija: You were asking about why parents were not teaching. Parents are still teaching their children at home. They come to school but our kids really need to learn bilingual too in school. They are still never learn more languages. We have to have two languages teaching in classrooms, because at home they do teach language. When they were small babies they grew up by learning languages. I learned language at home. I grew up by that language. I have to learn more because I still do not know more about the Arrernte language. It still have trouble writing the proper way because nowadays it is really mixed up languages written in all the dictionaries. I have seen dictionaries where eastern Arrernte languages are mixed up with western Arrernte languages. I have seen it.

Mr James: It is true what you say, that educating has to be started on. Look at the history of our people, and the way they have been all pushed into one community, some even off their own tribal land and onto a foreign

tribal land. Then there are the tribal conflicts. There are tribes that are a long way from their homelands. It is very hard for them to maintain their language because they are not close to their country; they are living in another man's country or tribal area. All through our history, we have always been dictated to on how we should run our daily lives as people.

Mr HAASE: You are talking about pre white settlement?

Mr James: Yes. Somewhere down the line, our needs and wants began to slowly dwindle. We have to look at our history if we talk about languages. A lot of us have grown up in communities that are not in our grandfathers' or even our grandmothers' country. We have grown up in someone else's country. A lot of people have died, taking their language with them, because they have been back at home in their country. They have taken away all that language. All that breakdown has been coming down to us slowly. I come from a community where there are about four or five different language groups. All have to live together. My tribe came from another area and were put by the government into the mission with all the other tribes, and we had to mix. Then that breakdown happened.

Mr HAASE: From that I would gather that what you are suggesting is that the policies of assimilation stopped the motivation for parents to want to teach the kids because they were off country and, as we heard previously—

Dr STONE: But often the kids were taken away to other places—

CHAIR: We are way off the track here, Barry. You are miles away from what we are talking about. I will let you go on for a while but really we need to get back to the issues. These people's time is valuable and so is ours, but we are getting into some of the history of assimilation and that sort of stuff. I am not here to blame the parents for it, okay? We are here to see if we can get some good outcomes. I do not think it is exceptionalism by Indigenous people. I want to hear from these people about other issues and how they are involved in things rather than go through the long history of assimilation.

Mr HAASE: With all due respect, Chair, to both you and our audience—who have so much very valuable information that ought to go into this report—the recommendations by this committee, which I will contribute to very strongly, need that justification. Without it, we cannot make recommendations.

CHAIR: Well—

Mr HAASE: So I thank you for your comments, Chair. I think it is very important, regardless of how the chair may feel.

Mr James: We have got to look at a bit of the history.

CHAIR: Sorry; I am very happy these people have taken their valuable time to come here today to give us that information, but I want to hear from them on the issues that relate to their submissions rather than about the long history of assimilation. Can you tell us about how many people work for the network and how the training is done in relation to your network?

Dr STONE: I think, Lionel, you wanted to follow on from that, didn't you?

Mr James: When you were talking about media I wanted to say that we do believe media does play a vital role in maintaining our language. Growing up as a kid I used to watch *Play School* and *Sesame Street*. It is very hard to sit down with kids and try and talk to them and tell them stories in language. But, if we can use the media or the television to give them those stories in their language, we should go for it.

Ms Katarinja: Through the media our children learn a lot about English because there is not much broadcasting or TV in language. Probably 28 years ago now, the first broadcasting in language was done by the Warlpiri people, the Arrernte people and also the Pitjantjatjara mob. They were the first to broadcast when radio started in Alice Springs from Palmer. They got together because they did not have any language broadcasting or videos, and they started doing that. A lot of people wanted their children to learn in language and they were trying to continue it into the future.

CHAIR: How many people work for your association and how many language-speaking people—

Ms Katarinja: In our association we have about nine Aboriginal workers and about four non-Aboriginal workers.

Mr James: That is, based in the PAW Media at Yuendumu.

Ms Katarinja: At PAW Media.

Mr Featherstone: What has happened with a lot of the media organisations is that they have a hub site with a remote media organisation and then RIBS communities. So there are close to 150 RIBS communities spread out across Australia and probably in the vicinity of about 300 to 400 broadcasters working altogether.

Previously, under the CDEP program, it was easy to employ people with a fairly flexible arrangement so they could come and work when they were there, when they wanted to or between different roles in the community. When it shifted in 2009 to the national jobs package, the emphasis was moved from the community employing to the remote media organisation employing those people, and that has changed both the number of people that we can now employ, because CDEP is no longer available, and the hours that they have to work. There is basically a 20-hour per week position, regardless of whether that is going to be suitable for that job or not. That has created a lot of inflexibility within the sector and has reduced the number of people that can be employed, because they basically have to be employed through that program.

In some areas they have still been able to manage the CDEP but, for instance, the Torres Strait was being done through the shire and they have just all lost their jobs because the shire decided that that was not a program they could fund anymore. So there will be no RIBS broadcasters employed after June of this year. It is a constant struggle of trying to find ways to employ people and to get them reasonable wages to match the level of training that they have done. Most people have done certificate II or III level of training.

CHAIR: I was going to ask the question: what training have the workers got? Have they got certificate II or III educations?

Mr Featherstone: A lot have. How many of you have done certificate III in broadcasting or another training course? Dennis, would you like to talk?

Mr Charles: I did training for radio for two weeks. I got a certificate III in media.

Mr Featherstone: I will continue. Batchelor Institute were previously doing a lot of that training delivery but have since pulled back from doing Central Australian delivery and have really focused mostly on the Top End.

CHAIR: Why did they do that?

Mr Featherstone: I am not sure. I think it was funding and internal policy decisions and also the fact that the delivery required the trainers to go out into remote areas and they were finding it hard to get people to do that, rather than actually recognising that there are trainers already working with the organisations who can do the delivery and they provide the accreditation or the evaluation.

CHAIR: Did anyone from Batchelor tell you it could be to do with dollars and cents?

Mr Featherstone: They have suggested that is part of the equation, but the funding that they did have is still there; it has just been turned into staff positions instead of being allocated to doing co-delivery. So that has again reduced the amount of accredited training being done in remote communities, although the non-accredited training is still delivered through the remote media organisations.

Dr STONE: I am not sure who would be the right person to answer this, but how do you make the decisions about which languages to put out your programs in, given there are a number of Central Australian languages? Do you have any policy where you try to give all of the continuing languages have some air time at some place? It is quite a complex matter, I know—Liz has just said that she speaks four languages.

Ms Katarinjja: **There are different languages here. We just put what we language are broadcasting in our community and our TV shows. It is good for kids to learn. There are also young people like Dennis, who comes in and out to PAW to train and do some work at home, some broadcasting. The kids come to our organisation, they learn and they do some broadcasting themselves.**

Dr STONE: So it is very local.

Mr James: It depends on which community on that day is broadcasting. So, if Yuendumu is broadcasting, it is mostly in Warlpiri. But if we get someone from Kintore and Kintore is broadcasting, it is in their language. If it is from where (*inaudible*) comes from it is in Mudburra. So it depends on which community on the day are broadcasting as to which language is heard.

Dr STONE: Okay. And your signal only goes to those areas particular areas, anyway, so there is not a problem of some people are saying, 'That's not my language.'

Mr James: It depends on which community is broadcasting on the day which languages are heard.

Ms Cattoni: To take up on that point, each RIMO generally represents a different language group—although not always. So the PAW generally tend to be in Anmatyerr-Warlpiri languages and APY media, Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra languages. In terms of the numbers that Louise spoke about, the 23 indigenous languages, and the question about policy: we broadcast in the languages of the material we receive, and most of the material we receive is from Central Australia and Western Australia, because these are the areas which have had a strong history of video productions—I am talking from a television point of view. So there is a lot of Warlpiri content, a lot of Pitjantjatjara content and content from the Pilbara and north of Broome. However, there

is a large area of Australia which historically has not produced television content, and we cannot broadcast in those languages because we have very limited content. The amount of languages we broadcast in is relative to what content we receive. So, while we would like to broadcast in a range of different languages, it depends on what we receive. We have no acquisition dollar—anybody who gives us content that fits in with our programming policy, it goes up. So at the moment we would love to get some material from the Top End—we are starting to get some—and from Cape York and the Torres Straits. But very little of that material is actually programmed because there is very little material.

Dr STONE: So it is really a relatively voluntary sort of process.

Ms Cattoni: We are a community broadcaster in the true sense in that our audience are also our program makers.

Mr Featherstone: Just to go back to the issue of languages in which we broadcast, obviously that is dealt with by the radio stations as satellite services to particular regions. There are eight remote media organisations with their own footprint on the satellite for the radio network that they deliver, so that helps to keep the languages for that region relatively specific and most people in those language footprints are able to understand the other languages that are broadcast, or have a fairly good understanding. In terms of what Rita was referring to with collating content from communities, one of the biggest issues that the remote sector has had is not having any content production funding at all. In fact, video was taken out of the Indigenous broadcasting program in 2006. We were told we could not use any of that funding for video production or multimedia production, only for radio broadcasting.

Dr STONE: Does that include the health messages?

Mr Featherstone: For anything. There is no video production, unless you can get it sponsored by another organisation. Most of the production has happened through sponsored corporate type programming, but there is no actual funding. The only way that most of the programming for ICTV is done is through training programs and so forth. When NITV was set up in 2007 and launched, it was to build on the ICTV service that had been running on Imparja's second channel since 2002. In fact, the remote broadcasters who had been broadcasting in language to their communities lost access to the channel—NITV took over that channel—and they also lost access to any of that production dollar, because it was set up as a high-end commissioning model and mostly in English. So, of the \$80 million that has been invested in Indigenous television in the last five years, almost none of that reached the remote production area.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming here. Lionel, do you want to say one last thing?

Mr James: Yes. We do believe that media plays a major role in maintaining language but it also could be used as a means of cross-cultural awareness for others, to teach not only our young kids but the wider community. Talking about language, I was watching this program with Ernie Dingo in it. He was putting on a show. He asked the audience if they knew how to say 'yes' and 'no' in every language. He called out all these countries and they answered; they gave him the names. They said 'yes' in all these other languages. When Ernie said, 'Can any of you speak 'yes' in any of the thousands of dialects or Aboriginal languages that we have in this country, the room just went silent.

Dr STONE: An interesting point.

CHAIR: We are about half an hour to three-quarters of an hour over time, so we apologise for that. Thank you very much for coming here today and for taking the time to present your very detailed submission. We greatly appreciate it. And I also thank you for being so open and honest with us.

BOX, Mr Lance Alan, Curriculum Coordinator, Yipirinya School Council

[12:39]

CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief introductory statement?

Mr Box: First of all I would like to apologise for Mervyn Rubuntja not being here. He was scheduled to speak and present this afternoon but some other pressing business came up and at the last minute he was not able to come. I was not able to organise an alternative council member. So I am going to try and represent the council as best I can. Obviously I am speaking from a school perspective, not for the Indigenous council members of the school.

CHAIR: Can you please tell us how your school is funded, for a start?

Mr Box: We are funded as a private school, so we receive some funds from the federal government and some funds from the Northern Territory government.

CHAIR: And you have some full-time and part-time staff there, as well. What is the mix?

Mr Box: Probably about 80 per cent full-time. We are a significant employer of Indigenous staff members. So a good majority of our staff members are Indigenous. Our council is fully Indigenous. The school was established by Indigenous elders to serve the Alice Springs town camps, the outlying communities and outstations of Alice Springs.

Dr STONE: So you were established as a request of the local people, Indigenous peoples?

Mr Box: That is correct.

Dr STONE: How are they engaged in the school now? Do the parents, grandparents and so on come in as very much coteachers? Are they bringing language into the school?

Mr Box: We are one of the few remaining schools in the Northern Territory that continue to teach Indigenous languages. We are swimming against the tide. In fact we teach four of the central desert languages. We teach Central Arrernte, Western Arrernte, Warlpiri and Luritja. The teachers of those four languages are first-language speakers. As I said, we have an Indigenous council. Then we have assistant teachers in the classroom, some of which are language speakers and some English-only speakers. Then we have ancillary staff around the school who are Indigenous folk.

Dr STONE: When your students complete their studies at your school, are you confident that they have good, strong traditional language and that they also have good Australian standard English?

Mr Box: We are dealing with highly dysfunctional town camps, and we are dealing with highly traumatised children. We are dealing with kids who come who have seen murders, who have seen abuse, who have seen all kinds of things. On a daily basis we are struggling to keep our heads above water in terms of just making sure that the place is safe. So in terms of being confident that we have strong language skills, no, we are not confident that we have strong language skills. But that is not the fault of teaching language; it is the fact that we are dealing with a milieu that opposes any kind of learning.

Dr STONE: These children—what would their retention rates be, daily attendance as well?

Mr Box: We probably vacillate between about 30 per cent and 80 per cent attendance, but you cannot predict it. On any particular day you cannot predict what it is going to turn out to be like.

Dr STONE: How do the students respond to learning traditional language? What does it mean to them? Do they sometimes come to school, perhaps, without any traditional language? How do they see that learning? Is it just another subject they cannot be bothered with, or is it a favourite subject that they learn in their classes? What is their response to that language learning?

