

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
RESERVES (RESERVE 43131) BILL 2003**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT PERTH
ON THURSDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2003**

SESSION 1

Members

**Hon Peter Foss (Chairman)
Hon Robin Chapple
Hon Jon Ford
Hon Louise Pratt
Hon Derrick Tomlinson**

Committee met at 6.50 pm

BROPHO, MR ROBERT CHARLES

**Spokesperson for the Swan Valley Nyungah Community,
Guildford, examined:**

Mr Bropho: I was born on 9 February 1930. I do not have a live-in address. I am homeless.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you read and understood the “Information for Witnesses” sheet?

Mr Bropho: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of the hearing for the record. I should let you know that we have a copy of your submission in front of us. Please be aware of the microphone, and try to talk into it. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during the proceedings, you can request that the evidence be taken in closed session. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing.

The committee would like you to not identify or name any person under the age of 18. If you wish to deal with that, would you note that that is something you wish to raise and we can deal with that in private session. The reason is that even if you do not say anything about those children that might be disadvantageous, other witnesses could identify them, which might be disadvantageous. Please do not use names and identify people under the age of 18.

Until your public evidence is finalised, the transcript of your evidence should not be made public. Would you like to make an opening statement to the committee?

Mr Bropho: What do you mean by that?

The CHAIRMAN: Are you asking about the opening statement or the transcript?

Mr Bropho: I am asking about the opening statement.

The CHAIRMAN: You can just start talking.

Mr Bropho: I am here to talk. I do not want anything covered up.

The CHAIRMAN: You talk then.

Mr Bropho: I am here tonight to try and go back behind Susan Taylor’s - the deceased’s - death and how the attack came against me and my community, which was orchestrated by the Premier, Geoff Gallop, the media and all those players who took part in it. The attack began from the time the deceased lost her life. I am here to go behind that. I am not naming anybody, but her life beyond that where she lived at 119 Scrivener Road, Herne Hill, a lot of devious things did take place by way of sexual assault. Her welfare officer then knew all about this. It came to our notice - my deceased wife - by the deceased, Susan Taylor, that these things did take place at 119 Scrivener Road, Herne Hill. There were several assaults taken out against her by persons, which I will name when the names are called for.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just ask, did you mean several assaults against Susan Taylor?

Mr Bropho: Yes. This was told to Alastair Hope’s inquiry. The lawyer for the other party stood up in that court and made a mockery of me. He shook his head.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I interrupt? You are entitled to name names of adults.

Mr Bropho: I do not want to name any names.

The CHAIRMAN: I wanted to be sure you understood.

Mr Bropho: I have been named by several parties, including politicians, both male and female, and in media coverage. Those names are known.

The CHAIRMAN: I want to make certain you understand that my request about not naming names applies only to people under the age of 18. If you wish to name any adult - people have named your name prior to now - you are fully entitled to do so.

Mr Bropho: I am here to point out to the committee the way that this girl lived her life. The welfare departments, the police and government departments knew all about it. This attack was orchestrated by the Premier, Geoff Gallop, in company with the media. It was orchestrated well, against me, Robert Bropho. There was no need for him to attack the women and children in the community. There was no need for him and his Government - this is Geoff Gallop and the media - to attack my immediate family, including my sons and daughters and their children. They committed no offences. All you fellas sitting in this room knew and know that now. They did not commit an offence, yet they were kicked off the premises. The reason given was that the women and children had to be protected.

Now, I want to go back a bit further than that. The women and children were attacked by police and by all parties before that - I will name one particular police - the police tactical response group, which came onto the premises a long time ago. That court case is still going. We had no justice done even to today. My wife is dead. The young girl then that was pulled out of the showers, stripped naked, is a woman now and she has children. That violence was orchestrated by unknown parties. That attack by the police then was when we were protesting at the old Swan Brewery site. That violence was really bad. Shotguns, hand guns and rifles were pointed at members of that community.

[7.00 pm]

My son Louis John Nettles is dead. My stepson Patrick was there. My wife pissed herself; she thought she was going to be shot. That was violence at its worst. Now when we talk about violence, just because Geoff Gallop and his Government wanted to close down the Swan Valley Nyungah Community, they closed it down and they used that excuse. They said it was a place of misery. Now your white society is a place of misery, where you live now. There are murders, rapes and drugs, and a lot of those murders took place after the Swan Valley Nyungah Community was shut down. So your white society has no form of protection, with what you said against us that the women and children had to be protected. There is no protection for them out there now. My eldest daughter, Bella, is afraid to send her kids to the shop because they might not come back home. When we had that community going, we had the form of protection of togetherness. This is black living lifestyle, but your white society has not got that. Your white society is different to ours. Your white society makes rules and regulations. Your white society breaks them and your white society uses those. Let us not forget the White Australia policy; it is still there now and it always has been.

