

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF
FIFO WORK ARRANGEMENTS**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2014**

SESSION TWO

Members

Dr G.G. Jacobs (Chair)
Ms R. Saffioti (Deputy Chair)
Mr R.F. Johnson
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr M.J. Cowper

Hearing commenced at 11.17 am**Mr GODFREY BARONIE****Chief Executive Officer, MATES in Construction WA, examined:**

The CHAIR: Godfrey, thank you for appearing before the Education and Health Standing Committee today. The purpose of this hearing is to gather evidence for our inquiry into mental health impacts of fly in, fly out work arrangements. I am Graham Jacobs, Chairman of the committee. To my left is Rob Johnson; to his left is Rita Saffioti; to her left is Janine Freeman; and to her left is Murray Cowper. We have the executive of Mathew Bates, Daniel Govus and Lucy Roberts; and we have Hansard recording our proceedings, because this is a public hearing. It is a formal procedure, but not too formal. We are very happy for you to call us by our first names. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament.

I have to ask you a series of questions before we start. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

Mr Baronie: Yes, I have.

The CHAIR: Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form?

Mr Baronie: Yes, I do.

The CHAIR: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses sheet provided with the “Details of Witness” form today?

Mr Baronie: Yes, I did.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. The first question from the panel is from Janine.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Godfrey, thank you very much. I notice you were in the hearing before. When Lifeline or beyondblue gave evidence, neither of them talked about peer-based training, and the previous hearing talked about that training for workers, and even stickers on hats, which you have got. Can you outline to the committee how MATES in Construction works and how that peer-based training is integral to that?

Mr Baronie: Yes. The way MATES in Construction works, honestly, is so simple and so effective. We have three levels of training. The first level is one hour, which is called a general awareness training, and when we go on-site we expect everybody to go the general awareness training. If they want to be accredited over the project, because keep in mind we are only construction for now, we have to keep it at 85 per cent. At that level, what happens is people get to have an awareness of mental health, know what to look for in my mate when he is doing it tough, and more importantly, what to do about it. Okay, so that is in place there. When we do that, we also have two questions we ask them. One is, “Are you going through a difficult time or a tough time right now, or do you know anyone else who is doing it tough who is a family member?”, and, guaranteed, every time we did that, someone ticked “Yes”. There and then, we could assist someone.

The next question we ask is, “Look, do you want to be a connector?” The connector is the second level of training. That is a four-hour training, and we expect one in 20 to be a connector. We get more than one in 20 volunteers, because these are volunteers. And this is what I like about this. It is like they are starting to take responsibility and acceptance. Now, when we do the GAT, the one hour that we are doing, the way we worded it and the way we have done it is so that the workers actually take responsibility. We ask a question, “Whose problem is this?” We say, “Is it the

government? Is it the employer? Is it the unions?" And guaranteed they will say, "It's everybody's." At that time, we have got buy-in by these people. The blame stops and the workers start to take responsibility—"Hey, this is what we need to do." We get the connectors and we train them. The connector training is four hours, and that is a very evidence-based training used by Lifeline, used by the police force, used by the military, used by the Canadian Mounties—worldwide recognised. So, we start getting nodes of people. We start getting go-to people in each of the sections. So, if there are tradespeople, we will have one in the trades section; if you have admin people, we will have one there, or more than one. We say, "Hey, look, one in 20, but if you want to put more in there, better still." So we start getting these little nodes of people going to them, and they are called connectors.

The third level of training is called ASIST training—applied suicide intervention skills training. This is a two-day training. What we call that training is, if you like, suicide first aid, very much like the first aiders; you do the first aid, assist the people, keep them safe and pass them on to health professionals. So that is the three levels of training that we do. At the connector training level, the person there knows what to do, knows how to ask the question if someone might have thoughts of suicide, and how to keep them safe, and again to get them to help. So we have the three levels of training. Every level has a colour sticker. This works really, really well. So, if you have done the general awareness training, you get a white sticker on your helmet. And this is what we have noticed: when the guys—I should not say "guys"—when the workers see the stickers, they start relating to each other and start saying, "Hey, there's someone I can look at, I can trust, or someone who has got awareness." Someone who has the green sticker, they know that is someone they can go to and talk to. The blue sticker is someone who can actually do an intervention. I can give you so many incidents. On the Wheatstone construction site, someone who had not even done the course knew about us, saw someone with the blue sticker from another company, went to him, spoke to him, he was able to do an intervention and rang us and we were able to assist the person. It is that simple.