Mr Box: For most of our kids, they come to school as language speakers. We have some Indigenous students who come as English-only speakers, but they come from families who do speak language. It is the family that chooses which of the four languages that our students learn. Some are actually learning a third language because there is some issue, or because we do not provide for their particular family's language and so they choose the closest one or the one of some distant family. For the younger kids, it is something they really, really love. For the older kids, though, language should be taught out on country. In the Warlpiri, we have a word called ngurra-kurlu, which is a term that speaks of the interrelatedness of five essential elements: land, law, language, kinship and ceremony. You cannot isolate any of these elements. All of those elements hang together. If you take people away from country, they cannot conduct ceremony, and if they do not conduct ceremony, they cannot teach strong language. Ceremony is the cradle to grave, a delivery place for education for Indigenous people. If you do not

have ceremony and you do not have language, then your kinship breaks down. Then law breaks down and the whole thing falls apart.

The teaching of language really needs to be done in the context of country, but we have had the funding taken away from us. We formerly had a cultural principal. We had four language teachers. We had literacy workers to generate books in language. We had assistant teachers assisting the language teachers and we had other people helping in the whole language program. But we have now been reduced to simply four of the language teachers. We just do not get the funding to do as much of the country visit and bush trips and all of the other things that are really important for language. For the older kids, that makes the classroom context for trying to learn language boring—which it is because it should not be done in that context. It really needs to be done in the bush and it needs to be done in the cultural context, not in the four walls of a school.

Dr STONE: In part of that conversation then, you mentioned the writing materials, the development of curriculum materials—vocabularies, perhaps dictionaries. How is that developed in your school, because we deliver languages at ours—

Mr Box: I talk historically. It is not functioning properly now, because we just do not have the funding to do it. Historically, we would approach elders or elders would approach us. They would talk through stories and we would record those stories. Then we would write those stories down and produce big books, small books and other teaching resources in language: in Warlpiri, and in Central and Western Arrernte. Sometimes those stories could be translated across, sometimes not. We got our own printing facility and publishing facility, which used to be used a lot more than it is currently being used.

Mr HAASE: Is that shortage of application now because you have not got the funding to provide the staff necessary to use the equipment?

Mr Box: Not just the staff; it is the resources. It is costly to buy the paper, pay for the toner and maintain the photocopier and all the software and so it. It is just more than staff; there are a lot of resources that come with generating.

Mr HAASE: What was the event that changed the flow of funding?

Mr Box: It was a number of impinging events. Intervention has contributed. There is the four hours of English policy in the Northern Territory and along with that policy came the winding down of the supportive resources that the Northern Territory department of education provided for bilingual and Two Way Learning schools in the Northern Territory. Linguists were taken off and no longer made available or there was reduced availability and the money that schools could use had to be directed in other directions. But, being a private school, we just continue to do the best we can. We take it out of general revenue and we just continue, because our elders consider that language learning is very, very important.

Mr HAASE: You mentioned the difficulty of obtaining language teachers. Prior to restrictions on resources did you have a close relationship with graduates of Batchelor college?

Mr Box: We continue to have a good relationship with Batchelor college. Most of our Indigenous students are enrolled with Batchelor college. We provide release time for our Indigenous staff in the school context to continue with their studies. We give very good incentives for our Indigenous staff to study with Batchelor college and to gain certification and qualifications. We have actually had one of our staff members go through and qualify as a classroom teacher. She was teaching in our school until she had to leave due to pregnancy. She will be back. We have another two teachers who have recently enrolled in a diploma of teaching course. Hopefully, in three or four years time they will be qualified teachers.

Mr HAASE: They are currently studying at Batchelor?

Mr Box: They are currently studying through Batchelor Institute and currently work as assistant teachers in our school.

Mr HAASE: Are you aware that Charles Darwin University provides those same teaching courses?

Mr Box: Yes, we are.

Mr HAASE: Here in Alice?

Mr Box: Yes, we are aware.

CHAIR: What are the educational and vocational benefits of these types of programs that you are running for Indigenous students?

Mr Box: Educationally, there is a lot of theory around that talks about the importance of first-language mastery before taking on a second or subsequent language. We are absolutely convinced that it is essential that we

establish our kids' mastery in both oracy and literacy in their first language as a priority in the school. We take a bilingual approach at our school. We divide the day into a good percentage of the day for first-language learning and then the rest of the day for English learning. In terms of employment, not a lot of our kids get beyond year 10. Those who stay on stay in an ungraded middle school context, but that is not an educational problem, it is a problem of where they come from. They are traumatised kids, on the whole; we are dealing with very, very sad kids.

Mr HAASE: The kids in the town camp, in the main, go through law?

Mr Box: I cannot answer that question, honestly; it would be guessing.

Dr STONE: Since you are not a state or territory school—

Mr Box: We are a private school.

Dr STONE: You are a private school—how are you funded? Are your parents capable—

Mr Box: Dreadfully.

Dr STONE: Yes, obviously. You are saying—

Mr Box: We are funded as if we are a fee-collecting institution. We are not; we collect no fees. We are funded on a very reduced basis and then have to deliver programs far above what anybody else has to deliver in the context of Alice Springs. We have a very tight, shoestring budget.

Mr HAASE: Could you illuminate for us where is a common source of funding?

Dr STONE: It would be federal.

Mr Box: We get funded as other private schools get funded, through state and federal funding—per capita funding—but we are funded at the rate that private schools are funded.

CHAIR: With the expectation that—

Mr Box: That we will top up with fees, but we do not collect fees. None of our clients pay fees.

Mr HAASE: Are you registered as a charitable organisation? Do you get donations?

Mr Box: We have a very good principal, who has a lot of contacts around the country in private schools. We get a lot of visits from private school students wanting to have the 'Indigenous experience'. We do get donations from time to time, which have been helpful, but you cannot budget on donations.

CHAIR: Thanks, Lance, for a very good presentation. You have raised a lot of important issues. Thank you, very much, for coming. A transcript of your evidence will be on our website. If there are any inaccuracies, please make changes to those. Give our best to the school community.

Mr Box: Thank you.

Dr STONE: Lance, if there is any extra information in your notes that you want to assist the committee with?

Mr Box: I have some answers to some of the previous questions.

CHAIR: Perhaps you can submit those to Susan or John from our secretariat.

Mr Box: I can do that.

Proceedings suspended from 12:55 to 13:23

HAYWARD, Ms Karan, Chief Executive Officer, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

MORRISON, Mr Ronald, Chairperson, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

MORRISON, Mrs Sandra, Language Centre, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

NIXON, Mrs Judy, Cultural Officer, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

PHILLIPS, Ms Penelope, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

WILLIAMS, Mr Ross, Deputy Chairperson, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

CHAIR: Welcome. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet and pay our respects to their elders past, present and future. Thank you for coming. We are greatly appreciative of the fact that you have driven such a long way. I am a Queenslander, so I know long distances, but I know you have driven for about 500 kilometres to get here, and we are greatly appreciative of the fact that you have come. I want to do a couple of formal things. These are formal proceeding of the Parliament of Australia. Everything said must be factual and honest, and it is considered a serious matter to mislead the committee—not that I am suggesting you are going to mislead the committee, but I have to get through the formalities. The hearing is open to the public and everything that is said will be in a transcript posted on our website. Before we get started, the way we do this is by asking you questions. I know you put a submission in. I invite you to make a brief introductory statement. If more than one of you would like to make an introductory statement, that would be good.

Ms Hayward: I have held the position of Chief Executive Officer, Papulu Apparr-kari Aboriginal Corporation for 15 years—a little old-timer. I am pretty lucky today. I am very privileged today because all the people I have here can actually speak and write their own language and have been founding members of the language centre, which has been around for 24 years. We originally covered 16 languages in the Barkly region but, due to funding cuts and language centres closing down, we are a dying race. We now cover a lot more areas than we did before, like Katherine. We do Kriol, which we never touched before. It is a made-up language, basically. We do from Borrooloola in the north across to the Western Australian border, across to Doomadgee in Queensland. We used to go down to Barrow Creek, but now we go all the way to Aileron which is about 100 kilometres out of Alice.

CHAIR: It is a vast area you cover.

Ms Hayward: Yes. We are probably the same as everybody else—limited funding. But when people ask, that is it. As I said, we started 24 years ago. When we started we were going to develop a school which was an Indigenous school of our own. We did not get the funding for that, but the language centre itself has gone on. In the past we were unique. We were the first CDEP organisation that was a language centre and we employed up to 200 people. We now employ only five or six people. We have gone through highs and lows, but we are still producing. We were at the forefront of producing multimedia. We believe you need to hear the language to be able to speak it properly. We have always worked with the education department and we have now got roads into every university in Australia as much as possible, aiding them to encourage language to be used in the education facilities.

As you said, we have already done a submission. You have probably already read it. It was tabled last year, so we would just be repeating what it says. There are a few little statements. Our name is Papulu Apparr-kari, which means home of language, and we believe that is what we do. We are a resource centre. We are a place for people to come to build on their language and to make sure that the language is here for our next generation.

CHAIR: Karan, what do you think are the best resources that you have produced? What is the best thing you have ever done in terms of resources?

Ms Hayward: It is numerous, but I would definitely say the digital books. Many of them are here. We have also worked on the dictionaries. We develop a process, like with their environment book. It is digitalised and animated. You click on the Australia flag and you get an English version of the story. You click on the Aboriginal flag and you get whatever language it is in. What we have tried to produce is multilanguages in one book. Their environment book is done in ten languages at the moment. We are aiming for 15 by the end of this month, and that is in the pipeline at the moment. We believe they are good resources for the kids and we have actually proved that over the years. Our bilingual program used to be unbelievable, but—

CHAIR: Tell us about the benefit for the kids, Karan.

Ms Hayward: The benefit for the kids is seeing the pride come back in them. When you lose your language, you lose your identity as such. That is an important thing. We have such a big thing. Our children are growing up without knowing their language. We believe that if we bring that back we can bring back pride and encourage them to be better leaders by knowing their own language, knowing where they come from. Without language, there is no land, there is no law, there is no culture. Those all go hand in hand. It has been proven over the years that if you lose your language, you lose your identity. That is very important to us.

We believe in a process of the old teaching the young and the young teaching the younger. That is our process. It is fantastic to see the high school kids going over to the primary school and showing them. All these people have been involved in that right from the beginning. They are all elders of our community. They are all fluent speakers. They are fantastic. They have all gone to school. There are Bachelor Institute degrees. Mr and Mrs Morrison and Ms Nixon speak several languages. Most of my people speak several languages. The best thing is to see those faces light up when they are speaking their own language and you see the kids understand. We do massive, big classrooms with 30 to 40 kids. To see the smiles on their faces when they are using their own language is just the best thing in the world.

CHAIR: Would anyone else like to say anything about that?

Ms Phillips: You have really got to teach it at the primary school. We teach the high school first with our old ladies. The old ladies teach the high school students and they have got to teach preschool mob what the old ladies taught them in English and in language. In the preschool, they have got about three or four different language groups. We split them all up into each language group and the kids from the high school teach them. Even when they are teaching their little brothers or cousins they are looking at each other and laughing. The language is so important and so valuable to them with their sister and brother teaching them that language at the school. That gives them pride when they go back home and tell mum. They say, 'Look, so and so came and is teaching us language at primary school.' And the parents start getting more involved with it now like they never did before.

CHAIR: Has there been any difference in the response to language between the boys and the girls?

Ms Hayward: We break down those barriers a bit. I am not allowed to speak on some of this stuff. But, yes, basically we do. We break down that barrier. When we first started this we did it in cohort with the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation and the University of Western Sydney. That has been great because we bring teachers out and then we break down that barrier as well and the kids turn up more. We must admit, this year we have got males. In the past, it has all been young girls. This year we have young, initiated men that are now teaching at the school and coming to the primary school. Everybody wants to be involved. Three years ago, we were pushing to get people involved. Now they are lining up. Even the teachers from the Western Sydney university are lining up. They actually apply to come and teach with us. They come out to Tennant Creek for a couple of months.

Ms Nixon: Every year.

Ms Hayward: Yes, every year. We break down that barrier. We do a cross-cultural with them, which is one of the biggest things. It is Two Way Learning. Everything is Two Way Learning in our life to strengthen that language with the men and the women.

Ms Nixon: For five years.

Ms Hayward: For five years, Ms Nixon has just said. Ms Nixon is my cultural advisor and one of the most important people in our employment. We would love to employ more people like her. Mr Williams here is an ATSIC representative from years ago and has been involved in every bit of our language. He has come back to us this year because of the importance of getting language back into the schools.

Dr STONE: Thank you. I am just looking at your little booklets. Are they available for the public to buy?

Ms Hayward: Yes. It is hard to make money out of language, but we do make our money.

Dr STONE: I know a lot of non-Indigenous families would love to have these little books as part of cross-cultural learning for their children.

Ms Hayward: We sell them all over the world—Russia—

Dr STONE: I think you would; they are stunning.

Ms Hayward: We have a school in Moscow at the moment that is actually doing Indigenous language lessons.