Now let us talk about the sex side of it. *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land* is a book that should be read on how white men had sexual intercourse with young girls then and there. There has got to be some truth in that when we look around at ourselves, the Aboriginal nation, today. There are half-castes, quarter-castes, quadroons and blue eyes. They did not come from the Aboriginal people's race; they came from white men having sexual intercourse with Aboriginal young girls then.

Another book, *Shadow Lines* - read that and read it well; it is what happened to the Aboriginal people in the riverbeds then of Northam with sections 12 and whatever they used then to discredit Aboriginal people then. My father, Thomas Bropho, was one and his sister Jessie Argyle, and how

Mr Neville then used his strategy. That strategy was then, but it has not gone away; it is here and now for Geoff Gallop and his Cabinet. All the politician men and women in this building here agreed with Geoff Gallop, male and female, and the biggest majority of them did not ever come to Lockridge campsite, especially the women who voted with Geoff Gallop to shut down the place. White women against black women.

This attack on Robert Bropho was well orchestrated by parties unknown. The Government knows who they are, we know who they are and they are still employed by the Government in government positions today. They are dangerous, corrupt people. The stolen generation has not disappeared. Today they are using different tactics. They are using Aboriginal families against Aboriginal families. It is the divide and fall tactics that they are using. When we talk of violence, we did not create violence; it was the coming of the second race that created the violence and their Ten Commandment laws that they brought with them. I would like to quote one politician who said, "Robert, never trust a politician." He went on to be better things and he did exactly what he said. I quote another politician, who said a hurtful thing about my community. He wondered whether there were any virgins left in that community. I put it to that unknown politician, "How many virgins are out there in the white society, teenage girls going to school, how many?" My question reflects back to that insulting question that was put against me and my community. It is true what the politician said: never trust a politician.

This is the worst Government I have ever encountered in all my 73 years. I have known quite a few politicians in my time and the Gallop Government has to top it all off, because when we look around at what the Gallop Government has done for us, the Aboriginal people, what have they done? You have overloaded Kings Park with the white man's monuments of great people. You have Yagan sitting down on Heirisson Island buried away from the eyesight of white people. You have John Forrest standing down there with a gun on his back; he was a gin tailer. Now, from our blackfella information, Daisy Bates was a whore. These are the people that the Government of the day and Governments of the past idolise.

Let us get back to Lockridge. This attack is not on the women and children. It is not on the land. It is a personal attack, a vendetta, out against Robert Bropho because he refused to bow down, he refused to kneel. I will not kneel to any high and mighty politician who stands over me. I will not. I would like some of you fellas to ask me questions now.

The CHAIRMAN: One thing that was told to us was that the school attendances by the Swan Valley Nyungah children were very good, apart from I think two teenagers who had a truanting problem, but generally speaking the school attendances were comparable with non-Aboriginal children. What did you do to ensure that children went to school and how did you encourage them to go to school?

Mr Bropho: We encouraged them to go to school. Before I go into full detail, it is most important that the whole of this committee clearly understands that we were the only community that set up the all-black school in Harrow Street near West Swan Road in the Swan Valley.

[7.10 pm]

We were responsible for that, and just because that is a success, the Minister for Education, Alan Carpenter, has put that under attack.

To come back to the camp, the camp was an example of how us blacks can do things. We turned that community from a bare field into what it is now. We created employment. It took the men off the social services. We tried to set up that school again there in that community to give it a balance - to teach the kids Aboriginal culture, and white culture. Those kids were going from that camp to the primary school and were learning the white education. When they knocked off from there, they would come home and would learn how to live through the other education that was open there for them to learn. The children would never throw stones at birds. If any tortoise or turtle - from a

white fellow's point of view and the way he talks about it - came out of the swamp, the kids would pick it up and put it back in the swamp. They never broke trees. They climbed on trees. That was their peace of mind. That was home. It took us 26 years to get to how we were there. That is the community.

We go beyond that to my childhood. I lived with my parents. This is in the pounds, shillings and pence days. My mum never had a home. She never had electricity. She never had running water. She never had a toilet. My dad worked for two pounds a day then. He schooled me through doing the things that he did in his time, and I became a man, and I learnt the white fellow ways and how to carrying shit. I lumped shit on my shoulder, with shit running down my back. I lived in camps. We are true people. We live together. We protect one another. Just because we are doing this, the white fellow does not want us to do this. That is the Government. It wants to remould, reshape and retrain us into what it thinks is best for us. We know it is not best for us.

The CHAIRMAN: I will come back to the question of the school, because I am interested in how you achieved such a high attendance rate. You raised the issue of living in camps. We have all had the benefit of a book about the fringe dwellers. Earlier on, Allawah Grove was closed by the Government. I think that resulted in a number of Aboriginals losing a place to live, and they ended up living underneath bridges - or at least that was the understanding that we had. Were you one of those Aboriginals; and can you give us any idea of the impact that had on that community?