What is happening now is if you go on construction sites, you will see that the first aiders have a photograph of them saying, "This is the first aider, this is the phone number." It is now happening that they are putting the connectors and the ASIST around on the safety walls, so people are starting to identify and say, "Hey look, these are connectors, these are ASIST-trained people that we can go to and contact." And it is happening, and it is happening so quickly. In this state, where they are starting to relate, they are actually taking ownership. Yesterday, I got a call from a worker who some months ago in fact I was involved with the training of this person up at Marandoo. This is about a year ago. The man has just gone to Cape Preston. Unbeknown to me, he has gone to the site, spoken to all of the people. He has championed it and he rang me yesterday and said, "Godfrey, I want MATES in Construction on Cape Preston." And now it is starting. We did not do anything. This is a man who has championed it, who saw the effectiveness of it and is running it on-site. And that is what is happening at the different sites. And this is what we like about it: it is actually coming from the workers; they are taking responsibility.

The CHAIR: Godfrey, how many sites are we looking at where this is now working?

Mr Baronie: Are you looking specifically at FIFO or are you looking at what MATES in Construction are doing?

The CHAIR: Particularly in the construction FIFO space, if you like.

Mr Baronie: Okay. In FIFO, we are at Gorgon, Wheatstone, Cape Lambert, Roy Hill and Port Hedland, and Rio in Marandoo. Rio's now into it.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And are you there because that is a part of the enterprise bargaining process or are you there separate to that?

Mr Baronie: Separate to that. We are not part of that.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And the companies pay for you to go there?

Mr Baronie: Some do, some do not, okay? We go there by invitation and by invitation only, Janine. We do not want to go there if we are forced to or anything like that. It is if we are invited, we will go on-site.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: If you do not get paid, how do you sustain yourself?

Mr Baronie: We have got funding that comes from ReddiFund, which is a mutual benefit fund, but their funding is mainly for the CBD area. So, when we go up there to the likes of the Wheatstones and the Roy Hills, we say to them, “Look, we haven’t got funding for the resources sector; would you please give us a donation?” And, honestly, we have to trust them that they will give us a donation. Whether we like it or not, we do not get donations. Some of them do not give us donations. But what I like about this little group is we want to get the program out to the people, so we will go there.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And in Queensland you have funding, it says here.

Mr Baronie: I am sorry?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: In Queensland you get some government funding.

Mr Baronie: We get federal funding from the Department of Health, DOH.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And your Queensland counterpart gets some funding.

Mr Baronie: Yes. As MATES in Construction Australia we get funding, and the funding is shared between Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and WA.

The CHAIR: Tell me how much funding you get? Can you tell us the magnitude of that?

Mr Baronie: From DOH?

The CHAIR: What is the commonwealth contribution?

Mr Baronie: The commonwealth contribution is around \$300 000.

The CHAIR: Tell us about ReddiFund. Can you tell me about that? What does that mean?

[11.30 am]

Mr Baronie: ReddiFund is a mutual benefit fund. The building companies in the metropolitan area put in moneys for the employees. This is invested—that is how a mutual benefit fund works—and they give us close to \$400 000 a year. But that is going to end in June 2015.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Where does that money go?

Mr Baronie: That supports us, MATES in Construction WA.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: How many people are employed in MATES in Construction WA?

Mr Baronie: Six of us.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Does that cover all your wages?

Mr Baronie: It does. It covers the wages, the workbooks. If we are going to remote sites, we get them to pay for our airfares and our meals and accommodation—everything. So the likes of Gorgon, Wheatstone and Roy Hill, they pay that.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: You were established in 2008, it says in the paper here.

Mr Baronie: That is correct.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Was that just in WA?

Mr Baronie: No. That was in Queensland. In WA, we were established in September 2011.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: So, three years ago?

Mr Baronie: Yes.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So some of these companies—mining companies and oil and gas companies—do not pay you for your service?