Dr STONE: You will have to tell us how to buy them soon. They are excellent. Clearly you have had to change your way of operating since you went from 200-odd people under CDEP to just the five or so that you mentioned. Have you found that there is a growing thirst among Indigenous young people for knowledge about language? Are you observing that the kids are really wanting to have language?

Ms Hayward: Yes.

Dr STONE: As you say, this is this because of identity, but is any of it also to do with the fact that they think they might want to work in some area where employment prospects would be improved if they had traditional language—interpreting maybe or some other area?

Ms Hayward: Yes. We were at the forefront of the Northern Territory interpreter service, and we still are, even though the government has actually got their money. We were there, making sure that they got their money. It is too important for our people not to have interpreting and translating skills.

Dr STONE: Do you run courses?

Ms Hayward: We run courses, yes. We get them NAATI qualified. Everybody here except for me is interpreter trained. Mrs Nixon does most of our translating. She is fantastic in that. So are Mr Morrison and Mrs Morrison. We find that we have a lot of people wanting to come back and learn their language that was taken away. We have a lot of those sorts of calls. We have people that want to just learn a language. They do not know where they come from but they know they are Indigenous—that kind of stuff. We do not just do our own languages; if somebody comes to our door and wants to know anything on language, we will actually go that extra mile and find their language for them and get as many books as we can. You can send us a word list and we will develop a book exactly as you want. That is the beauty of having a prototype. The kids love them. My nieces and nephews just love these books. They are the best Christmas presents you can get for them. We have them in different styles and different everything. We really believe that people want to know more language. Like I said, I have worked with Mrs Nixon and Ross for 20-odd years. You must admit there are more people wanting to know language now than in the past. We have had to change our way of thinking in everything we do.

Like I said, it is hard to make money, but when we were a CDEP organisation we were successful as, and we made a lot of money. We get limited funding—you have probably heard that from everybody—and we were the first to get three-year funding, so we kind of use our own money and we have got to make money. This is how we make money. We have got to produce books; we have got to be the translators; we have got to charge. In the past, we used to do it all for free, just to get the language out there. Now we charge for it. We get paid handsomely, but I would love to employ more people. So many people come to my door and say, 'Can I get a job here?' I just do not have the money to employ them. But there are hundreds of people that could work on language at the moment if we had the resources. The kids are our new resource. We are planning for the future. We are planning that language is here forever, because, if it is not, where do we go?

Dr STONE: With the revival or sustaining of the language, you have talked about mentoring the older kids with the younger and so on, and it is all excellent. Do you find, with the renewed sense of self-worth perhaps, or strengthened sense of confidence, that those same students become more confident with standard Australian English as well?

Ms Hayward: Yes. My son is one of those people. He has a learning disability. We did a driving CD in language, to teach people how to get their licence. We are a film unit as well; we dabble in everything, whatever we can think of to make the language get across. He got his learners permit first try, and yet he cannot read and write very well. It was because it was coming up on the screen, it was repetitive, the language was there and it was being spoken to him. He got his licence, and I was amazed. I am sorry; this is my son, but I was. The kids come in the afternoon and they put the DVD on. Their parent does not have to be there repeating it, but then when grandma hears them talk, she talks more, so there is two-way learning. Definitely the schoolwork has improved. The schoolkids from last year that did our language program all graduated grade 12. That is a bonus to us.

Dr STONE: So you think it enriches the whole experience for those students—it is not just them learning their language better, or perhaps even for the first time, but it is enriching all of their learning outcomes.

Ms Hayward: Yes, they are learning both. They are learning how to spell the English word and how to speak the Indigenous word. It benefits both. That is what we need to see, because these are our leaders of tomorrow.

Dr STONE: Yes.

Mr HAASE: Yes, it is a good story. First of all, you tackled a dropping off of interest, of numbers of students involved, and now you are implying an explosion of attendance and interest. Was there a tipping point—was there an issue that occurred that changed that?

Ms Phillips: For us, sometimes family passes away or there are family problem or issues and all that, and language just lies low. Then, all of a sudden, the community picks everything back up. What they were missing out on before, they have come back to. Now they want to learn more. For that, you cannot push our people, especially the elders. They tell us what time is right. You have to talk to them and say, 'I'll be ready when you're ready.' They might say, 'Not today'. They might tell you to wait for a week, three weeks or a month and then they will come back and demand, 'Come on, I'm here now; I've got to teach you what you missed out on,' in language, or whatever they are going to teach you.

Ms Hayward: We have been doing a lot of work in language in the health area, and we have been getting that message across. We provide interpreters for the health mobs when we are talking and a lot less of our people are passing away. I do not know if we can claim that as being because of us—that might be a bit broad a statement. But the fact is that we are breaking down the barriers when they are talking about their illnesses. In the past they were just spoken to in English and they did not understand. Now, if someone's got cancer, we are there and we are discussing and bringing out ways in language to say that. So we are getting better health outcomes. The kids are coming to school maybe because one of their family has passed away and they realise the language is going. We have been really working on that language part, and we do think we have broken down some of the barriers between the health departments.

Mr HAASE: To make a connectivity between Ms Phillip's answer and yours, was there an occasion within your surrounding communities when elders made a realisation of the health benefits of interpretation into language and therefore unofficially approved participation in your services?

Ms Hayward: I think the intervention had a bit to do with this, at least the fact that we were used so much through the intervention and that they acknowledged the fact that language had to be spoken to get the messages across. Then the health department also took that on board, and the education came back from the bilingual that they got rid of. I think that might have been a turning point. It was about six or seven years ago that the turning point came, and we got inundated; we just could not keep up.

Mr HAASE: When you say the 'health department' do you mean the federal government health department?

Ms Hayward: Yes.

Mr HAASE: And they are using your services to distribute health messages?

Ms Hayward: Yes.

Mr HAASE: And you are being paid for that on a user-pays basis?

Ms Hayward: Yes.

Mr HAASE: That is in addition to normal Commonwealth funding?

Ms Hayward: Yes. And our local Aboriginal organisation, which is Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Organisation, also use us regularly. The body part book was developed for them to use to point out the parts of the body. We also do posters.

Mr HAASE: So harking back to your point previously about funding, your desire to employ more people and your inability because of cash flow to do so, on a user-pays basis and with a well-developed marketing model, maybe there is an opportunity for you with some focus on that future of funding to develop some self sufficiency—perhaps not 100 per cent—but with the increasing importance of marketers in organisations you might find that that is the case.

Ms Hayward: Yes. 10 years ago, we identified that if we were going to survive, we had to make our own money. We were not sitting back and going, 'Grants are going to come forever.' We knew that was not going to happen.

Mr HAASE: Wise woman.

Ms Hayward: So we got smart. We got smart and we started getting money in. We started earning money, didn't we? We started doing what we could. We started developing our own enterprises. I must admit, we have been cut off at the knees a lot. Every time we put applications in to do things and that, we do get cut back. But we believe we need to make our own money. We believe that and we try to do that. This year alone of our own money we have spent \$136,000 that we have made. Hopefully, my grant funding will not take this on board, but we have enough funding to last three more years without funding.

Mr HAASE: We did not hear that.

CHAIR: I would like to ask Ross and Ronald as chair and deputy chair of the organisation, their perspective of it in terms of where it is happening, particularly in your capacity, but also from a man's point of view. What do you see in terms of these issues and the challenges the centre has?

Mr Williams: One of the most challenging things we have in the men's area is—as Karan was speaking about before—to get those young kids back and also get some of our adults back who have been Americanised, looking at the DVDs and the rest of it, watching the movies at cinemas and that. We are trying to change attitudes so the elderly men are starting to get them back and showing them the culture too. You become multicultural. If you are a cultural person, come along and we will teach you the ways our forefathers have taught us. We are going back. These kids are actually getting back off the streets and coming to the elders and the arts. As was pointed out by my colleagues over here the kids are coming forward now. Even the older kids, the 20 to 25 year olds. Most of them would be urbanised from their traditional lifestyle. They are coming back from the cities and from the larger centres in the Territory. They come back and really revise their own language to teach their own kids when they bring them up. I think the biggest challenge is that—I know it is a word that every public servant and organisation uses—the funding is very vital and important to keep those organisations going and to represent the people in the regions.

Karan said when we first started that we have covered quite a quite a broad area. It was bigger than Tasmania. Some of the areas are bigger than Victoria too. It is a vast land out there. Some of the places you could travel, you could travel about 1,000 to 1,500 kilometres and you have got various little communities, which in the old ATSIC and DAA days they used to call 'outstations' where landlords were established. You have to move back to your land and teach your young kids, and the rest of your family that live in the urban area, to go back and learn about your land so you can get it back. That was one of those things to claim your traditional land back. So it is very important to bring those younger generations of kids back. A lot of these outstations now are abandoned. They lack the funding within the governments. It goes back 15 or 20 years, maybe more. They abandon them. A lot of those old people are passing away and the younger kids are not learning the stories and the Dreamtime of those places. We are finally getting them back slowly.

CHAIR: Ron is nodding his head all the time, as you are going. Over to you. What is your perspective, then?

Mr Morrison: Young ones, young women and young men, had to move to other places. They have to learn to keep the language and ceremony and things like that. There used to be a bus that would take kids out—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—to learn how to survive in the bush, how to look after them, how to find waterholes and bush tucker.

CHAIR: That is an interesting point. Non-Indigenous kids as well benefited. That is a very good point you make there. Has that been your experience, Ross? Would you agree with that?

Mr Williams: Yes, I quite agree with it, because in our area we have a lot of mining companies. It never used to happen before, years ago, that a mining company would come and sit with traditional owners and sign documentation with the elders. What is happening now is that in the submissions we put in we are actually teaching the miners and the government workers to understand us. We have said, 'We've learnt your way, and we go to schools and work with your people.' I was a public servant for 20-odd years with DAA's, then I went to ATSIC. And I was on the board with them, too. I moved around a bit. I am pretty happy that I have met a lot of experienced old people from other states. That gives me the opportunity to bring it back and encourage people. 'If you do that, you can go places.'

The miners are really working well with us. They actually get Aboriginal people who owned the traditional land to go out and do site clearance. That is very important because they are some of our sacred sites. So you do not go to certain areas. The oldest take the younger generation with them, so they can see and learn for themselves where these sites are, too. So in both ways we are passing the knowledge of the land to non-Indigenous and to our own kids, too. The elders are doing that.

Like we said before, a lot of our elders are passing away slowly. I think we have the worst kidney problems in the world in the Barkly region. I think some of our elders, and some of our young ones, too, have actually gone to dialysis machines down here. We have built one now at Tennant Creek. We are working with them, too. So people who are too afraid to go to those centres, with interpreters and so on, are encouraged to go to better themselves. That has really improved the lifestyle of a lot of those younger kids and the older generation, the elders, because they were very afraid. It is a learning curve.

CHAIR: They are really good points that both you guys have made, about ceremony, about employment, about non-Indigenous kids, about young people as well. That is really good.

Ms Hayward: Can I just clarify something. With the schools, it is non-Indigenous and Indigenous that are doing that with us.

CHAIR: That is the point Ronald was making as well.

Ms Hayward: In the classroom that we teach with the University of Western Sydney, we actually have non-Indigenous kids wanting to teach language to the other kids at the primary school. At each class at the primary school it is not only the Indigenous kids; it is everybody. So that was definitely one that I wanted to talk about.

Mr Williams: I love my sport. I grew up with sport. I would play any sports I could play. I see a lot of the kids now, the non-Indigenous kids, using some of the languages that kids use at school with their schoolmates. That is fantastic, because they want to learn off their mates. Our kids want to learn off them, too. It is a two-way thing, and it is fantastic going out to watch the juniors going out to play football and here they are singing out to each other, calling out to each other in skin names. It is unbelievable. It is good. It is good to see kids with a big smile on their face and running around. It is pretty hard nowadays; they get into trouble. But these kids are really enjoying themselves—not only our kids but the whole community's kids—Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids.

Dr STONE: Karan, when you were making your introductory remarks, you said—and I wrote it down—that you had roads into all of the unis now. You mentioned West Sydney a few times. What do you mean by 'roads into all the unis'? Do you mean in relation to their teacher training or into their—

Ms Hayward: In all aspects. I do not know if you are aware of this but we do not employ a linguist. These people here are my linguists. We believe the language is pure from us. We do use linguists. I am not knocking their education or anything like that; it is just that we have found in the past that they mix our language up. We work with James Cook University. We have Alana Garwood there, who does work for our Borroloola ladies. We work with the south eastern Queensland uni, I think it is called—

CHAIR: It is the University of Southern Queensland. It is in my electorate—Springfield as well as Toowoomba.

Ms Hayward: Yes. We work with a few people down there. We also work with the Song Room. A lot of the universities are on board with them.

Dr STONE: The song room?

Ms Hayward: The Song Room work with Barkley Regional Arts. We have our own music centre at Tennant Creek. We helped to develop it. It was a men's program to work with young men on dance and music and to develop their own styles. From that we have gone into the Song Room, where we write in our own language. We get a lot of work. For instance, we have translated a few Johnny Cash songs into languages and the work guys sing them out in the groups. It is being used. Language has to be used or it dies. So the more we can do the better. All the universities come to us. We work with anyone that comes to the Northern Territory. We work with Charles Darwin University continually, and not only in our own training. We develop numeracy and literacy training for our own workers for anything that we have. That is why we were successful as a CDP. We believed that numeracy and literacy were the first things we had to do.