Mr Bropho: Allawah Grove was the second last reserve that we had in the metropolitan area. It was closed down. The last reserve that was closed down in the metropolitan area was Widgie Road. Once that went, we had nothing left. Now Allawah Grove was just south of the cemetery, a long time ago, in the late 1930s, and it was shut down. The Aboriginal people were moved around and around. We ended up back at Eden Hill. My father, Tommy Bropho, and Mary Morton and all the old people, they fought for Allawah Grove to be given back to the Aboriginal people after the Army left it, so the Aboriginal people went back there, and they stayed there. Then they got the idea of assimilating the Aboriginal people from these places and into suburban areas, but they made sure that the Aboriginal families were scattered, or there was a distance between each Aboriginal family to keep them apart. Firstly they would go around and ask the white people in the area whether they minded Aboriginal people coming into the area. If it was all right, the family would be settled there. My sister Ruth, who is now dead, and her husband, was removed from Allawah Grove and went to Brindle Street, Coolbellup. She ran into problems. The then Jack Brady was alive then. He lived in Archer Street, Midland. He said to my father, when dad was alive, "Tommy, the Aboriginal people are going to run into difficulties down there, because there is a big gap between the camp life and the white society, and there is no training." He was right. Aboriginal families like Ruth's went there, and there were problems. She would clean the yard and go to bed, and in the morning there would be rubbish on the ground. She would clean it up, and she would wake up the next morning and there would be rubbish on the ground again. It was the neighbours throwing things over the fence to try to create an argument between them and my sister. The State Housing Commission got to hear of it, and my sister had to be moved away.

These are the things that we faced. Aboriginal people went through the process of that year in and year out, and they got fed up. Me and my family, we got pushed from pillar to post. We decided to go to Canberra to the old Parliament House when Ian Viner was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. We travelled all the way to Canberra. He promised this and he promised that. We came back, and we started the movement towards Aboriginal people getting into better housing on the fringes, with running water. We were the people who were pushing for that - the Swan Valley Nyungah Community. We did a hell of a lot, and we took a beating.

This is what I see with Geoff Gallop and his Government. He wants to be master over the Aboriginal people, and they have got to kneel down and do what the Government wants them to do, even if it is failing out there. A change has got to come, but let it come at our pace, and let it come

with both parties sitting down and talking about what they want. I think, Peter, that you have been around for long enough, and Derrick and most of you. You would know this. This has not been done. There is always talking behind closed doors - try this on the blacks, and try that - but it has failed miserably. There is no success in it, because I have come through it. That is the reason I wrote the book *Fringedweller*. You have to be careful, because two fringe dweller books have been written - one by Nene Gere and one by Robert Bropho.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the one we have is by Nene Gere.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: No. It is by the girl from Murdoch University.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not called the fringe dwellers, but it is about the fringe dwellers.

[7.20 pm]

Mr Bropho: There were no strange words in the book I wrote about fringe dwellers because we lived it. I traced myself back to the areas and I wrote exactly what I went through and what I saw.

The CHAIRMAN: I am trying to find out to what extent your dealings with government may have coloured your feelings about government. I am asking the obvious, but I would like you to give us some views on it. One of the things that has become quite clear from some of the evidence we have had is that not all government departments have managed to gain your trust. That is probably a combination of how they behave and, to some extent, some history. You are now 73 years old. Obviously you have had some dealings with a lot of government departments, bureaucracies and people over the years, which is the lot of many Aboriginal people. What has been your experience with the attitude that Governments have shown towards Aboriginal people and how effective has that been in engaging some sort of cooperation for or improvement in the place of Aboriginal people?

Mr Bropho: In all my life, I have studied a lot of things and we did a lot of things, but a lot of things have been juggled around in my time. The reconciliation thing has been running for 10 years. They have been running and talking and running and talking, and nothing has happened. Fred Chaney is sitting down in Murdoch, holding the reins on many important places. He was the one who came to Barkers Bridge when the Noonkanbah issue was going on and said to us blackfellas sitting under it, "Don't worry about it. Don't fight against it." What makes me see red is that the Government does not listen to what Aboriginal people want, and that is land and common decency and respect shown for their culture. Now Kobelke is down here and has replaced Carpenter, who got on the bandwagon straightaway and started attacking us. We have never met the man in our life. It is the same with Mick Gooda. He comes all the way from over the other side. He listens to what people say here and he just jumps on the bandwagon and says, "Bropho's no good. The Swan Valley Nyungah Community - shut it down." You sat with him and studied the photos of the body of one of the girls. That was not right and you should not have done that. When I heard about that, that insulted me. I had to get that off my chest.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I appreciate that.

Mr Bropho: Get me back on course of what you want to know.

The CHAIRMAN: I am trying to get at a series of matters that have been raised in our evidence. Perhaps I will turn to the audit -

Mr Bropho: Did you say evidence, Peter?

The CHAIRMAN: We have had evidence. It is called evidence.

Mr Bropho: Concrete evidence or hearsay?

The CHAIRMAN: No. I am saying that we have had evidence that you had good school attendances. That is the evidence that interests me.

Mr Bropho: A lot of hearsay has been slung around.