Mr Baronie: No, they do not. Some of them do. As I said, it is a donation. We do not want fee for service, because as soon as we say fee for service, they are going to want us to do this and do that; and, honestly, the workers trust us totally and they will talk to us, and that is how we work. We really are totally hands off from the unions and from the organisations.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Some sites have what they call active health–lifestyle people who deal with issues. Do you ever have cases where you are able to interact with those people who have been provided on site?

Mr Baronie: We would like to do that. But one of the things we say is we like to partner with people. It has not come to that point yet. Right now, we are just providing a service. We go there. But the service is that we do not just go there and leave. We do follow-ups, and I can talk you through all of that. So we go there, we are invited, we do the general awareness training, we do the connector training, we do the ASIST training. When they want us to come up again, we go up there. We keep reminding them, “Look, you need to keep your 85 per cent, because if you don’t, there are going to be gaps. If your manning changes, make sure that we are there.” Some of the companies are very good, and we are there regularly.

Mr M.J. COWPER: If someone presents with an issue, what are the protocols that you follow to get them the help that they need?

Mr Baronie: It depends on where the issue happens and how they respond. There are lots of issues happening.

The CHAIR: Can you give us an example of someone working on site and engaging perhaps the first connector and how that works?

Mr Baronie: Sure. The other two services that we provide is we have a 1300 number, which is a 24/7 helpline. The receptionists or the telephonists who answer that are all ASIST trained, so they know how to do an intervention. So, if they have got a phone, their family has got a phone, they can contact us 24/7. If they are in a donga, in privacy, they can ring. The next service we provide is what is called case management. If someone has got complex issues, they can be referred to the case manager. The case manager will meet with them. Usually when up north, it is after work, so we will be on the phone, or Skype, and we will assess the person, and then we will actually triage them. We can triage them to the EAP of the company, or, if it is a relationship issue, to wherever they are, across Australia. We do a lot of work with custody issues. If they have financial issues, we send them to financial counsellors. For instance, here is one. Someone has rung the 1300 number. This is a connector, and he is from Port Hedland, and he has actually rung on behalf of a friend and he said a friend of his wife is having counselling and can we please assist. Another one is from Barrow Island, a mother, whose daughter is down in Perth, having issues, and she rang the 1300 number and said, “Could you please go and assist our daughter, who is having trouble?”, so we will take the call and go and assist the daughter. That is how it happens.

The CHAIR: Sorry. What resources have you got to assist the daughter? How does that work?

Mr Baronie: It depends on what the issue is.

The CHAIR: So then you engage another—a service to help that person?

Mr Baronie: Initially, someone—one of the case managers—will go and assess the person and see what the issues are. If it is relationship issues, we will do that. If it is, say, anxiety or stress, depending on what it is, we will send them to the doctor. It is very, very client orientated, very, very client centred: “Where are you at? What is happening for you? What is best to meet your need?”

The CHAIR: So you have got people on the ground, for instance in Perth, to do the follow-up on that daughter in this case?

Mr Baronie: Yes. That is what happened. I have another one here. A man calls us. He was sent off site. Fortunately, he rang us at the airport. But he lives in Newcastle. Before he arrived in Newcastle, someone in New South Wales' MATES in Construction was there to take his call. So we can actually work around Australia, depending on where people work. Just because we are fly in, fly out here, the workers are all over the place. We can still meet their needs, wherever they come from.

The CHAIR: So in the Newcastle example, the man was distressed —

Mr Baronie: Yes, he was distressed, and he was working up north somewhere—it does not say here—at Port Hedland.

The CHAIR: So he made a call, and what you are saying is by the time he got to his destination, there was someone there to assist?

Mr Baronie: That is correct.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: But on the telephone, not waiting at the airport?

Mr Baronie: No, not waiting at the airport.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He was given a telephone number in New South Wales that he was able to phone?

Mr Baronie: Yes. So the case manager here connected with the case manager in Sydney, gave all the information, sent this intake sheet, and said, "Could you please look after this particular person".

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: One of the issues that has been raised with us is about the stigma of mental health issues. How does the peer support program deal with that aspect of stigma? Is it because they are doing it between each other and there is a third party outside that can deal somewhat with the stigma? How do they deal with that?