Dr STONE: Can I ask about prisons. We have got a lot of Indigenous young men and older men and also Indigenous women in our prison system, particularly in Northern Australia. Do you get any calls to help out with them?

Ms Hayward: We have a prison at Tennant Creek now. We have a work camp. They come and work with us, and we do work with them. Through the elders council in Tennant Creek, which is a very important group for us, we aid them to do whatever. In the last couple of weeks, they have given us some songs to translate. They do classes after they do their work program. We aid them in doing that. A lot of them have come from Ti Tree, which is just up the road. They want their language. So we have got books in their language now so that they can actually learn. One of the prisoners that we did the mining course with—we run the mining course at the language centre in Tennant Creek—said, 'We want to learn our own language.' So we got the books and everything and now they are speaking their language again. It has all gone round the prison now. There are about 30 or 40 prisoners. They are from all over the Northern Territory.

Dr STONE: These are Indigenous prisoners who are picking up language?

Ms Hayward: They are all Indigenous. I cannot comment on the women. But when I have had women in the Alice Springs prison, they do work for me. Ms James and others did interpreting and translating and things like that in the prison for the prisoners and for me. They are still using their language. We have not got a program with the women here in Alice Springs. I think the Alice Springs IAD do that, or maybe Darryl Pearce's mob do that. But we work with the men in Tennant Creek.

CHAIR: You made the comment in your submission about interpreters and translators not always being used when they should be, and obviously the people here are all doing that type of work. Ronald or Ross, do you think there are times when interpreters should have been used and they have not been?

Mr Williams: I quite agree with that point. One of the things I have noticed at a lot of the meetings—you have government meetings sometimes and you have to keep reminding other agencies and stakeholders that do not use interpreters, 'You've got to use the interpreters.' The elderly people who are sitting down there are not understanding what you are saying in English. It is better if you have an interpreter there, sitting down beside you, a male and a female. The male always speaks to the males and the females talk. I think it is very important to have interpreters. Everything you do in life, if you want to get the other people to understand what is happening—as I said before, it gets the younger people more involved. They could be sitting out there instead of that person who is 50 or 40-odd years of age. It could be a 25-year-old or an 18-year-old sitting out there. That is a bit of a livelihood for them; it is employment.

CHAIR: Yes, employment opportunities. Just as there are footballers and not footballers and there are carpenters and not carpenters, there are interpreters and there are people who are not quite so good. Do you think the training for interpreters is adequate? What do you think in terms of their accreditation?

Ms Phillips: We need more training. It needs training. You need to be trained all the time because systems change sometimes and the languages change, and you need to adjust it to explain, because in language we have to adapt to the English and you need training all the time to be a good, qualified interpreter.

Ms Hayward: A prime example is that we trained Mrs Nixon, and translated the Northern Territory Department of Housing rental agreement—to try to get the words in that translated! It is the same with some of the other stuff that we have, the intervention stuff; that was unbelievable. Yet the message was able to get across. When you were hearing it in your own language you could understand. As Mr Williams said, as Warumungu people we like to hear things. We are like everybody else. We like to think about it, we like to understand it and then we like to give you your answer. But a lot of government departments fly in and go, 'rah, rah, rah,' and everybody is going like that around the table but nobody is being understood. Then they are expecting us all to go 'Yeah, that's fine; we'll go with that.' That does not work.

Mr HAASE: We had an example of it yesterday.

Ms Hayward: Did you?

Mr HAASE: Big time.

Ms Hayward: We need to know. It is like everything. We need to know, but if you are not getting the information you cannot be informed and you cannot make the best decision. That is what has happened to our people in the past.

CHAIR: You mentioned Kriol before. Tell us about Kriol and what is happening.

Ms Hayward: We call it a made-up language.

CHAIR: Made up—exactly.

Ms Hayward: I have a soapbox now. When I first started I was told by the old people: 'No Kriol. It's a make-up language.' It is a mixture of languages made up from Warlpiri, and from the Katharine mob up that way and from the desert mob. It is actually taking over the other languages. The languages are not as pure as they used to be. Kriol is a make-up language, so it is spoken a lot. We find it the same with the linguists that come. They mix up the language. They will put Warlmanpa words in with the Wambaya words, or they will put a Warumungu word in there, and it is not. That is not their language.

I run an age 0 to 4 reading program in Katharine for the kids. We use these little books, which are ideal for ages 0 to 4, and it also helps the mothers' and fathers' reading as well. Of necessity they wanted it in Kriol because that is the main language spoken up there. I bowed and we did it in Kriol. So we are adapting; I am adapting. Kriol is definitely a made-up language. It was not a registered language in the beginning and you will not find it on maps from 19 whatever, but you will find it in the last 23 years.

CHAIR: What is the response of the elders to Kriol? Ross, Ronald, Judy, Penelope?

Ms Hayward: It is the young ones that speak it.

Mr Williams: It is the majority of the young people. As I said earlier before, they are leaving their traditional land, they live in an urban environment now and that has changed them. They do not speak their own language so they have mixed their languages. That is what is happening at the moment. That is why we need to strengthen our language so the kids can identify where they actually come from. If you do not know your language, you do not know your country and you do not know your Dreaming. You have got to follow lines and you keep in line with

the older people. We are trying hard. It is very hard to get change in kids' lives. We were all once kids. It is very hard to change until you get a bit older, I suppose, when they are 18 and 20. It is about getting them back and interested again and getting the kids to focus on their elders.

We get a lot of people coming back and getting back into the ceremonies, where you did not have it before. I think in 1994, the language centre supported the first Warumungu dancers. I had not seen the dancers since I was about 12 or 14. We formed a group which was the Warumungu Pujali Group. It was all Warumungu people and all our kids that were actually brought up in urban areas came back and the old people taught them how to dance and we toured Western Australia stopping at each place and each centre. We stopped at Katherine. We did not stay in motels; we went and stayed in a community with the people in Katherine—Kalano. Then we asked the traditional owners if we could come and stay at Gidgee Gorge and practice the dance there and speak in our language. They said, 'We will give you permission.' We went to each language centre. This is one in Fitzroy. They were amazed to see our dancers come up painted up the way the old people do. I was there. I just organised the seating arrangement and kept the area very clear for the dancers to come out. You have got kids running around. But all of a sudden you see the blokes come out, painted up with their head gear and these kids sort of popped down and sat down. They did not realise we dressed up like that. That was a good learning curve for our kids. All those young blokes that went on that trip have gone onto better things and they are helping the younger generation now to get involved with the dancing. That is fantastic.

CHAIR: To take that further, what Ronald was saying before, language leads to ceremony, leads to better things to use your words.

Mr Williams: Yes. That is correct.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. We appreciate it. We will just have a break for a couple of minutes before the next people come.

Dr STONE: Did Sandra, Penelope or Judy want to add anything there?

Ms Phillips: I did the workshop a couple of months ago and when we go back, I am going to do an apprentice and a master chef training and we are going to try and go back and—

Dr STONE: Bush tucker cooking—

Ms Phillips: Yes. We are trying to go back and do that so we are able to speak our language with the kids—not English, talk to them in languages. If we have not got a word, we have to make up a word or put a word that is similar to it—

Dr STONE: Okay.

Ms Phillips: To keep our language strong and striving.

Ms Hayward: Competition is good. We compete against Western Australia. Whenever the Pilbara mob come out with something—they copied us with some of this stuff—we now look at what they have done. And Ms Nixon will tell you, we are very competitive against each other. 'Did you see what they did?' 'Oh we've got to do that', and that is good for us. All us languages have got to work together because each one of us is important. One is not more important than the other and there are so many that have passed away.

Mr HAASE: I have only one little thing. I am going to take all this back to the west with me. I am just wondering: do you know whether the west languages groups are accepting and supporting Kriol?

Ms Hayward: The ones we talk to, yes. They are involved with us through the interpreter service. The Northern Territory interpreter service also goes across the Western Australia, and the Western Australian model is very strong. We sometimes, when I am feeling like we cannot go on, which happens sometimes, look at them and say, 'Look what they are doing!' and we revamp. They have got linguists. We cannot afford the linguists on the money we get. They are expensive. We believe that they are working with Kriol but they are trying to preserve their language as much as possible. Their language is very pure.

Mr HAASE: Did you do the big colouring-in book for the sniffing story?

Ms Hayward: No, we did not do that one.

Mr HAASE: It was a good book, hey?

Ms Hayward: Yes. We need to, but we never had a problem with petrol sniffing until just recently.

Mr HAASE: You need to resurrect the book.

Mr Williams: On behalf of the organisation, I would like to thank you for giving us an opportunity to speak with us and listen to us.

CHAIR: We are sorry we could not find the time to come to you. We thank you very much for driving all this way. Your evidence has been absolutely marvellous, fantastic, this afternoon. We really appreciate all of you coming down. It has been greatly appreciated. You made your points very, very well. Thank you.

Dr STONE: We need to know where to be able to buy a book. Do we look up your website or something?

Ms Hayward: These are being donated to you guys to take back to the Senate or wherever you want to take them.

CHAIR: The House of Representatives.

Ms Hayward: We do not mind. Penny spent a long time collecting all of this.

Dr STONE: They might be in the Parliamentary Library.

CHAIR: We will put them in the Parliamentary Library. They made it all the way to Canberra.

Ms Hayward: For once, I have got to Canberra.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 14:11 to 14:15

BAARDA, Mr Frank, Private capacity

EGAN, Mr Matthew Jampijinpa, Private capacity

RICE, Mr Donovan Jampijinpa, Literary worker, Bilingual Resources Development Unit, Yuendumu Community

CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon. Would anyone like to make a brief introductory statement? These are the formal proceedings of parliament. Anything you say must be factual and honest. It is a serious matter to mislead the committee, not that we think you will tell us untruths today. Please feel free to tell us how you feel about Indigenous language and the benefits of it and what your experience has been.

Mr Baarda: Have I got permission to read out a long statement rather than a brief one?

CHAIR: Yes. We will let you do that.

Mr Baarda: I made these notes last night. This is on behalf of myself but it is relevant to all of us at Yuendumu. One thing that I should mention is that I have lived in Yuendumu with my family for almost four decades, so we are stayer. I will read what I prepared last night. Ken Hale was one of the greatest polylinguists that ever lived. Ken, known as Jabanungga to the Warlpiri people who knew him, used the Warlpiri language in his Dutch lectures at the university of Nijmegen to explain and illustrate some grammatical principles to his students. Jabanungga loved the Warlpiri language. He became so fluent in Warlpiri that he raised his sons, Ezra and Caleb, to speak Warlpiri after his return from Australia to the United States. At his funeral in 2001, Ezra delivered the eulogy for his father in Warlpiri. I am telling you all this to help dispel the myth that Aboriginal languages are anachronistic relics that only serve to hold Aborigines back and have no intrinsic value in the modern world.

In my submission to this inquiry, which you would have there, I did not mention that I had the great fortune to grow up multilingual. I learnt to read and write in my second language, and English is my third language. There are a great many Aboriginal people who are multilingual. Far fewer of them are multiliterate. Anyone with the great fortune to know more than one language can tell you how this has enriched their life and so much more if they are multiliterate. The Australian nation does not have the right to deny multilingualism and multiliteracy to Aboriginal children, yet that is what current policies from the federal government and the NT government are doing, either by intent or out of ignorance.

Aboriginal languages are perceived as an impediment to scholastic, social and economic achievement rather than celebrated and valued as part of Australia's society's rich and diverse multicultural heritage. It makes me think of the Joni Mitchell song *Big Yellow Taxi*: 'You don't know what you've got till it's gone.' That will do as an introduction.

CHAIR: Matthew and Donovan, would you like to make a statement?

Mr Egan: Yes. As a Warlpiri man, I learnt both Warlpiri and English in the 80s. In our Walpiri schools in Yuendumu we learnt Lajamanu and Nyirripi. We had bilingual programs in Yuendumu which started in 1974. Everyone was happy for their children to learn in our own language and to learn to read and write in Walpiri. It was easy for all the little children to start in Walpiri. And, as they went up through the grades learned more and more English, easily. Everyone in this community who went through bilingual programs speaks English quite well—for instance, me. I speak and write in Walpiri and I also read and write in English. Both languages are really important but we really want our children to keep up their Walpiri language and to learn and read in Walpiri first. There are lots of words and there is lots of grammar and knowledge in Walpiri books that we want them to learn in Walpiri first. Otherwise, English starts to take over in their minds. That is why they have Kriol. We want our Walpiri people to speak Walpiri and English.

We have so much Walpiri knowledge about our country, plants, animals, water, soakages and our Dreaming, which we need to pass onto our children. When they learn mainly in English, their Walpiri gets weaker; they do not understand all the people talking. It makes us sad and it makes them feel sad and lost.

CHAIR: Thank you, Matthew. Donovan?