The CHAIRMAN: I know that. However, we have concrete evidence that your group had far better than usual school attendances. It interests me how that occurred, because obviously it presents a different picture from some of the other pictures that have been presented. People also say that you are a difficult person to deal with. I would like to go into what might be the reasons for that. In particular, I am interested in the audit that took place in December 2002. It was called an audit. Do you recall when a number of government departments accompanied by three police vans and six policemen turned up with, I think, the media and proceeded to make a statement to you about what they expected in terms of cooperation from the community over services being provided by government? Do you recall that particular incident?

Mr Bropho: Yes. They all came into the paddock.

The CHAIRMAN: Other people have described it. I would like to hear from you what you thought occurred and how you viewed it.

Mr Bropho: From memory I think I had about 10 minutes warning. Everything was set, cut and dried. It is what I have just said about being behind closed doors. This is the whitefella. He organised everything and I got a phone call saying that in 10 minutes they would be here. I had to run around and bring all the people out and stand them all under the tree like I was rounding up sheep or cattle. The cavalcade came to the gate and they were all there. They came marching into the middle of the field. Most of the women were standing around scratching their heads and the men did not know what was going on. There were all these whitefellas and policemen there. They just wanted to know the ins and outs of everything. The first thing I said to them was, "Do you want us all to strip off here and now?" I just thought I would say that to them, because they all looked at one another. I think one whitefella started to talk. I could not make out the reason they were there. That is the kind of treatment I got.

The CHAIRMAN: Were you offended by it?

Mr Bropho: Yes, I was offended by that. In my experience, when a whitefella makes a complaint against a blackfella, the police are quick smart on it and welfare is on to it. It is quick smart and it is bang, bang and they get the thing going. When a blackfella makes a complaint, they do not believe him. Maybe 39 or 40 something flags were stolen from the stick that was put inside our boundaries. It represented my grand-daughter's spirit when she hung herself on the fence. That was not Susan; it was Nicole. That flag had been there since the day she died, and I was proud of it. Every time it was stolen, I put another one back up, and every time it was stolen, I told Sergeant Clarysse about it. He said, "I don't think we can do anything about it. Did you see the bloke? Did you see who it was?" I said, "No, sergeant." That went on. We put up a nice big flag near the school, before the school was taken, and we had a United Nations flag there. After the experience of all the little ones being stolen, I thought I had better sit and watch. The bloke came through the gate and, with my heart problems, I grabbed my bit of spray, stuck it in my pocket, put my shoes on quickly, grabbed a torch and a stick and I watched him through the window. He was cutting the thing. He was that busy that I got up close to him and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" He dropped the knife and ran to the fence and nearly hurt himself getting over the fence. I could not see his face and off he went. That was one incident. I was wild over that.

There was another serious incident and this is a factual one. A car came into the camp one day. The gates were open and he just drove straight in, past the camp and drove right down to the bottom end. By the time he got down there I thought I had better go over to the gate and wait. I pushed the gate shut so that the car could not get back through. I left a gap. He drove up and pulled up and said, "What's this?" He was an aggressive bugger. He was a middle-aged, hefty bloke. He said, "Open the bloody gate, otherwise I'll wrap it around your neck and you can use it for a tombstone." I said, "What?" Then the bugger grabbed a spanner. I tried to open the gate for him and he went through and I pushed the gate shut and he hit me across the finger. He busted my finger and blood was running out of it. I did not have time to take his numberplate, so away he went. I rang

Margaret and we went to the Midland Police Station. I stood at the counter with my hand like this, and it was hurting and blood was running out of it. They have a big glass thing there. The buggers were all behind the glass, having a good old laugh at old Bropho standing there. I could hear them.

[7.30 pm]

Anyway, they came out. The young lady policewoman came out - I could see she had a bit of a giggly thing on her face - and started to try to get a bit funny with me. The other young men were standing behind her. Then finally the big bloke came out - the big sergeant - and he started to get a bit hot around the collar. Being who I am I just said, "Oh well." I make quick decisions. I thought it was no good standing there; they were making fun of me. I just walked out. I rang up Inspector Mumme and told him about it. He said, "Well, you go to the doctor." I went up to see Dr D'Souza. He had a look at my hand. He inspected it. He gave me a certificate saying that this happened to me on such and such a date. I went up the next morning to Sergeant Clarysse, produced my thing, told him what had happened and he said, "Did you get the numberplate?" The matter ended there and then. Now you wonder why, Peter and the rest of you, I get lots of troubles. Why?

The CHAIRMAN: On that topic, Mr Bropho, we have had a number of people say that they found you difficult to deal with and others said they had no problem. Sergeant Clarysse is one of those. Inspector Mumme is another one of those. The DCD people from Cannington have also said they have no difficulty in dealing with you. Would you agree that you get on quite well with some civil servants?

Mr Bropho: There was a bloke named Ron Hall at Midland Police Station. He was a powerful man. He treated us blacks as human beings. We were the same as the next white man. Going back a bit further - he is long gone now - Inspector Daniels of CIB. This was the camp days. This was a long time ago in the Beaufort Street days.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Inspector Spike Daniels?