Mr Baronie: Janine, it depends on what sort of stigma you are looking at. When we are working with them, we notice quite a few things there. The big thing is the man, the macho guy, does want to talk and will not disclose, and of course that happens, especially on a construction site. So we do not tap into that. If we get them alone, they might talk. But what we tap into is, guaranteed, these guys will help their mate out. They will walk the extra mile for their mate, and that is what we tap into. We say, "How is your mate doing; will you work with your mate; will you look after your mate?", and usually they do. We have got lots of incidents where we will get phone calls saying, "My mate is doing it tough; can you please call him?" It has happened so many times.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: So you almost use the masculinity as a tool? Instead of trying to change the culture, you just accept the culture and work within it?

Mr Baronie: Yes; very, very much so. We tell them very clearly we are not the experts. We work with them, where there are at: "What do you want? What will work for you?" It is honestly as simple as that. The big thing is listen to them, where they are at, what do they want; what works for them. We are listening to the people. Issues with what we have heard and what they believe their issues are. So I can walk you through all of that. The other stigma—I have got graphs here if you want to have a look. Do you want to have a look at some graphs?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What are they going to tell us?

Mr Baronie: What they are going to tell you is exactly what is happening with regard to stigma. One, is general awareness training. When we do the general awareness training, we ask the guys to tick a box if they need help. They tick the box. That one tells me they are starting to break down the stigma. Two, is "Referred by". This is case managed people, "Referred by". Nineteen per cent of them ticked the box. This is over the last calendar year. Nineteen per cent ticked the box and said, "We need assistance." Twenty-six per cent of people referred themselves. That tells me that stigma

is breaking down. The next is referred by self, 26 per cent. That tells me stigma is breaking down. They are actually willing to refer themselves and say, “I need help.” Statistics show that 97 per cent of people do not seek help. We are starting to buck that trend right now. That is very exciting for me. If you have a look at that, it is not just for the workers. Family members are actually referring each other. That for me is very touching, very heartening. We had had a man going to the airport, and he rings us up and says, “I have just left the missus, she is not in a good way; can you go and help?”, “Yes, not a problem”, and we have actually done that. It is as simple as that, no big hoo-ha: “What is your need; how can we meet it?”

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: One of the issues that was also raised with us by the AMWU was from a survey of people in the mining industry that they did. They believe from that survey that people were not taking their medication around depression because of the alcohol and drug testing. Have you come across that at all?

Mr Baronie: We have not come across not taking medication. But with regard to the drug testing, the people are somewhat fearful and live somewhat fearfully. They are so afraid, because it is one wrong, and they are out. They are living in some sort of a stress and fear that they are going to do one wrong thing, and they are going to be off site and lose their job. That is one of the concerns that they have brought up with us. They live in some fear.

The CHAIR: Is there any fear that people taking antidepressants will be basically discriminated against?

Mr Baronie: I do not know. I cannot answer that specifically. But there is a fear of actually acknowledging mental health conditions, because they are so concerned that they are going to be blacklisted and would not get a job again. That comes up time and again.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Can I ask you a question in relation to rosters. In your experience and through the people that you work with in the mining camps, have you been able to form a view in relation to empirical evidence from the FIFO workers of what is the most ideal roster system or roster rotation, as opposed to what is the worst one that could bring on depression, anxiety and feelings of suicide?

Mr Baronie: I cannot answer that, Rob, because, really, we have not got that from any of our clients. What we get from them regularly—because, remember, we work only in construction, and the roster we work with a lot is what we call 28/7, or 21/7, which is four and one, and three and one. We get a lot of them saying the four and one, which is usually the blue-collar workers, they find that really tough. They say in the fourth week, their production starts to go down, or else in the first few days of arriving, their production is not as much as it used to be. With the white collar workers or the administrative workers, they are telling us that on the third week, at the end of the week or just before, their production is going down. That is the sort of information we are getting. We have not heard anything about what is the best roster.

[11.45 am]

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Godfrey, you are working with people on all types of rosters, one week on, one week off; four days on, three days off; two weeks on, one week off; and so on and so forth. Do you keep any data at all on those rosters and how many people are accessing your facilities in relation to family problems, mental health problems, and what actual rosters they are working? If you keep some data on that, that might give us some information as to what is an ideal one and what is a detrimental one.

Mr Baronie: Rob, I hear what you said, but, no, we do not work with people with the different rosters. Again, in construction, we work with four and one, and three and one. The mining companies—we have heard lots of different rosters, okay—we do not work with them. We are quite specifically in the construction area, and we are working in that area. The biggest roster I have

actually heard of and worked with is three months on, one week off. That was a man from the Philippines. The poor fellow was really feeling it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am not surprised.