Mr Rice: I grew up in Yuendumu, learning both in Walpiri and English. I work in the language centre in Yuendumu, and my main work is translating and recording stories for new books. I have brought some of them here for you to maybe check out later. They are in language. When I was growing up, since I was in preschool, there were two teachers, a European and a Yapa—an Aboriginal—and they both helped, in my opinion, in my education. I think Walpiri language is a vehicle to move me further towards where I need to go, even in learning

different languages such as English. Language keeps me grounded, it gives me identity and a sense of belonging, because I know where I stand, and it gives me a strong sense of pride.

I had the opportunity to pick up the English language as I was growing up in the school. I learned both ways, English and Walpiri. I can read and write in both English and Walpiri both, so it helps me to learn both ways, to fit into both cultures, English and Walpiri. I think it helps. I think it is important, especially in younger children because they soak up knowledge very quickly. Especially when they have English coming in and they do not know much about this new language, they have to be slowly fed knowledge. I think the Walpiri language is the way to help them learn about with English—using both as a way of gaining knowledge, growing up strong and grounded. It helps them get to where they want to go in life. So I think it is important that we keep both languages. That is what we had when I was growing up in Yuendumu.

CHAIR: Thanks. Can I pick up something that both Frank and Donovan talked about. You can both answer if you wish. You talked about the link, the positive advantages, between English competency and the other thinking, reasoning and skills that come with learning Indigenous languages. Could you talk about the linkages there?

Mr Baarda: Worldwide there have been lots of studies that indicate all sorts of advantages to being multilingual. I had the great fortune of actually growing up that way. To deny multilingualism to anyone in the world when the possibility exists to give that blessing to a child then it is an absolute crime or a missed opportunity or whatever you want to call it. When it comes to trying to tell bureaucrats or politicians that this is important, they say, 'But there are so many languages. Where are you going to get the teachers and where are you going to get the linguists from?' That is always there.

When the bilingual education program started in Yuendumu in 1974, they did not have any qualified bilingual teachers. One very important principle that has to be kept in mind is that an unqualified vernacular speaker is far more able to impart knowledge to a child than a very qualified foreigner. That to me is so simple and yet bureaucrats will not accept that. When it comes to, for instance, employing Aboriginal teachers, they put the bar up more and more. Now to become a qualified teacher in the Northern Territory you have to firstly be very proficient in English. There are very few Warlpiri people at Yuendumu that have gone through secondary education, which is a prerequisite if you want to do a university teaching degree. If only they had seen the sensible thing: these people can speak the language the children can understand so that has got to be worth something. That has got to be worth a hell of a lot more than these alternatives.

Very recently the Northern Territory government announced they were going to allow people to teach in Northern Territory schools and all they need is a university degree. They will not even have to be qualified as teachers. In a place like Yuendumu, is a university degree qualified person that has never taught in this life more capable of imparting knowledge to these children? Another argument keeps popping up from people right at the top of the Northern Territory education department. They say things like, 'They can learn Warlpiri at home.' Hang on, what does this mean? Learn Warlpiri at home? No.

If I may indulge myself, I would like to give you a hypothetical example. It goes like this: just imagine that in the Second World War the Japanese had won. There is a little school of Australian English-speaking children in western Victoria, in Casterton, and the Japanese have taken over the education system. In walks Matsumotosan. He has got all these little children lined up on their first day of school. They have been hunted to school because if they do not go, their parents are going to lose their entitlements to Centrelink. So then this guy walks in and says [Japanese language not transcribed]. These little children have not got a clue what he said and all he said was, 'My name is Matsumoto.' Then he proceeds to give them a lesson in phonics—reading and writing. Those kids are going to go home at night and their mothers and fathers are going to say, 'How did you go at school today?' They are going to say, 'Not all that crash hot. We didn't have a clue what the teacher was saying.'

When I tell people this, they come up with this business of: 'But that's not the same.' I say to them, 'No, think about it. It's exactly the same as what's happening to these little Warlpiri kids out at Yuendumu.' They pick up English fairly quickly. They have got the television, they have got the shop keepers, they have got the police. Everybody there talks English at them. So, lo and behold, by the time they are about eight years old their English is good enough to start to understand what Professor Matsumoto is talking to them about, but they have lost two valuable years of schooling. Their scholastic and intellectual development has been held up for those two years. Only the really bright ones are ever going to catch up. They have been handicapped right from the word go.

Then in grade 3, what happens? Along comes the NAPLAN test. You have heard of NAPLAN testing, right? The third grade kids at Yuendumu fail dismally. Now, I am telling you that, if I went to Brunswick in Victoria and started asking a whole bunch of kids in Brunswick East Primary School questions in Walpiri, they would fail dismally, absolutely. They would get us absolutely nowhere. But it is not so much the failing. What is even worse—and this is something that I put in my submission—is that it is bloody cruel. These kids fail. They go

home and they have failed. They have been told that they are pretty dumb. They cannot answer the questions. The next day, they do not feel like going to school. You see, the irony right now in Yuendumu is that those kids who are not going to school actually are starting to talk better Warlpiri than the kids that are and the kids that are not learning to read and write, because they are still catching up with trying to understand what the teacher is talking about.

It is not just the language. It is not just the words. It is the context. This classroom is a completely alien environment. When we had the rapporteur for Indigenous rights from the United Nations visit Yuendumu, I was with the little party that went around. We walked into the classroom where there were all these little Warlpiri kids. This was not long after the 'four hours English-only' policy was instituted. There were these little Warlpiri kids, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed kids, with the white teacher. On the screen was this interactive modern thing. We never had those when we were kids, but there it is—flash. *Happy Little Dolphin*, for goodness sakes. These kids had no hope of knowing what a dolphin was, for starters. If had it had been the happy little yinalingi, the echidna, their attention might have been a bit more like: 'Yes, wow. We know about yinalingis, yes.' But, no, it was *Happy Little Dolphin*, all in English. These kids managed to turn around and say, 'Good morning,' to the special rapporteur. But, hey; hang on. Were these kids getting full value? Were they being educated? Were they learning things?

Then whenever people talk about this they say, 'But they have to learn English.' Nobody is arguing against 'but they have to learn English.' Politicians go up to Warlpiri people and say, 'Do you want your kids to talk English and to learn English?' The answer is always: 'Yes, absolutely.' But that is the wrong question. 'Do you want to learn English at the expense of your Warlpiri?' would have been a question that might get a slightly different—

CHAIR: It is not either/or. It is and/and.

Mr Baarda: Absolutely.

Dr STONE: That is the nature of our inquiry.

CHAIR: That is the nature of our inquiry.

Dr STONE: You are teaching to the converted. That is what the inquiry is all about.

CHAIR: We agree.

Mr Baarda: No, I am not preaching. I am getting this into *Hansard*. That is what I am going to.

CHAIR: We get you, Frank.

Mr HAASE: There are too many questions. I just think your point is well made and should be well taken and the inherent negatives or hurdles thrown up by bureaucrats that you mention are spot on the money. The question is constantly asked and the argument is constantly made—and I am guilty of it personally, and I am not bilingual of course. I think we have resources and if we are going to deploy those resources for the best possible outcome, we ought to teach English, and language ought to be taught at home. That is a natural monolingual thinking person's view, and you illustrate the wrongness of that very well, I think.

Mr Barda: When you talk about funding, I have got some other little notes about that very same thing—but I want to let the others have a go as well.

Mr HAASE: \$1,200 will buy a lingual system, I imagine.

Mr Egan: Yes. All we ask is for the government to give us back our bilingual. The government wants to work together with Aboriginal people to close the gap. I have worked as the liaison officer for the government, with FaHCSIA, for a year. I was the first Aboriginal worker in Yuendumu and I was a translator also. If the Aboriginal people and the government in the communities want to work together, all we ask is for them to give us back our bilingual.

Mr Rice: As you were saying, I think our language is important and should be recognised. It is part of who we are and only by recognition can we work together. As Warlpiri, like I said before, for our children growing up we are sort of in a foreign concept of a classroom. We would not know what to do unless we had a Warlpiri person standing there showing us what to do and what the European person is saying. Warlpiri is like a vehicle to learn a new language and I think only then if we can work together on that one part of what we are aiming for. I think that the proper recognition of our identity and language makes us strong and grown-up, knowing English and Warlpiri together. I think that the Indigenous language can assist in many ways such as in translation, because that is what I grew up on, especially the experience in the classroom of always having two people, a Kardiya—a European—and a Yapa—an Aboriginal person, a Warlpiri person. They were both there for me to make sure that I got the proper education in both ways. That has been an important thing in my growing up in both worlds, Warlpiri and English.

Dr STONE: Matthew, I hear what you have said a couple of times: bring back the multilingual regime or policy and that will be a good thing. But there are other elements as well that I would like you to comment on, such as the churn of teachers who come out to remote areas and do not typically stay very long, the difficulties with lots of the kids being on the outstations or the home stations and a long way from where there might be enough kids to be put together a secondary or primary school and the lack of preschool, and the lack of a balance between men and women teachers, whether they are teachers' aides or fully qualified teachers. As you know, at a certain age, boys are better to be taught by the men with the link in the cultural sensitivities. Could you comment on all of those elements as well? How are those overcome by the bilingual policy?

Mr Egan: I think that is why we need more Aboriginal teachers in our schools, so they can work together as assistant teachers. I have worked as an assistant teacher in a school in Yuendumu, and I have taught them with books like these ones I am showing the committee.

Dr STONE: They are vocabulary books?

Mr Egan: Yes, with pictures and all of that.

Dr STONE: When you say 'teacher's assistant', I think that is an excellent thing, but we also want as many Indigenous teachers as well as teachers' assistants, don't we? That is the point Frank was making about the Northern Territory changing its policy to that where you do not have to have a teaching qualification, just a degree. I think you made that point very well, Frank, but I am thinking about all of those other elements. What is your view about English ESL or TSL qualifications? Do you see those as an important adjunct to any new teacher coming to our remote areas to teach?

Mr Egan: Yes.

Dr STONE: Can you see an advantage if they have ESL or TSL training?

Mr Egan: I see it as very important for kids to learn English, but I would rather they learn Warlpiri first.

Dr STONE: So you have the kids when they come first to preschool or the first grade. They would be beginning in their home country language. Sometimes, if there are three or four different languages in the classroom, oops, they will have to manage that.

Mr Egan: Also, in preschool, they have assistant teachers.

Dr STONE: Yes, so it starts right back in preschool—

Mr Egan: Yes, from preschool.

Dr STONE: They are learning in their first language, which means that we have to have more of those sorts of books, doesn't it. We are going to have to do a lot more codifying or production of language into written form so the kids get the idea about the written.

Mr Egan: Yes. I went through it in the eighties. Then, after three or four years of schooling in Yuendumu, I came here to a boarding school, Yirara College.

Dr STONE: In your first couple of years before you went to boarding school, you were taught in Warlpiri?

Mr Egan: In Walpiri.

Dr STONE: Was that by Walpiri teachers' aides?

Mr Egan: Yes, by the teachers' aides, and English.

Dr STONE: Was that by a white teacher?

Mr Egan: Yes. It was a white, Canadian teacher.

Dr STONE: Canadian? Okay.

Mr Egan: Yes. It was in the eighties.

Mr Baarda: Was that the one that talked about how in hockey they use a puck instead of a ball?

Mr Egan: Yes, that was the one.

Mr Baarda: And then the whole class burst out laughing.

Mr Egan: Mr Weir.

Mr Baarda: Oh, no, that was another one. I was thinking of the Californian guy.

CHAIR: Frank, you pointed out how your son is multilingual and that he attributed his success in his computer skills—and now he is working for Google—to the advantages of being multilingual. Can you explore that. I know it is hearsay evidence, but what did he say?

Mr Baarda: You will be interested to know that my eldest son is called Donovan and that he is a contemporary of this Donovan here. I think he is a year older than you, isn't he?

Mr Rice: Yes.

Mr Baarda: They went to school together. My son eventually ended up at RMIT doing computer science and working for British Aerospace and all that sort of thing. Eventually he was recruited by Google because he had a website which was a wiki, or a swiki, in the days when nobody had heard of wikis or swikis. He was way out at the cutting edge and has stayed there. One time we were discussing this very thing and the fact that he grew up bilingually with Walpiri as a second language. In that sense, he parallels my own background in that I grew up with a second language and so on, and went to school and learned to read and write. He learned to read and write at a school where they had a bilingual program going and at that stage I think he was the only white kid in the class. So he learned Warlpiri by what they called immersion. When I discussed it with him at one stage he said, 'I think I have no problem with computer languages because I grew up with two vastly different languages.' In some ways that is what Donovan, here, has been saying: he grew up with both those languages and that has given him the confidence and so on, and that is why he is working in the school, the printery and all that. As a white kid my son had more opportunities than the average Yuendumu kid has. On the other hand they are both very comfortable with themselves. Multilingualism gives you an ability to think outside the box. Like I say, we multilinguals are very happy that we are, and we think it is very unfair that people should be denied that opportunity. That is a point I make all the time.

When it comes to the funding thing, which always pops up, not long ago Peter Garrett announced that they are setting aside \$85 million to enforce the new school attendance regulations. That is a lot of money for a student who is not going to school. That kind of money could be spent on re-employing linguists at the school, for instance, and not having the printery at Yuendumu running out of funding every now and again—which it does. It is now funded, I believe, by WETT; it is funded by Aboriginal royalty money. Then you get other things: a hundred new houses for teachers in remote Aboriginal Australia. It just so happens that the Northern Territory department of education does not provide housing to locally recruited staff. That is all very well because that is an Australia-wide policy.