Mr Bropho: Sullivan. They were men of the law. They treated us blacks as human beings. So you get quite a few of them there and you get this other attitude I have just told you about. We stay clear of the Midland Police Station now. Sergeant Clarysse was the one with us mostly in the Lockridge area when we were there. Inspector Mumme was always the bloke we could fall back onto.

The CHAIRMAN: The point that was made is that people said that if you bothered to respect Mr Bropho, treat him properly and talk to him properly, you would have no problems in establishing a relationship with him. Has that been your experience?

Mr Bropho: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: And the people who do not treat you that way, how do you respond?

Mr Bropho: Look at the incident with the Channel Seven or Channel Nine woman and the man that came out. Just because she was a white woman, in the white men's court they fell over her. They almost fainted over her. I was the dirty dick sitting in the dock. They were trespassing on my registered sacred site, but the prosecuting sergeant did not stop to think about that. He did not stop to ask me about it. He just blasted away in the court and I was given the 12-month good behaviour thing. That has long gone now. Those are the sorts of things that happen out there. Plus other police officers in the early days before the houses were built that are there now, when we were in the caravans, they got up into the Supreme Court and told bloody lies about me and my son. We ended up with thousands of dollars of fines each. These are the incidents.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Bropho, you have given us a very good submission. It is probably the best submission we have had in terms of preparation and thoroughness. There are two matters that you keep raising which we would not mind if you have any further comment to make. One was the

failure of the Government to enter into an MOU. You were continually writing to the Government to ask them to enter into an MOU.

Mr Bropho: We asked for a memorandum of understanding.

The CHAIRMAN: The other one you wrote on a couple of occasions was to seek assistance for solvent abuse. You asked that the Government assist you with that as well. Would you like to give any background on those?

Mr Bropho: We spoke about it then and there to take those solvent cans off the shelves and to not sell them. When the brewery was going I spoke for over two, maybe three hours, with some welfare people. They came for ideas. I talked until my face was white to these people. They went away, because I could see the growth in the numbers of these kids. This one morning I was coming back from the brewery and passed through Bayswater. There were about eight or nine kids at the station and they looked like they had balloons - they were waving them. That problem got bigger and bigger. You must bear in mind that Claremont was not shut down when all these white women were murdered down there. It was not shut down. The Government then did not attack the whole of the Claremont area and say, "Bugger off; shut it down." There is discrimination here about what has been done to me. I will say "me". There is a vendetta out against me. Leave my sons and daughters and their children alone on those premises. It belongs to them. You do not do to your white society what has been done to me. You have never done it and you never will do it.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Bropho, we received a message that you had some supplementary documents that you would like to give us for the submission that was made earlier on. Do you have those here?

Mr Bropho: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we have them please?

Mr Bropho: I am prepared to name the people who the deceased, Susan Taylor, said had raped her and had sexual intercourse with her. I am prepared to give that when the time is right. I will not say their names now.

The CHAIRMAN: We will go into private session later and I will ask you for those names. For the time being if we could have your further documents? We will decide how to receive those documents later, in case there are some private documents in there. At least we now have them.

Hon JON FORD: Earlier on this evening I took it that you said that you thought that there were people from government agencies that were deliberately orchestrating attacks against you and your community. I was wondering if you would be able to tell us who you thought they were? If you feel you cannot tell us, maybe you could indicate to us which agencies you thought treated you badly.

Mr Bropho: Have I the right to tell you the names of them now?

The CHAIRMAN: Indeed.

Mr Bropho: Well, Michel Poland is one. She is still working for the welfare in Midland. We have checked that out today. We believe that there is corruption going on with the lawyer, Richard Bannerman. ATSIC has got its finger in the pie here by supplying money, yet I have got charges pending and I cannot get assistance from these people. There is corruption all around. When we asked for another inquest into Susan's death, all doors were closed. All the bloody doors were closed.

Hon JON FORD: Do you think you have been treated fairly by the Department of Indigenous Affairs?

Mr Bropho: No, it should be shut down. The new minister who came into the ministerial position has signed off on Mt Jackson. The secret-sacred women's law in the whole of the hills are going to

be destroyed, selling the iron ore to the Chinese. That has made me sick and it is making a lot of old people sick. We are fast losing all our culture. The sacred sites have been destroyed. The Government of the day that is in power is creating that situation now. That is where the problem comes from - shutting down the land, refusing to let the black fellas go back home, banking them up around parks and in laneways and in old houses around the city. You are destroying them. This is the Government - the state and federal Governments. If it continues on, we will have no religion and culture and there will be no need to call us Aboriginals. You do not need any minister for Aboriginal affairs. You do not need any indigenous affairs.

[7.40 pm]

It is useless. It is a whitefella sort of thing. The danger to us, the real Aboriginal people, is the half-castes, quarter-castes and quadroons that are put into state government positions and federal government positions. These are the buggers that frighten us off. If it does not stop, it is going to kill us.