Mr Baronie: Okay, that is the only one. Like I said, I am not going to make things up; I am giving you our experience of talking to the people, and giving you back what they are telling us.

The CHAIR: Godfrey, in the background information that you provided for us, it states that MATES in Construction is a charity established in 2008 that aims to reduce the high level of suicide amongst Australian construction workers. Can you give us some data on those suicide rates?

Mr Baronie: Yes, I can. We have just done some research with the —

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The Barletta and Dundas report—is that the one?

Mr Baronie: No, Professor Chris Doran. I can get that to you. It is just hot off the press, and you can actually see what we have done. From what I can gather, there is evidence, because Queensland has been there for quite a while, that suicide rates have actually fallen. I can send you that document.

The CHAIR: We would appreciate the data that you have, because one of the challenges that this committee has is getting some valid and comprehensive data on suicides.

Mr Baronie: That is something that we are trying to do. We are trying to say, “Look, we need to be evidence based.” I can give you a whole list of research that we have been doing. I am personally working with Murdoch University on two researches, and with Curtin University. Queensland is working on two big researches. But, yes, we are happy to send you that information.

The CHAIR: Mat will give a list to you later about what you have undertaken to provide for us. Thank you.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You are dealing with all of construction, and we are looking particularly at the FIFO element. One of the key themes that is coming through is about the camps, where you are away for a long time, you are in these camps, and there is a level of control over you that maybe does not exist for someone who is working on a CBD project. Is that something that is coming up in any of your research and evidence—where people are dislocated, they do not have the usual support mechanisms, and every part of their lives is actually controlled by their employers?

Mr Baronie: Rita, when I am talking to you right now, I am talking to you about FIFO only. The graph that I have given you is across the board, but everything else that I have said is quite specifically FIFO. So, if it is not FIFO, I will make it very clear. But it is all FIFO. Yes, we do. The things that we are getting back are: the rooms are very close, so as soon as someone walks in or walks out—if your neighbour walks in or walks out—you hear the noise; if they are outside drinking, you hear the noise; so there is lack of sleep, and that causes quite a bit of problems; and sometimes the showers are not cleaned properly, so some of them get tinea. That is the sort of stuff that we get. The other thing that we get is that the internet is not very good, so they cannot Skype, or the phone reception ends. One of them said that it is really painful when it gets cut off.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So a key theme coming through is that communication is variable. That is one of the key issues. When people are talking to their children and they get cut off, it creates a lot of stress. Is there also an issue about your lack of ability to control what you are doing at night time—that there is always someone, in a sense, in control of you?

Mr Baronie: In some of the places we get that. Yes, some of them say, “Look, it feels like a jail.” That is what some of them say. Having said that, there are other people who are doing FIFO who are really happy. But, remember, some of them are on the mining camps, not construction camps. We have seen people on construction camps who are doing the FIFO four, one, and they are really

happy. But the majority we are getting, because of our work, is the people who are not happy or are going through difficult times.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Do MATES in Construction also deal with construction workers that are living in towns, so they are not FIFO workers but construction workers that have been living in Karratha or Port Hedland.

Mr Baronie: Yes, Janine, we have a small group of people from BGC. We have some Aboriginal people. We have not had any problems with them.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: In terms of them being able to live in town and in terms of their sense of wellbeing when you were working with them, did you get anecdotally a feeling that they had a greater sense of wellbeing than those that were in camps?

Mr Baronie: Again, my sense is yes.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes; obviously there is no empirical evidence.

Mr Baronie: Exactly. There is no empirical evidence. Yes, I agree with you. They seem a lot happier. I was up in Hedland a couple of weeks ago, and met three locals, and they were very happy. Two of them are Aboriginal people, and, yes, no problems whatsoever. Whereas I was having lunch that day, and someone who was having lunch with me slowly sidled up and started talking about someone else who was having a difficult time, and I said, “Yeah, I know, that is how it is.” I simply turned around to him and said, “How are you going?”, and that was enough, he just told me his story, and he was talking about himself. It happens all the time.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I note in your submission to us that based on the Barletta and Dundas report, you are saying that the likelihood of suicide amongst construction workers is twice as high as for other people in Australia. That is across the board. Is there any difference that you are aware of between FIFO and general construction in terms of that?