There is a big difference, though, if you happen to be in Casterton. I keep picking on Casterton because that is where my wife comes from. If you are in Casterton, you get posted to that place, where Mr Mutsumoto would have gone if Japan had won the war, and what do you do? You go to a real estate agent and you can choose between 20 and 30 houses that you can rent or buy, or whatever. In Yuendumu that choice does not exist. So this little furphy of 'Oh, no, we don't provide housing for local recruits' is just a cop-out.

It has just been announced that under the Stronger Futures initiative we are going to get 100 more residences for teachers. That means 100 more white teachers. Those houses are going to cost about 400 grand a piece, so that is \$400,000 by 100. You work it out; it is so many million. There is \$85 million to fund the school police to hunt kids to school. Whatever is being taught in the school, never mind. There is that business about: 'We haven't got the funding.' Hang on—linguists and resources for language centres are peanuts compared with the amount of money they spend on policing.

CHAIR: It is a matter of priorities.

Mr Baarda: Absolutely. It is not just about priorities; it is about understanding how terrific these languages are.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming such a long distance. We appreciate that very much. A copy of your evidence, a transcript of it, will be on the committee's website. If there are any inaccuracies there, or things that need to be changed, please let us know.

Mr Baarda: Things that I wish I had said!

CHAIR: Put it in writing and send it to us!

Dr STONE: And if t you feel that your submission—

CHAIR: You can make an addendum to your submission.

Dr STONE: Yes, you can do that.

CHAIR: We will now suspend the committee.

Mr Baarda: There is something that I would like to ask. This is a submission that was made by a group of Yuendumu people, 71 of them in fact. It has all their signatures. They submitted this to the Senate inquiry on the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill. It deals almost exclusively with the language theme. The committee have ignored it; there is nothing in the Senate report that indicates they have taken any notice at all.

The Stronger Futures legislation does not have the term 'Aboriginal language' in it, by the way—I did a search and I could not find the term—though it often mentions alcohol and whatever else. If I could resubmit the submission to your guys—

CHAIR: Yes, that would be fine.

Mr Baarda: Can I say one more thing?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Baarda: I believe the Menzies School of Health did a study. One of the things that was in that little study was that Aboriginal youth who still spoke their own languages were far less likely to become dependent on alcohol and drugs. How that works, do not ask me. But I think it is an important thing to take into consideration.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I declare the meeting suspended.

Proceedings suspended from 14:52 to 15:07

BAARDA, Mrs Wendy

GALLAGHER, Mrs Enid Nangala, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

MARTIN, Ms Barbara Napanangka, Chairperson, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

MORRIS, Mr Hamilton Japaljarri, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

OLDFIELD, Mr Riley Jupurrurla, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

SPENCER, Mr Jacob Jungarrayi, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

WAYNE, Ms Maisie Napurrurla, Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

[15:07]

CHAIR: I welcome representatives from your community here today. We understand that some more people are coming. We do thank you for taking the time to come here. We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay our respects to elders past, present and future. Thank you for coming so far. Thank you for your submission as well. I invite you to make a brief statement at the beginning, if you wish. *Mr Oldfield then spoke in language—*

Mr Morris then spoke in language—

Mrs Baarda: I have lived in Yuendumu since 1973 and been involved in our two-way program until it was ended by the four-hour English rule. I still work at the school, mostly voluntarily. Sometimes for special things I get paid.

Ms Martin: I am one of the teachers at Yuendumu school. I am also a chairperson for Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc. Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru means Warlpiri triangle. Maisie Wane came all the way from Yuendumu to meet you.

Mrs Gallagher: I came to listen and share our ideas.

Mr Oldfield: I came here to listen to you mob. Also, my sister works at the school. She is a teacher.

Ms Martin: I am also a qualified teacher and have done all my four-year training.

Mr Spencer: I am a community chair person in Nyirripi. I came because Warlpiri education is important to us.

Mr Morris: I am involved with young people in the mentor program at Nyirripi. We encourage young people to make videos, music and all that. I am a musician myself. We do our own recording out there. I am also a community store manager.

CHAIR: Would you like to make a brief introductory statement about the importance of your language to you and how it can benefit not just your community but young people as well.

Mr Spencer then spoke in language—

Mr Spencer: I just said it is important for us to speak to a new born, a kid that is born, in Warlpiri when they are a child. We like to teach them in Warlpiri first because that is the only language that is important to our kids. It is really important for us to teach them Warlpiri first and English later. I have just translated that.

Ms Martin then spoke in language—

Ms Martin: I just said that we want to talk in our language. We want to recognise that Warlpiri is a strong language for our children and us and to keep it going so that we cannot lose it. Warlpiri is important for our kids and their kids and for later generations. We are Warlpiri people and it is our identity. We are Warlpiri people and Warlpiri is the language that we want to keep going for our kids so that we do not lose it. That is why we are talking in our language and translating it back to you.

Dr STONE: You obviously have more than 30 years experience in the education system, Barbara, as have numbers of the rest of you here today. You have lived through the bilingual era—shall I call it—that the Northern Territory government approved of in some schools. Now you are in the four-hour English-only era and you have made a lot of observations—you have looked at how those compare. Can you tell us the number of children now not coming school compared to before? The truancy rates for example? The retention rates? Can you compare those two systems for us? How they are panning out in terms of children wanting to go to school, enjoying school, keeping their traditional languages and also learning English?

Mr Morris: Sometimes children miss school for various reasons, like for sorry, culture and all that and for men's business. Sometimes white teachers do not understand about our culture and how important it is, like Barbara was saying earlier on. That is very important. It is in our heart. It is everywhere, like the plants and the

trees. That means a lot to us. It has got a story there, a dreaming there, you know? A plant to you might be an ordinary plant but it represents bush medicine, you know—it heals.

Ms Martin then spoke in language—

Ms Martin: In the last Warlpiri tribes [Warlpiri language not transcribed] before that we used to have remote learning partnership meetings with some of the people who are working for the Northern Territory government.

[Walpiri language not transcribed]. They used to have lots of meetings with us about how we could share our Walpiri. We gave all our ideas to them and they said in the last Walpiri triangle that they were going to support Walpiri for a long time. [Walpiri language not transcribed]. At the last Walpiri triangle that we had a lady came and said that there would be a whole hour of English and one hour of Walpiri. There were two things that we were not coping with. We were doing workshops and having meetings because they wanted us to sign an agreement for the remote learning partnerships.

At first things were getting better and we were talking about keeping things in Walpiri and how we could teach our kids in the school. We talked a lot about that but then things changed. They were coming back and giving us changes that they had made that we were not happy about. At the very end we said that we did not want to sign the agreement. At that time we had four hours of English and one hour of Walpiri being taught in the classroom. We were not happy about that. The kids were finding it really hard to learn English. Now they are learning English; they are getting it, but we are still worried about our Walpiri. We do not want to lose it. As a teacher, I have been working at teaching both languages. At that time we were not happy about the four hours English but now things are getting better for our kids. One of the main things was attendance. Some kids were not coming but now that is getting better and the kids are coming. The only problem that we have is with the teenagers in secondary. Our school does not have proper secondary class.

Dr STONE: So the kids are coming more often to the secondary classes now?

Mrs Baarda: Not to the secondary. We have a problem with secondary students. It is only the kids in early childhood, primary and some in the middle years that are coming back, not the teenagers. We do have one, two or three teenagers, secondary-age students, who come, but our school does not have a proper secondary class.

Mr HAASE: Enid, did you want to say something about that and answer that same question?

Dr STONE: Also, do you have anything to add about comparing the bilingual programs of old and the four hours English today and how the students are responding to those two different types of schooling?

Mrs Gallagher: The kids in the classroom have problems with having another teacher there and no Indigenous worker. They have problems with listening and talking. It is better to have an Indigenous worker so the kids can understand and talk to the teacher in language. They used to have elders coming in, helping the Indigenous teachers with some words. Today there are no elders in the classrooms.

Mr HAASE: Just continuing along the same line of questioning, how many of you were teaching as fully-fledged teachers and how many of you were teaching as education assistants? Were you a teacher or an assistant, Enid?

Mrs Gallagher: I was a teaching assistant. I did my training through the Batchelor Institute.

Mr HAASE: But you were not fully paid as a full-time teacher?

Mrs Gallagher: No.

Mr HAASE: Maisie, were you?

Ms Martin: No. She is just a person who cooks. She is doing a literacy program.

Mr HAASE: And Barbara? You were a fully-fledged teacher paid equally to a Kardiya teacher?

Ms Martin: Yes. Wendy was a teacher too.

Mr HAASE: And Wendy. I am sorry; I am not excluding you, Wendy. Are any of the men teaching?

Mr Morris: No.

Mr HAASE: Is there a barrier that we can understand as to why there are not many men teaching in schools or assisting in classrooms, perhaps to take separate boys or young men's classes? Is there something cultural that you could share with us in that regard?

Mr Morris: At the moment, for jobs that are being advertised anywhere in town or in cities, especially in the Northern Territory, sometimes the Aboriginal person has not got the qualifications for teaching. That person might be educated, but you have got to do a police check and all sorts of things before going for a job. There are mainly only female workers. There are only white people working there who are teachers. [Indigenous language

not translated] These people who have come from cities and they do not know the knowledge of our law and culture and our kids. I am getting to the question that you are asking us. Like I said, sometimes our people try but find it hard to work in jobs, especially teaching. I might have the experience and the skills, but if I want an interview for the job they will not let me.

Mr HAASE: What you are saying is: there is not a cultural reason.

Mr Morris: No, there is no cultural reason.

Ms Martin: Before, we used to have three men working at Yuendumu school. They have retired, finished working, and now they are trying to get in and get a job. They need to get police checks and they need to get an ochre card. And ochre card is for working with the children. Some men who want to work at the school may have been in prison, and that is why they cannot get through it. They need to get a police check. Mostly, we get men involved in culture days. We take them out bush and they teach young men and boys and we teach young girls and young women.

Mr HAASE: Does that mean the involvement of the men has to be on a voluntary basis?

Ms Martin: On cultural day we learn about traditional—

Mr HAASE: So for cultural work there is an exclusion for having the card?

Ms Martin: No, it is not for that. The ochre card is for teaching in the classroom.

Mr HAASE: You do not need the card for outside work, the cultural work?

Ms Martin: No, we do not need that because we are all Aboriginal and we know our culture and our language and we want to teach our kids in our language so that they can learn about their kinship, their Dreaming and their country, and we take them out bush on excursion. That is where most of our teaching and learning comes from, from the bush, and we bring them back to school so that in the classroom we can do follow-ups for our culture days and culture nights from what we do out bush.

The kids all come to school and they learn English, maths and everything, but they also learn Walpiri in the school. At the moment they are learning English as a first language. The first language is only one hour, while the second language is four hours. That is how it is happening at our schools.

Mr HAASE: Do you believe that results from the NAPLAN testing are going to have an impact in your school?

Ms Martin: Mostly, NAPLAN testing is only for English, not for our language.

Mr HAASE: Now that we have introduced the four-hour English, no longer bilingual, is that going to improve the results for the NAPLAN test? I believe that it was the poor results for NAPLAN that made the change, the four-hour English rule, and took away the bilingual. So do you think now that the NAPLAN results will improve or are they irrelevant?

Mr Morris: I think that it will improve as long as there is an Indigenous person there. Kids will feel uncomfortable if there is no Indigenous teacher in that classroom. They will feel uneasy—

Ms Martin: With NAPLAN testing, kids have got to do that test, but they learn English with both the Kardiya teacher and Indigenous teacher there and they need to do it by themselves—it has got to come out from them. We are going to have to do NAPLAN testing lower.

CHAIR: They are at a disadvantage, aren't they?

Mr HAASE: Yes, it is very difficult.

Ms Martin: It is really difficult. I cannot even sit with the child now—

Mr HAASE: I understand. I am just trying get onto the record your point of view about whether the reason for changing from the bilingual system, which was to improve NAPLAN results, might work or not work.

Ms Martin: I do not really know.

Mr HAASE: I understand that you do not know, but just what you think from the heart.

Ms Martin: I think that we want our kids to learn both languages so that they can be balanced. If that NAPLAN testing was also for our language, they would be balanced. But if English is up there and our language down here, we do not understand how we can teach our language to our kids. They can speak the language, they can do anything, they can go hunting—they could do those kinds of things.

Mr HAASE: Our city kids cannot.

Ms Martin: You would not survive out bush.

CHAIR: Wendy, you are sitting there quietly, can we hear from you? You have lived in this community a very long time and I am interested to hear what you have to say in terms of the importance of language from your observations as a schoolteacher.

Mrs Baarda: I have seen attendance go up and down and up and down, and it is still going up and down and up and down. I do not think that the program makes any difference to attendance. That is tied to people's lives and the traumas in their lives and their need to move away because white people take their people away to jail or to hospital or wherever else, and the kids are moving around a lot. Once, someone did a study of how many kids in the community came to school on a day and it was over 90 per cent. But on the rolls it is always around 50 to 60 per cent, and that is not counting the fact that kids are actually not there. When they are there, people send them to school.