Hon JON FORD: Do you feel that they are proactively working against you?

Mr Bropho: I do not feel; I know. The showing is there, the neglect.

Hon JON FORD: Have they offered you assistance in the community?

Mr Bropho: ATSIC has shut its doors to us when Geoff Gallop got up on the bandwagon and said, "Follow me", and everybody followed him. He did a pretty good job. He has got a history - his family - against blacks. I have said it outside. When I came to protest at that door no politicians hardly used that door; they all used this one. When I went home, they used that door then.

Hon JON FORD: What is your relationship with DCD?

Mr Bropho: They are wolves in disguise.

Hon JON FORD: In relation to the -

Mr Bropho: I just want to tell you a little story about when you said DCD. My young daughter Carrie - her son Richard and his de facto are two young kids. The young woman got pregnant and she had a little boy. He became Richard Junior, my grandson. Us mob out there we worked in well - Terry Powell from the Canning thing, Maureen - and we thought it was great. We built bridges with them and tried to assist. They found Bonnie and Richard a place in Archer Street and put them in there. On Bonnie's side, the family from around Balga and Girrawheen started to travel down there with their sniffing and with their drugs. We and Bonnie - Terry and Maureen - these are the Welshpool office - we said, "Look, keep an eye on it. Don't collaborate them together." I see things very quickly. I said to Terry and Maureen, "Don't use this mob to take away that little boy from those two. They are young. You have got to help them", the same as a few years ago out in the Balga area when some of the young white teenage girls had babies and everybody was making a fuss of them. They was looking after their kids and enabled them to go to school.

Do unto the black women as you would do unto your own white women. This is a sad case. This young mother - the baby has been taken away. The welfare gradually got a grip on it, took it away, placed it somewhere for the time being and then they switched it over quickly to an Aboriginal family. This is where they are using blacks against blacks. The mother is walking around; she is a danger to herself; she could commit suicide because the love for this child is showing on her. Only last night she came to Mrs Jeffery's place and spoke about it and she just disappears into the dark. On top of it all, her Archer Street home has been shut down and they said, "You can't look after the place." All what I told you, do you think that is fair? I would say it is not fair. Last night that young mother said to me, "I can't even have my son for Christmas." I said, "Why?" That is another big argument for me. I have got to buy into it. I have got to try to help her see the boy.

This is the welfare system and the way the welfare is working in cahoots with the Government. I want you to clearly understand that Sheila McHale and the other politician women and a lot of

politician men in this Parliament - why do they all just jump on the bandwagon and go with Geoff Gallop and all say, "Yes, shut it down. Shut it down"? Why? That is the big question we must ask ourselves. These people do not even know us. They do not even come near us. When my daughter appeared on the steps here with her children and a few other women to talk to Geoffrey Gallop he just run through the bloody door. He is a devil. He has no respect for black women.

The CHAIRMAN: If you could come back to Mr Ford's question, because he has a number of questions he would like to ask you.

Mr Bropho: I must talk that way, because if I do not talk that way, you fellas and politicians in this House will never know the other side.

Hon JON FORD: You were saying that you felt there were some deliberately orchestrated attacks against your community by government agencies. I am trying to find out which one of those agencies you feel -

Mr Bropho: We have got it bad in Midland. You can put that down. That is the main place in Midland coming from there. They are in cahoots with the police. You have only got to go and get the full history of how they are treating the blacks up there. They have shut down all the parks. They are moving the blacks around. Any incident in the Guildford area at Saunders Street - that is another community - the police go tearing out there in full force. That is one of the agencies that must be connected up to Sheila McHale or whoever is in this building.

Hon JON FORD: Would it be the shire that -

Mr Bropho: The shire is in with it - the Swan shire. There is no brotherly love in that area - none whatsoever.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Bropho, again it is probably an obvious question, but you have been described as an Aboriginal activist -

Mr Bropho: You tell me what activist means?

The CHAIRMAN: No, that is not the question. I am just telling you that is what you have been described as. Do you believe that Aboriginal people have to fight for their rights or else they will not get anywhere?

Mr Bropho: It is our land.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think that is what you have to do to get what you want?

Mr Bropho: No-one will listen - neither you, Derrick or anybody.

The CHAIRMAN: The point I am making is that you, as a result of your life experience, believe that Aboriginal people will only get what they are entitled to if they push for it.

Mr Bropho: If you have my bike and I know it is mine, you have got to give it back to me.

The CHAIRMAN: I am just trying to get your philosophy right.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Robert, if I may, there are good departments and bad departments -

Mr Bropho: I do not know much where the good ones are.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: If there are not good ones, which are the better ones?

Mr Bropho: The better ones are the ones that show you common decency and listen to what you say and try to balance things. It is no good having one side. It is like the scales of justice.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that a department or an individual?

Mr Bropho: Departments and individuals. You have all got to come together and work together.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: If I may follow that through, Robert, how would you describe your relationship with Jim Clarysse - good or bad?