Mr Baronie: No, we have not done any work on that. We are doing some work right now on that.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I also noticed further on that you are saying that young people who are apprentices in the construction industry are two-and-a-half times more likely to commit suicide—again, that was based on that Dundas report—and that there is research that says that a young worker has usually communicated a suicide intention within 12 months of that suicide. So that would be a really critical time for people to have that contact—they talk about their ideation and then —

Mr Baronie: That is something that again—I am just saying it how it is; I am not trying to big-note MATES in Construction or something like that. With the case management, as soon as someone is put in the database, we follow them up. We also have automatic follow-ups. So the case manager will decide, “Hey, look, what is the risk factor here?” If we need to ring them weekly, we will—daily, weekly, twice weekly, one monthly, sixteen weeks. This will come automatically every day, and the person will be called. So we follow them up until we get from the client, “Hey, look, I am okay; I am doing well”, and then we let them go. It is not just meet with them, do whatever needs to be done and walk away; we actually follow through with what needs to happen.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And that goes to what you have here, your postvention service, which is an aspect of working with people after the fact. On page 9, you talk about preventing contagion, which is particularly prevalent among Indigenous communities and the young. When you say that you follow up with that, can you just talk more about postvention services?

Mr Baronie: Right now, MATES in Construction WA is just about to sign an agreement with Standby, where we will be looking after what is called the postvention. When that happens we will probably be the only organisation that does prevention, intervention and postvention. What will happen with regard to postvention, as much as we like, MATES in Construction is not an inoculation against suicide. We are going to have suicide. Should that happen, be it the police, the

coroner, or whoever, can contact MATES in Construction. We have a critical response team, and we will either go onsite, or we will go to the family, wherever the family might be, anywhere in Australia, and we will work with them at a very practical level: What do they need? Is it a casserole? Is it a doctor? Is it the church? It is whatever is required. So it will either be on site, or if the family is in Bunbury or on the Gold Coast or wherever the case may be, we will work with them.

The CHAIR: Godfrey, it sounds like it is fantastic work, but I just need to ask you a couple of questions. You have case managers and you have follow-up, and that is fantastic. I just want to know what the size of the structure is in order for you to do that as a resource. I also have a follow-up question about funding, because you obviously need money to make this happen.

Mr Baronie: Yes, please.

The CHAIR: I notice that in your background brief for us, you talk about Queensland, where it receives greater industry and state government financial support for its program; and as a result there are 42 000 workers in Queensland that have undertaken the general awareness training compared to only 6 000 in Western Australia. My question is: how much does the Queensland government contribute and how much does the WA contribute to your organisation and your work? The first question is: Tell us about how you cover all these people? You have a worker flying out of the Pilbara, and there is someone to follow up in Newcastle. Obviously, you have people on the ground too. How big is that network? How big is that human resource?

Mr Baronie: I cannot give you an exact number. I think there are about 40 of us altogether. There is MATES in Construction Queensland, MATES in Construction New South Wales, MATES in Construction South Australia and MATES in Construction WA. That is what we do. We work together very closely; the case managers and the CEOs are always talking and working together.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Are you a national charity or an individual state charity?

Mr Baronie: There is a national body called MATES in Construction Australia and then the franchised bodies of Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and WA.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: So you are incorporated under the Western Australian incorporations legislation?

Mr Baronie: Yes, that is correct.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: You are a registered charity.

Mr Baronie: Yes, we are a registered charity. That is correct.

[12 noon]

The CHAIR: Would you be able to provide us with some information in and around the human resource you have as an organisation?

Mr Baronie: Yes, in WA?

The CHAIR: Nationally?

Mr Baronie: Nationally, yes.

The CHAIR: And the appropriate training and skills of those people to do the job.

Mr Baronie: Yes.

The CHAIR: Godfrey, there was the funding question that I asked you about.

Mr Baronie: The Western Australian government?

The CHAIR: We did ask about Queensland.