The NAPLAN tests are very unsuitable for Aboriginal kids speaking a second language. I do not think English-speaking kids would do well either in NAPLAN tests if they were tested in a different language. At year 3 and year 5, how can they learn what those other kids have been learning all their lives in three years? It is impossible. The miracle is that we have one or two really linguistically gifted children every year who do actually get benchmark 1 in NAPLAN tests. In the last lot of testing, one of Barbara's grandchildren, who is in year 3, made it to benchmark, probably because she learns at home. NAPLAN tests are not suitable. They should have different tests for ESL learners.

The other thing is, what they found with bilingual education in one of the Top End communities where people had a choice—they could learn bilingually or they could be in English class—is that the all-English ones did better on English in the early years, years 3 and 5, but in years 7 and 9 the bilingual ones were ahead. They had caught up and passed the other ones. We have people coming who say they love to teach Yuendumu children because they are turned on, they are switched on and they want to read. That was because they understood everything when they were learning to read. But now it is all-English, mainly, and what they are reading does not have much meaning. For example, with *Happy Little Dolphin* there is not much in their lives that they can relate to, whereas they understand the Walpiri books completely. That is what literacy is about. It is about understanding. It is not just about the mechanics of reading. I do not think they are going to get better results in the long run—in the short term, maybe, but not for life and not for having kids who see their learning at school as related to life outside school.

CHAIR: We want to thank you all very much for coming here today and for your detailed submission. A transcript of what is being said today will be on the committee's website and you can make changes to it if there are inaccuracies. Please let us know.

Thank you for making the time to come all this way. We very much appreciate it. Keep working hard. Thank you very much for what you have been saying. We will take on board what you have to say very closely in our recommendations to the government. We will be tabling our report in September or October this year, and the federal government has six months to respond to the recommendations.

Dr STONE: If there is anything that you felt we did not cover today that was not in your original submission, you can send us more information. Thank you.

CASTLE, Mrs Dominique, Principal, Alice Springs Language Centre

SMITH, Miss Margaret, Assistant Teacher, Alice Springs Language Centre

ZERK, Miss Tanya, Assistant Principal, Alice Springs Language Centre

[15:39]

CHAIR: Thank you for coming. We appreciate you taking the time to come here. Please note, everything that is said must be factual and honest. Would you like to make a brief introductory statement before we start?

Mrs Castle: The Alice Springs Language Centre first opened its doors in 1989. The main role of the Alice Springs Language Centre is to deliver languages to all government schools in Alice Springs. There are four main languages that we deliver at primary and middle school. They are Arrernte—which is the local Indigenous language of Alice Springs and is priority number 1—Japanese, Chinese and Indonesian. At the senior level, as well as those languages, we deliver French and sometimes Spanish.

We teach approximately 2,050 students per week. Of those, 850 are students or children learning the Arrernte eastern central language. The Alice Springs Language Centre took over the Arrernte language back in 2005. We decided that it should be a priority language in Alice Springs and that it should be the first language we look at. We started recruiting Indigenous teachers and Indigenous assistant teachers who could speak, read and write the Arrernte language, as at that time there were only 3,000 Arrernte speakers in Central Australia and very few of them could read and write the language as well.

We recruited some Indigenous people, ladies. We trained a couple of them as teachers and Margot as the assistant teacher. We tried to talk Margot—Margaret—into becoming a teacher for many years but she does not want to; she is very happy being the assistant teacher. In 2005 we recruited a senior position at the Alice Springs Language Centre because we recognised that there were no resources to teach the Arrernte language in Central Australia and there was no curriculum or programming for it. That is where Tanya Zerk comes in and I will let her talk a little about what she does with the Arrernte school program.

Miss Zerk: Basically, my role is to work with the Arrernte ladies to program classes from transition through to year 9. In senior years there is a subject called Australian languages, which is run through SACE in South Australia. We teach that in years 11 and 12. Our students who decide to continue from year 9 into year 10 will jump into that stage 1 course. They have a pathway to move into there and continue with their language studies. It also gives students who have not learnt any language before or who are interested in the language and the culture an ability to jump in and learn about the Arrernte language and culture. I suppose, programming-wise, in middle years and primary, we program according to the Northern Territory curriculum framework. We use the second-language learning area as opposed to the Indigenous languages and culture program because the majority of the kids we teach are second-language learners of Central Eastern Arrernte. All our other languages are also based on second-language learning and we follow the same format when we program our classes.

Mrs Castle: I guess for us, the Arrernte program needs to be a little bit different from teaching Japanese or Chinese or any other language. There are not a lot of resources available so a lot of the resources are made at the language centre. Tanya does a lot of research into that and Margot and Kumalie make up a lot of these resources in order to be able to teach the Arrernte language in schools. A lot of the program is really hands-on because, as the ladies always tell us, it is more culturally appropriate to have the kids outside the classroom than inside the classroom. A lot of it is about culture and so, if they are studying about bush tucker or something like that, it is better to take them outside.

In 2006 or 2007 we had our first senior students in Alice Springs doing Australian languages with Tanya through SACE. All five of them did very, very well. One of them actually got a 20 out of 20, which I think for South Australia is like a perfect score. I always tell the story that the father of the girl met me at the Yepereny Shopping Centre and said, 'Dom, I am really embarrassed that my daughter's name made it to the paper. I am really not happy that the language centre could do such a thing.' I said, 'What are you talking about?' and he said, 'She got 20.' 'Yes,' I said, 'she got 20 out of 20! That is like saying 100 out of 100.' 'Aahh,' he said, so they were really happy. We have the Minister's Award after year 12 here in Central Australia and the whole family turned up to see this young girl receive her award, because she had got 20 out of 20 in Australian languages, which was fantastic.

But there are other things we do—and I will ask Margot to talk about that. A lot of teaching is done in the INU units, which are Indigenous units in all the primary schools. It actually helps the kids to settle in or enables them to use their language with a teacher who is the speaker of Arrernte. I might just ask Margot to talk a bit about what she does, because it would be awful if we went back and she did not say anything.

Miss Smith: I was quite happy with that. I am the Arrernte teacher at the language centre. I deliver Arrernte from transit into year 6 including what Mrs Castle just said, the Indigenous unit. We also teach students at the Amoonguna community just out of Alice here through the IDL centre that we have with the language centre, and we do about half an hour communication with Arrernte. The kids love it with the TV and everything.

I also teach and assist with the middle school with years 7, 8 and 9 with the other Arrernte teacher, Kumalie, who could not be here today because she is not well. I also teach Arrernte evening classes to adults and anyone who wants to come and learn a bit about the Arrernte language. The people who do come along work in the hospitals and schools and Indigenous organisations around town. They probably just want to learn a bit about Arrernte. That is pretty much it.

CHAIR: I am interested in how the kids respond to Arrernte compared to, say, Indonesian. I presume there are not too many Indonesians living in Alice Springs, necessarily. How do the kids respond to Indonesian and how do they respond to their native language here? Do they respond differently and, if so, how?

Mrs Castle: I would like Margot and Tanya to elaborate on it, but one of the elders from one of the communities around Alice Springs once stopped me at the supermarket and said, 'This little blonde, blue-eyed girl just said "werte" to me, and it was amazing.' She said, 'I got a wonderful feeling, because it's taught at all primary schools.' I think it is very, very good. It does help with our non-Indigenous children getting a glimpse of the local Indigenous culture. I think it is very important. That is why Arrernte is a priority language for us. There can be a lot of racism in Alice Springs, and I think it is really good for Indigenous teachers to be teaching it in our schools and to have a senior teacher who is planning and making sure that it is in the program at the same level as Indonesian, Japanese or Chinese and not just, 'Well, let's talk about the hunters and gatherers.' No, they actually are learning the language, just as they would be learning Japanese.

CHAIR: I ask that question because one of my daughters did Indonesian at high school and she is currently studying it at university, and for her it is a foreign language; she speaks English at home. But do the kids respond differently when they are learning their Indigenous language?

Miss Zerk: Are you talking about kids who actually speak that language?

CHAIR: Yes, exactly. Do they respond differently? Is it something that they embrace more readily than, say, Indonesian, for example?

Miss Zerk: My personal opinion is that it is just like any other language class. You have the kids that love it and are good at it and really enjoy it and do embrace it, and then you have the other kids—'Oh, this is my language; I already know all this.'

CHAIR: Like maths, science and history.

Miss Zerk: Yes. So it is just like any other classroom environment, I would say. However, I suppose that where that changes is when you move up into senior and then they are making the choice to take on that language. I have kids in senior who absolutely love doing languages and do embrace their language and culture and think that it is really important. But then again you get that in middle years as well, don't you, Margot?

Miss Smith: Pretty much the same—and primary.

Miss Zerk: Because you do have a mixture of kids that are learning it from scratch and kids that know it, that is where I think Indigenous teachers are really important, because they can extend those kids who do have that language base and speak to them in language and extend them, as opposed to the other kids in that classroom as well.

Mrs Castle: The other thing for the Indigenous child, who maybe is not doing so well in literacy, numeracy or whatever, is that the ladies come in and they are teaching Arrernte, and they are actually having success at something. For that one hour, they are king of the class, which is very good.

Dr STONE: How do the schools go about selecting a language to be taught? Do they do some sort of referendum amongst their parents and say, 'This year we can do Indonesian, Japanese or Arrernte'? How does that work? Do the students have a choice of language? Do some of the Arrernte speakers get to choose Indonesian instead? What is the focus on the actual literacy part of the language learning when it comes to Arrernte?

Mrs Castle: In the middle years—years 7, 8 and 9—students choose what language they want to do. Amazingly enough, the numbers of years 7, 8 and 9, compared to the other languages, are much higher for Arrernte. So you have many more kids wanting to do Arrernte.

Dr STONE: These are Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids?

Mrs Castle: Maybe, I would say, a third. It is a good mix of non-Indigenous and Indigenous kids. In primary schools, all primary schools in Alice Springs want the Indigenous language.

Dr STONE: Do they?

Mrs Castle: Yes.

Dr STONE: State and independent?

Mrs Castle: We do not teach independent; we only teach state—government schools. Basically, the assistant principals will ring the language centre in about October-November and they will say, 'Look, we want to specially transition years 1, 2, 3 and 4 to do Arrernte, because we might have little kids that are coming off the community and we know that the ladies will be able to settle them in and talk to them,' or, 'We would like, say, Margot to have her recess as part of her teaching program with some of our new kids,' which seems to work. At the senior levels, of course, it is their own choice whether they do it or not.

Dr STONE: You are saying that at senior levels that was the 30 per cent. What numbers were you quoting for those choosing Indigenous?

Mrs Castle: That was middle school. In middle school it is a good half and half, would you say?

Miss Zerk: Would you have Indigenous kids whose first language is not central eastern Arrernte and who are also doing that class?

Dr STONE: Do you have many year 12 students? Can they take it as a year 12 subject?

Miss Zerk: Yes, of course. Basically, at years 11 and 12, it is Australian languages, which is not just learning the language; it is actually a study of Indigenous languages in general as well. There is a component where they have to learn language and they do an oral task. One of their other tasks, which I am working with them on at the moment, is to study a text and then look at the word order, at how it all works and everything like that, which is actually quite full-on. I have spoken to SACE about that, because it quite linguistic. Then they do a research topic.

Dr STONE: So are there many Indigenous students or non-Indigenous students doing that year 11-12 subject?

Miss Zerk: In year 12 this year I have five students doing that, which is quite a lot compared to what I have had in the past. I think a lot of kids maybe expect that that course will be something a little bit different from what it is. That is where that linguistic component is quite challenging for them, because the kids that want to do this are not the most academic students. They just want to be in there learning the language; not to then explain how the language works and all that kind of stuff. That tends to have an impact on whether we have larger numbers or not. Year 11 is usually quite good. Last year, I think we had 14 or 15.

Dr STONE: Margo, how do you teach these junior or just-commencing students with teaching materials? Have you made your own? I am talking about the books, the dictionaries, the reading materials and the vocab. How have you developed your reading materials for Arrernte? This is the literacy part. I can understand you teaching oral language, but I presume you are teaching the literacy as well in these courses?

Miss Smith: We do make our own resources at the centre. Then we take them to the classes.

Dr STONE: You make them yourselves?

Miss Smith: We make them ourselves and take it out and explain to the kids. In general, if we are reading a book it will be a normal English little story book, and, for whatever program we made, we can sometimes convert it to Arrernte and share that from the book and from their worksheet into Arrernte.

Dr STONE: Do you use the language centres: the Tennant Creek language centre or was it Katherine? The one we had evidence from earlier on: the Papulu Apparr-kari Language Centre. Tennant Creek. Do you use any of their materials?