Mr Bropho: Jim is all over the place. He is like the weather - cool today and warm tomorrow. He is a pretty good bridge builder but sometimes his mind is not in it. When we lived at the property, if he had something to talk to us about, he would ring up and come to the gate. If I thought it was right for him to come and look inside, he and I would walk in there. This has been done several times. I told the police officers who came, "You stay out there. We are the two people who will go and look for things what he is talking about - if there is anything missing from my wife or the yard or anything." He is not as good as Bob Mumme or Ron Hall.

[7.50 pm]

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: So you would describe Inspector Mumme as having a good relationship with you; somebody whom you can trust and treats you with respect.

Mr Bropho: All the time I was there, when he come into the property, we would stand near the car, we would talk for nearly an hour. We talked about things. He listened to what I am talking about: the spiritual dreaming, the land and what it means. He was a white man that was interested in it. He was really interested in our wellbeing. He did say there, "I can't see why you fellas are going to be kicked out of here." This was before it all happened. For a person to talk like that, he is real. He has got feelings, and that is the sort of people we need.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Would you describe Terry Powell from DCD in Cannington as one of those people?

Mr Bropho: Terry was a man that always wanted to hear the other side. As I said to you just now, they finally took that boy away. I got back into my shell. That means that I come so far to talk to you, mate; no more. That is letting the guard down and talking to you; that type of thing.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: What about Maureen from DCD?

Mr Bropho: Maureen is a very shrewd person. I do not blame her. If she wants to be who she is and who she wants to be, that is her. But no-one mucks around and tries to pull the wool over my eyes. If I can see anything wrong and if I have got something to say to you, I am going to say it, regardless of who you are. I would like to have a retaliation from your sorts of what you want to say to me.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Would you have any respect for any people or good relationships with any of the people from DCD in Midland?

Mr Bropho: Not anymore, from the lies that have been told.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you previously?

Mr Bropho: There was a time that there was no thoughts about bad things or whether they were friends or enemies. Before, when we first set up camp there, everybody was welcome because we was building towards what we ended up with and what we did not end up with. This is what Richard Court could see, and his Government. We were pushers for setting a good example for people to come.

Now let us go back to the rivers in Northam. There was an inquiry, and my dad was one person in that inquiry, and Mary Warmdean and Melba Higgins, who got killed on the Moora railway line when the train run over her. They asked my dad what he thought and what visions did he have towards the future, and he said he would like to see more things done for Aboriginal kids then in ways of education and better living conditions. He was told by the person sitting on that inquiry, "All those things are yet to come, but they will come." That is in *Shadow Lines*. You read that book. That was the hardships they went through then, and these are the hardships that we are going through now in 2003. We are in the jet supersonic age and we are still hovering around in the dust of the white man.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry to interrupt. I should have let Mr Tomlinson continue.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I am grateful to hear what Mr Bropho has got to say. When Peter asked the question, “Did you have good relationships with DCD Midland in the past”, you said “yes”. Then you said, “Then we were building up the camp.” Were you talking about as far as back as 1974 or after 1995?

Mr Bropho: Coming from the camp days -

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Back in 1974.

Mr Bropho: - coming this way. We had to better our living conditions. This is what Richard Court could see. That is the reason why his Government gave us that land. I see not the sense of what Gallop did - reverse it around and take it away. There was just nark-ness and jealousy in his mind. He wanted to dismantle everything that we built up and we fought for. That is the way you have got to look at it, Derrick and everybody.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Since the Gordon report, have officers from DCD in Midland been out to the Swan Valley Nyungah Community?

Mr Bropho: They have been there. Roley Bayman has been there, and the other welfare woman, to come and see the young girl, but we are not naming her. They was told to take that girl away from there. They was told that there was certain things going on in her house with her father, but no-one would listen to us. It was just “Bob Bropho this, Bob Bropho that”.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Have you at any time since the Gordon inquiry prevented officers from DCD from entering the Swan Valley Nyungah Community?

Mr Bropho: The gates were opened. Alannah MacTiernan came there. She was a snotty, drunken woman to me. She made it her business to let it be known in that school, before it was taken away by Alan Carpenter. She introduced herself to everybody else but me. That is the type of woman that you have got in Parliament. So people do come in through that gate, and it is important to know that that property, as you know, is not fenced off all around. You know that. People keep saying it is the fence - closed property. You go there today, you will see a lock on the gate, locked up. You will see security guards inside. So it is a reverse back around of what they said about us - locked gates.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Who asked you to put the gate there?

Mr Bropho: We put the fence along there so that we could control the kids from going out on that highway. Now just over the road, you have got Bill Smith, Bill Jones, Tommy Hayward. All the white men along there, they got fences along there. You go along there to Wanneroo, you see the signs: “Keep out. Trespassers will be prosecuted.” This is the whitefella law and the way he lives. What is the difference? If he can do it, then we can do it.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: It is my understanding - please correct me if I am wrong - that the gate was put there at the request of one of the departments as a condition of the agreement for the control of the land. What is the correct term?