Mr Baronie: I do not know about Queensland. Queensland gets quite a bit of funding because they have been around since 2008. They get quite a bit of funds. In WA our funding is from the federal

Department of Health, ReddiFund, the CFMEU gives us \$50 000, and we get donations. I go and look for and request donations; when I go, say, to resources and mining construction, I say, “Look, we’re happy to do it, but you’ll need to fund this.” We cannot demand money because we are a charity and we really leave it up to them because ultimately our focus is the workers, and when I say “workers”, please, it is not just blue-collar workers; it is all the workers. I have personally worked with project managers who are doing it difficult.

The CHAIR: Do you get any state government funding from any particular —

Mr Baronie: No.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What is your total income in WA?

Mr Baronie: Income? We do not have an income. Just under \$1 million: \$400 000 from ReddiFund, \$350 000 from the federal Department of Health —

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: \$50 000 from CFMEU and the rest is donations?

Mr Baronie: That is right.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The key issue is that the ReddiFund will cease on 1 July 2015.

Mr Baronie: That is correct.

The CHAIR: That will create a big hole.

Mr Baronie: It will create a big hole. I do not know whether I should say it, but I really do not want government funding; I may need it, but I do not want it—this is Godfrey—I really would like to see the industry take hold of us and say, “This is something that we need to do.” I have been putting that and saying to the industry, “Look, take it on, we’ll work with you, you fund us.”

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Have you approached the Chamber of Minerals and Energy?

Mr Baronie: I am having discussions with them next week, but keep this in mind: we are MATES in Construction for now; however, there are people who are calling us and we are starting to move into Mates in Mining, Mates in Resources, et cetera. So, yes, that is getting very close. We have been drawn to do something like that for the miners and oil and gas et cetera.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I want to ask you about the development of your pre-employment services. You talk about preparatory workplaces and how you do that, so you are basically doing inductions at that point in time; is that how it works?

Mr Baronie: With regard to the apprentices, we think that they are really important, so we have actually developed what is called Life Skill Tool Box training. It can be broken up into different sections that suit the apprentices, and in that we will give them mental health awareness, look at finances and budgeting and look at communications. We actually look across the board so that before they go out and go into the big wide world, they have some understanding across the board about all the different areas there. It is not just about safety; it is about nutrition, mental health and budgeting. It is looking at those specific areas so that they have a rounded understanding of who they are as little human beings.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: That sounds great to us, but at the end of the training, do you get feedback forms? How do we know it is really active and doing what it is on the ground? How do you ensure that the training you are delivering is actually effective?

Mr Baronie: What we do is: every workbook has a “before” and “after” that they tick, we get feedback forms and right now, with Murdoch University, we are doing research to see a few things. We are looking at the reduction of stigma, and we are looking at what we call “help-seeking activity”, whether they are actually doing that, and the effectiveness of the general awareness training, or GAT. That is the sort of stuff that we are doing right now. It is really important for us

that we are actually effective, and on a yearly basis we have a little committee that looks at each of the presentations and how we best do it and best present it to the clients, and we get feedback from them. Again, it is not from an expert, “Hey, this is what we should be giving them”; it is us saying, “Hey, what’s working for you guys?”

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: So this is adult training principles?

Mr Baronie: Definitely it goes there. It is all written out in a manual and the workers we have come from the industry. I have a project management civil engineering background, plus I have a background in counselling and behavioural science. We have a social worker, a driller, a brickie; they have all come from the industry. Basically, like we say, you cannot bullshit a bullshitter when you go on site. These people know what they are talking about, so they are very clear. If you are not authentic and you are not real, they will not have a bar of you. That is so, so important. We do not go as experts; we go there, work with them, and work alongside them.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask you, what is the uptake in the industry at particular construction sites in and around awareness, connectors and ASIST? How many sites are there where can you say, “Well, that program is set up in Western Australia”?

Mr Baronie: I am not sure I fully understand what you are asking.

The CHAIR: If I went onto a FIFO construction site, what would be the likelihood that this program, with awareness, connectors and ASIST, would be up and running and I could see the insignia on the helmets and it had been adopted?

Mr Baronie: There is no one site that has taken on the program totally; if you go to some of the sites, you will see that some of the subcontractors have taken it on. There is one site that would like to do all of it; we are on that site and we are going to be there in the next fortnight. Mind you, it took us over a year to get them to agree to it. What we have been doing is that we have been working with the subcontractors with no donations or anything like that. We have made such a difference that the workers are saying, “We want this on site”, so the organisation is really calling us and funding us. So, yes, I can give you some stats on FIFO in WA: for GAT there have been 2 325 FIFO people who have done the general awareness training; Connectors, volunteers, 207; ASIST, 46. It is getting there, and remember it is not just the workers; it is the workers and their families, because we often work with the families.