Mrs Castle: No, because it is totally different language. Basically, the Alice Springs Language Centre—the model for us is basically for us to go out and teach. That is what we do. So we go out into the schools and we do it. This year, because we have a few non-native speakers working at the language centre—for instance, a Chinese, Japanese and an Indonesian—what we have decided to do to make it easier for the children, especially in primary school, is to use the big book. So we start with a book in English. It might be *Wombat Stew*. That is what Margot did last. So she will read them the story in English and the kids will get involved with everything, and then gradually that book will turn into Arrernte. She will look at the animals of Central Australia and what they are called. She will look at the colours. They will talk about maybe the seasons: the dry, the wet. The children will then make a mural about all the things that they have learnt in the book and everything will be in Arrernte.

Basically what we have found using that method is that, because most in primary schools are non-Indigenous, the kids are more willing to engage with the language.

CHAIR: Mr Haase?

Mr HAASE: Thank you. I am listening, not formulating questions. But I am very interested in knowing more about this whole question we have been analysing here today about the bilingual period versus the now four-hour English period. Dominique, do you know whether there is any moratorium in this regard, or is it gone and gone forever and that it is—close the door?

Mrs Castle: We are not really involved with this. Basically, we are a language centre and all we do is deliver languages, and that is it. We are not into the bilingual program. I was brought up in a bilingual system in Mauritius so I can answer for that, but I cannot really talk about the other because we really do not have any.

Mr HAASE: Does the Language Centre have anything to do with appealing to people who might go on and learn to teach or translate? Do you believe your impact in schools in any way leads to career opportunities for people in language? Might it be that your teaching of Arrernte in schools may result in an interest that sends a student to Batchelor? Have you any experience of that?

Mrs Castle: I think so.

Miss Zerk: I could probably say so. I have a couple of students at the moment. One is very passionate about language, and about central western Arrernte, even though that is not her first language. Her first language is English. Her father came from up north in Western Australia, but he is 'kuminjay' now. She loves it and is looking at going to university to become a teacher, and she would really like to come back to Alice Springs and work in that area. I have another student who is doing a school based apprenticeship with CAAMA. She has more of a grounding in the language. She understands the spoken level of language and she can speak a bit of language. She is working on her reading and written language and is getting quite good. She is certainly looking in that direction with CAAMA and maybe being able to use the language in that way.

CHAIR: Margot, what is your experience? You have obviously done some study?

Miss Smith: Sort of, kind of—not really. I learned as I went along. I have been working with kids for about 17 or 18 years. Like Mrs Castle said before—

Mrs Castle: Don't call me Mrs Castle; what is that?

Miss Smith: Sorry—just being professional! I think I have just been lucky in the field. I have been passionate about working with kids. After becoming a mum, I thought, 'That's it; no more teaching.' But, after 12 months, after the little one was born, I said, 'Okay, I'm going back to work with kids.' I think in my field I have just been lucky to work with kids. I never had the opportunity to study but I learned as I went along, getting great professional help and support from Tanya and Dom over the many years that I have been working with them.

CHAIR: Dom—I will call you 'Dom', not Mrs Castle—and Tanya, you might be able to help us. How can we improve teacher training in language in Indigenous communities? What can we do? You are both teachers. You are obviously both experienced; what are your observations?

Mrs Castle: I think that, first of all, you have to be lucky. I have always said that we need to clone Margot. She is an amazing teacher in the classroom and in the way she works with students. If I walk in to go and have a look to see what she is doing, it is as always, 'Miss Margie, Miss Margie.' Watching Margot teach is like watching a television show. She is very good.

I also think that the Indigenous languages need to be taken very seriously. At the Language Centre we have decided that it will be a priority language, and Tanya has done a fantastic job with programming and curriculum. When you walk into the Language Centre, if you want you can pick up a Japanese program, but you can also pick up a very similar Arrernte program. I think it is very important to recognise that it is a language. On communities and even at the Language Centre, the ladies who come in to teach have to be trained. You have to work with them and support them. They know a hell of a lot. Also, we need to all work together to have a good work ethic. I think it is very important that we are at work all the time and we are teaching the kids and building relationships. That is what it is all about.

CHAIR: You mentioned before that just for an hour some child that might not be particularly academically gifted or doing particularly well could be king or queen for that hour. Have you seen any correlation between, say, the Indigenous language teaching, particularly here in Alice Springs, and the development of English proficiency and effectiveness? Do kids say, 'Oh, I worked that out there; that'll help me in my understanding here'?

Mrs Castle: I am very passionate about languages. I teach French and Indonesian, and for me it is very important. Learning another language is like a window to the world, and you do not have to carry a book; it is all up there in your brain. I think that for all children, whether they are learning an Indigenous language or another language—whatever it be—their literacy skills will improve, their grammatical skills will improve and their cultural knowledge increases. I think they are much more intelligent and sensitive human beings. Also, at the

same time I think that you need to have teachers that know their stuff too—that know about grammar and know about the linguistic part of what makes a language or the culture. Watching Stephen Fry at the moment on Sunday night is excellent. But I might just pass that on to Tanya also, because she sees the other end. She is with the senior students, who are getting 19 or 20 out of 20 at year 12. What do you think?

Miss Zerk: With Australian languages, I have said it is very linguistic, so it can be quite difficult for the kids. But at the same time they are learning through being able to say, 'How does the language work?' and to say, 'Okay, with a sentence you have your subject, your object and your verb. In English it's this way. In Arrernte it's actually slightly different, the word order changes and it doesn't have to be exactly the same.' They start to understand, even with the simple things in year 7, that every Central/Eastern Arrernte word ends with an 'e'. They get that in their heads. Fantastic. That is the start of being able to do some spelling here, whereas it might be different in a different Indigenous language. When it comes to English, they can make that correlation: 'They use this word to mean these things; English uses many words to mean the same thing.' They start to maybe put the puzzle together. With my kids at the moment, I am saying, 'You look at the writing; you work out your puzzle; you go around.' I said, 'You know, when you have a puzzle you go around; you form the edges first because that's the easy part for you, and then you start to put the pieces together.' Yes, they are getting there. They are starting to understand: 'Okay, these are nouns, these are pronouns and these are verbs and adjectives that work slightly differently from English.' As they are learning the Arrernte, they are actually learning, 'Okay, that's how it works in English.' So I would say that it does help their literacy and their knowledge of that kind of stuff immensely. I think they get that in the middle years as well.

Mrs Castle: Currently we teach Indonesian to Wallace Rockhole School, which is about an hour away; it is near Hermannsburg. They have decided to learn Indonesian from us. What the teacher has noticed out there is that their English has improved because that is the common language that they are using as a medium language to communicate all this stuff. The teacher out there is saying the kids are asking a lot of questions and they are doing it in English. So the lesson is in English, they are learning another language and it is actually improving their literacy skills.

Dr STONE: Can I ask Dom, Margot or Tanya—whoever knows—how you fund it. Do the skills who request you to come and teach Arrernte or whichever language pay you a fee per child, or do you have a global budget which is not dependent on different schools asking you for different classes to be taught?

Mrs Castle: The Alice Springs Language Centre started 23 years ago, and the language centre has grown since then. It started with only two teachers, and it now has almost 13. We are all above establishment, so basically the schools do not pay anything. We are the language centre. We go out to the schools and we teach. We do not provide teachers with relief time, so when we go into primary schools the teachers are actually there learning with the students. In the middle school or in the senior schools, we are not relieving anybody; we are there in our own right teaching languages.

Dr STONE: So the usual class teacher is in the classroom with you when you are teaching?

Mrs Castle: Yes, in the primary schools, but in the middle school and the senior schools we are part of the timetable.

CHAIR: Are your teachers, in terms of their language, at a high level?

Mrs Castle: Yes.

CHAIR: You guys are really specialist language teachers?

Mrs Castle: With DET, we are just normal language teachers. We are not seen as specialist teachers or anything like that.

CHAIR: Your proficiency in that—say, Indonesian—

Mrs Castle: Yes, we are all fluent.

CHAIR: is so much better than, say, a year 11 or year 12?

Mrs Castle: Yes, because we teach right through. All of us will teach about 380 to 400 students a week. We are going from classes to classes. Tanya being the assistant principal of the language centre, her teaching load should be 12 hours, but it is not; it is 23. Mine should be eight, but it is not; it is 20. We are travelling all the time.

Dr STONE: How many schools do you service?

Mrs Castle: We have six primary schools. We do the School of the Air students from Katherine all the way down to the South Australian border, because we have IDL facilities at the language centre. Margot does Amooinguna, which is through IDL; Wallace Rockhole, through IDL; Tennant Creek, IDL; and then we do—

Dr STONE: IDL is School of the Air?

Mrs Castle: IDL is interactive distance learning.

Dr STONE: What about what we used to call School of the Air?

Mrs Castle: Yes, we used to go there but we do not now because, with federal funding, they gave us our beautiful language centre. Every two years we used to move from one school to another and use up a couple of their rooms, but now we do not have to move any more because we have a brand-new language centre with IDL facilities.

We do the middle school. Languages in years 7, 8 and 9 are compulsory, so we teach all the students there. We also, starting next term, will teach at Acacia Hill School, which is the special school in Alice Springs. We do years 10, 11 and 12 at Centralian Senior College.

Dr STONE: I think you are unique. I cannot think of any comparative model in any of the states. Can you think of any in the states?

CHAIR: No.

Dr STONE: I think it sounds brilliant. I wish I had one in my area—one of your clone centres!

Mrs Castle: It is really good. I think one of the main reasons that the language centre works is that all principals and all assistant principals really value languages in Alice Springs. At the moment we are stretched. We cannot offer them any more. They want more, but we just cannot.

Dr STONE: Are you the only language centre like this in the Northern Territory?

Mrs Castle: There is one in Darwin but it does not operate the way we do. Our sole purpose is to deliver languages into schools, whereas their main purpose is to deliver PDs for teachers.

Dr STONE: What is a PD?

CHAIR: Sorry, I did not quite pick this up. The federal government has provided a centre for you?

Mrs Castle: Yes.

CHAIR: Your recurrent funding?

Dr STONE: Are you paid by the Northern Territory?

CHAIR: The Northern Territory government?

Mrs Castle: Yes, by DET. We are teachers. We are employed.

CHAIR: By DET?

Mrs Castle: Yes, the Department of Education and Training.

CHAIR: Of the Northern Territory.

Mrs Castle: You know Building the Education Revolution?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mrs Castle: We got funded to get a language centre. It is marvellous, marvellous—what can you say?

CHAIR: What can you say about the BER? I am a great fan.

Mrs Castle: Yes, I am a great fan.

Mr HAASE: Just to clarify that: the students do not come to your centre, do they? You go to theirs?

Mrs Castle: We go, but we do have classes at the centre. We are based at the Centralian Middle School, so years 7, 8 and 9 will come down. We are not attached to any school. We get maybe \$50,000, I think, per semester. We provide all our resources. We do study tours for our students. Every two years we take them to the country that they are studying. We do not pay for that, though we do subsidise our students. In May we have 32 students from years 9 to 12 going off to Japan. We do a lot for our language students, yes. But we would love a bit more funding, so if you could put that into your submission that would be great!

Dr STONE: Do you have equal numbers of boys and girls? First of all, how do male and female teachers at your centre divide up? Then, in the classrooms, with the older students who get to choose whether they do whichever language, are they equally divided between males and females?

Mrs Castle: Students, you mean?

Dr STONE: First of all, with the teachers in the centre, how many and what is the mix?

Mrs Castle: We have one male and the rest are females.

Dr STONE: Okay, I am not surprised. Tanya, what is the divide of girls versus boys when they get to senior levels?

Miss Zerk: At senior, specifically for Australian languages, they are all female; no males. I did last year have one male who was quite interested but then just dropped out halfway through. He had other stuff going on.

Dr STONE: We have a cultural problem, don't we, in relation to engaging males in education?

Miss Zerk: Yes. I think, if you had maybe some more male Indigenous teachers and assistant teachers, that would certainly help with male students.

Mrs Castle: I think it has to do with a lot of their cultural—

Dr STONE: I am sure it is, yes. Margot could tell us more, I am sure. It seems that our schools are the domain of women, particularly in the isolated regions, in terms of being teachers, TAs and so on—which is a problem if you are male, especially an older boy.

Mrs Castle: Margot does, as she said before, a lot of night classes for us as well, so we get a lot of people from the hospital—

Dr STONE: These are mature-age professional people wanting to have language; is that what you are saying?

Mrs Castle: Yes.

Dr STONE: And how do they pay?

Mrs Castle: Night classes are self-funded.

Dr STONE: So fee per course?

Mrs Castle: They pay, then we pay the teacher, and anything that is left over is like a big fundraiser for our study tours for students who cannot afford to pay, so we assist them in going overseas.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming. We really appreciate it. Good luck. You are doing very good work, obviously. A transcript of the evidence will be on the website. Please make any changes you wish if there are some inaccuracies there—let us know. Once again, thank you, Hansard, for being with us for the last few days and today. Well done.

Dr STONE: If there is additional evidence you want to submit, just feel free to do that, if there is something that you think of five minutes later to add.

Mrs Castle: We do not really know how our names got on this little committee thing.

Dr STONE: Your fame has come before you!

CHAIR: The committee secretary said it was through the Institute of Aboriginal Development.

Mrs Castle: We have never been invited to anything like this.

Dr STONE: It does fit in very much with our inquiry in terms of traditional language preservation and learning.

Resolved (on motion by **Dr Stone**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 16:18