The CHAIRMAN: The management order.

Mr Bropho: Is that factual evidence, Derrick?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is what I am asking.

Mr Bropho: No. Is that factual evidence?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That was my understanding. I do not know that it is factual.

Mr Bropho: You are talking about understanding but you are not talking about facts, are you?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: No. That is why I asked you. Was that gate put there at the request -

Mr Bropho: We had no talking about that. Your understanding -

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is wrong.

Mr Bropho: - is wrong.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Thank you.

Mr Bropho: If it was factual and you had the proof, then so be it, but you have not.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is why I asked. I wanted to know the truth, and you have told me. Thank you. I think that is all I wanted to ask.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Mr Bropho, you spoke before about the failure of white society to prevent drug use and crime and violence in their own community. I wanted to ask you how you in the past have dealt with those kinds of issues in your own community.

Mr Bropho: We dealt with them the same as you would. If you had an incident, we would go to the doctors. We would go to the proper authorities.

[8.00 pm]

We would always go to the white doctor. We banned ourselves away from the medical service. We do not use it. It is a white idea, and that sort of thing.

The CHAIRMAN: That is Derbarl Yerrigan.

Mr Bropho: Yes. We do not use it. So we live by the rule and the law of the whitefella book, what you fellas set down. You have got that law here, over and above our first law. Our first law is still there.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Mr Bropho, how would you try to stop such things from happening, like this law and all that?

Mr Bropho: Well, there is no way we can stop that, because, as I said, we go to you whitefellas, and you put it down to nothing. That sort of thing can be inflicted on us time and again, and you fellas do not do nothing. When I say "you fellas", I do not mean all you fellas sitting here; I mean your law. As I said, the blackfellas have got no right to make any complaint - none whatsoever.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Could I just ask one question, Robert? If you had instances of sniffing at the camp, did you ever call the police down to try to help you deal with it?

Mr Bropho: I will give you a good example. I was down in Guildford there one day, and the police called around to Margaret's place. They had a problem. They had this black boy on this pipe - this is at Success Hill. He was on the middle of the pipe, up top, in the middle of the river, and he had a can of spray. This is a police officer from the Midland area, I think, and another bloke. They wanted me to go down, so I went down there, and we tried to coax this boy down. I said to the police officers, "Can't you fellas do anything?" They said, "No, we can't do anything." These are police officers. It was my grandson up there. He is a man now. So they could not do anything. Anyway, in the end we coaxed the boy down. Who are we - the blackfellas. How can we stop these kids from sniffing when it is you buggers - not you fellas; you buggers, the whitefella - you make this stuff? You put it in your bloody hardware shops, and it is there for the kids to get. I am not having a shot at you.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: No.

Mr Bropho: I am just explaining in my own straightforward way. The stuff is there. Now, whether you like it, you have got to put up with us, because we were here first, and you came here and you started setting down your living lifestyle - your European living lifestyle. You did the things that you think you want to do, and that is your business. Hey, hang on; we are here. You did have some form of protection when you had the reserves going in the country towns. You had the distance, the three miles, but now that is all gone. The blackfellas were all right. They were working seven days a week out on the farms, and they were coming in and playing football around

the Moora area, and everybody was happy. Then the drinking rights came in. This is the whitefella now. He is smelling around and he wants to try to destroy this naturalness of the Aboriginal people, so he gave them the drinking rights. Right; my cousin is dead. I went into the Moora Hotel. I was a boozier. I became a boozier when I was 13, and the bottle of wine I got drunk on first was 3s 6d. That sheoak tree is still standing today along Lord Street where I stood when I got drunk.

Anyway, the drinking rights came out, and I said to my cousin, "I'm going in there now. I'm going to have my last drink." He said, "You're mad. Look, we can get drink now." I said, "No, it's going to destroy everybody." At the end of the day, that park was just packed with Aboriginal women and men laying drunk, with these empty flagons laying around them, and the police had a problem. They were going around trying to wake them up, trying to get them home. That was a very damaging thing. But then the whitefella said, "They've got to have their rights; they've got to have their rights." They have got their rights now, and they have drunk themselves right out of that living lifestyle what they had. The reserves have shut down, so everybody comes to town now because all the land out there has been shut up - mining companies here, private properties there, pushing them on the side there, and they have all become like they are now around Fitzroy Crossing. Colin Barnett said he had been up there now to look at them all there. Now, who do you think created that problem? We did not. So the problem of us and you is here to stay, and how we are going to work it out, I know not. Can I stop now?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. I was going to suggest that. We would like to cover that other matter we dealt with in private evidence. However, I understand you have two people with you who also might like to give evidence. I do not know whether they do want to give evidence. However, would you like to sit down for a little while, while I hear from them before we go into private session, and then we can do that in one lump? Then we can actually handle any other public evidence before we go into your private evidence. Are you happy for us to do that?

Mr Bropho: I will have a drink of water.

The CHAIRMAN: Take your drink with you, and take a seat and relax a bit, and we will have the other two witnesses come forward.