Mr M.J. COWPER: How many have done the connector?

Mr Baronie: Two hundred and seven have done the connector training, and 46 have done the ASIST training.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: How many in the construction industry are FIFO? Have we got those figures that break up between the two?

Mr Baronie: Just in Gorgon, 8 000 workers. Wheatstone, 6 000.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: So you are a little scratch on the side of how many workers.

Mr Baronie: Just a scratch, and I can honestly say we have saved lives. I could give you stories.

The CHAIR: You are very careful about the fact that you do not impose yourself on companies and that you have to be invited. When you are invited, is there any discussion in and around funding of the program within the organisation and within the site? Surely that must come up.

Mr Baronie: Yes, I bring it up. Again, I say to them, “The money that we have is for the CBD and CBD alone; we have no money for the resources sector”, and we ask them to donate and fund us, and I have to leave it like that. I give them a dollar amount and say, “This is what it costs us per person to train.”

The CHAIR: So what would that be? If I am the mining company and I have a construction site up in the Pilbara and I ring you and say, “I really love your program, Godfrey; can we start adopting your program in my construction site?”

Mr Baronie: General awareness training, keeping in mind that you get the 24/7 phone line and case management, we say, to cover our costs, it is \$150 per head. For ASIST, because it is proprietary information, we say it is \$350 a head, and we say, “This is the amount of dollars we need, plus you’ll need to fly us up there, look after our flights, food and accommodation”, and that is what we do.

The CHAIR: And the next level, the ASIST level?

Mr Baronie: ASIST, as I said, \$350 a head. We charge them that because we have to buy —

Mr M.J. COWPER: And the connector?

Mr Baronie: The connector, again, we say \$350, but what we do is, we say, “Also, these are the sorts of dollars that we need from you.”

The CHAIR: In order to do the ASIST, obviously, I would have to have my workers have two days off so that they could go to your course.

Mr Baronie: That is correct.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The other thing is that you would have to do the other two as a precursor to —

Mr Baronie: No, you do not. When we go on remote sites we have to have ASIST workers on site before we do the GAT, for a very simple reason: whenever we talk about suicide, it brings up past emotions; that happens all the time, so we need to have people there who can assist the people who are going through that.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Godfrey, you have been doing this for how long—three years now?

Mr Baronie: I have been doing it for two and a half years.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Can I ask you what made you get into this? What was your background, and do you have any psychological experience?

Mr Baronie: My background is civil engineering. I worked up in the mines and lived in Newman and Hedland; I was up in Newman in 1969, working as a cleaner, and saving money to go to uni. I have also lived up in Kununurra, so I know what it is about. I have been a project manager working for Multiplex in civil engineering. But, come 2000, I really followed my heart—people. Really empowering people, so I went back to uni, got a degree in counselling and behavioural science, and really enjoyed it and someone said, “Hey, Godfrey, you’re really good; maybe you should go and do some coaching”, so I went and got a commonwealth scholarship and got my masters in coaching at Sydney Uni. So yes, I love what I do.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: So what actually convinced you to do this two and a half years ago?

Mr Baronie: One phone call to someone here in WA; they knew exactly the type of work I do and they said, “Yes, Godfrey, we’d love to have you on board”, and here I am.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: So did you start MATES in Construction in WA?

Mr Baronie: No, the CEO before me—his name is Sergio—started it, and I have taken over from him.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: When did he start?

Mr Baronie: He started in 2011 and left in December 2013.

The CHAIR: So the phone call was about you taking over from him?

Mr Baronie: No.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He started halfway through. So he was the CEO then and you were —

Mr Baronie: I was a case manager, so I really worked with the people at that level.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Godfrey, for your evidence before us today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. If you have no corrections within the 10-day period, we will deem it to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include it as supplementary information. Mat will send you some of the points you have given an undertaking to provide to the committee in written form. Thank you very much again, and congratulations on the work you do with MATES in Construction.

Mr Baronie: Thank you.

Hearing concluded 12.14 pm
