

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE ARTS IN REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT KALGOORLIE
ON FRIDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2003**

SESSION 6

Members

**Mr D.A. Templeman (Chairman)
Mr L. Graham (Deputy Chairman)
Mr J.N. Hyde
Mr A.P. O’Gorman
Ms S.E. Walker**

[4.05 pm]

DVORAKOVA-MOKHAYBER, MS MONIKA

**Desert Art Gallery,
examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: Welcome. The committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants the same respect that proceedings in the House itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. Unless otherwise directed by the committee, your evidence is public and may be published, including on the Parliament web site immediately after correction. Have you read the notes attached to the "Details of Witness" sheet regarding giving evidence before this committee?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I have.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you read the information sheet that accompanied them?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I have.

The CHAIRMAN: This is a parliamentary standing committee, which means that the committee can inquire into a range of issues emanating from a range of portfolios. We are presently conducting an inquiry into regional arts in Western Australia. I believe you have seen our terms of reference, so you will be aware of the scope and nature of this inquiry. Over the past few months we have been meeting with various individuals, organisations and representatives etc throughout Western Australia. We are visiting all the regions. As our terms of reference highlight, we are particularly interested in learning from various agencies, organisations and groups of individuals, including individual artists, the scope of arts outcomes being delivered in regional Western Australia. We are very interested to learn from people like yourself about some of the issues surrounding the effective delivery of arts outcomes in regional centres and regional Western Australia. Our terms of reference include the importance of the arts in delivering social outcomes. They also include reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of festivals. We are very keen to learn what access, if any, local organisations, artists etc have to some of the state-funded bodies that are supposed to be delivering outcomes to people in regional Western Australia. You are most welcome to refer to your notes; in fact, you can table them as part of your evidence today. This afternoon we will ask you a series of questions, and towards the end you may like to highlight a number of issues. Can you tell us a little about Desert Art Gallery's role locally and regionally?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: We represent a number of local artists, such as Dr Pantjiti, Mary McLean, Dinni Smith, Clinton Smith and Desmond Cameron. We represent the artists locally, interstate and on the international market. I provide a lot of assistance in getting their CVs and portfolios together, which is a major issue that I will raise later. Essentially, we provide a commercial outlet for local artists. There is not much of that nature in this town. This is the only art gallery that specialises in Aboriginal art. There are two other centres, one in Dugan Street, a side gallery, and another one in Egan Street, which sells a small component of Aboriginal art. We have two galleries: Desert Art Gallery, which is solely for indigenous artists, and Mokhayber Art Studio, which is my husband's art studio at 11 Hannan Street. They are next door to each other. Essentially, we represent local artists and provide access to the art market.

The CHAIRMAN: What challenges and issues face local artists who visit your gallery?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: There are several issues. One issue is art and local artefacts made by local people that are not sustained on the market, especially wooden artefacts. Many of the women in particular from the communities and the local area, such as the Ninga Mia community, work very hard, and they often involve the children, in making little artefacts. However, when they bring the artefacts into town they find it very difficult to sell them. The other two shops do not purchase many of them. We are the main buyer. Sometimes staff at various government agencies purchase things. However, that does not happen consistently. I have often seen very disheartened people leave our premises after I have bought as much as I could include in our stock and as much as our budget could afford. Over the years, many of the women have given up making artefacts because the market cannot sustain the purchase of them. We are losing a lot of ancient skills by it not being an economic or viable procedure. However, I believe the social impact has much more significance. The process of making these artefacts could be incorporated into something like the CDEP program as part of a payment. Even if it is below market value, at least it keeps the process going. The first point of call would be a retail outlet so they can get full market value. However, anything surplus to that could be incorporated into some kind of CDEP program. I am not completely familiar with the CDEP program but I know there would be room for that support. People have discussed that idea but it has never been taken any further.

The main issue with artists is their presentation to the art market. Whether it be local, interstate or international, they need some form of presentation. They need a profile that incorporates their personal history, and a portfolio, which, as you know, is a visual representation of all the work they have done. In more than 10 years in the industry not one person has come through the door with either a profile or a portfolio. Although some services in town can assist with CVs, there is very little, if anything, available to assist with portfolios. That process involves just a little extra skill and either an analogue camera or, preferably, a digital camera. That could be available for a gallery or any kind of forum for presentation. Barry MaGuire, the regional and indigenous arts development coordinator of the Artist's Foundation of Western Australia, has been to the goldfields a number of times to assist artists. He has given some wonderful presentations, provided some great glossy brochures and informed local artists about how important it is to have a profile, or a CV and a portfolio. The problem is that once he goes back to Perth, local people are left to create a presentation themselves. I do not have much spare time to do it for people. I have often assisted people, then I do not see them again. I do not have the spare time to voluntarily assist people. I have done a couple of them. However, it is not sustainable for me to spend the whole day on research, which is necessary when preparing people's profiles. Many people - not just young people but also older people - cannot provide their details. They do not know the origin of their language group. I find it a profound problem. The solution could be if Barry had some assistance with funding. I find it scary when he asks me for assistance in seeking funding avenues. If that is a priority for arts in this country, it is alarming. If funding were available to assist someone like Barry to come to the region a bit more often, that would go part way towards solving the problem. The ideal situation would be for a local person to be based in the area as a research officer and to have all the information stored on a data base in the local region so that local artists could have access to it. It should be available to illiterate people who cannot fill out a simple form as well as to people who need assistance with the latest technology and to take photographs of their work.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you see that person as being a local focus for information assistance, and someone who knows the networks both within and outside the region and has links to

government departments, whether they be funding agencies such as Country Arts WA, ArtsWA, Healthway or Lotteries West? In New South Wales there is a model for delivering arts outcomes whereby regional arts officers are devolved to the regions and live and work in the main city in each region. If there was an opportunity for such a model to be introduced in Western Australia, could that person assist in that role? He might not be able to do all the research, because that is a specific skill. However, he might be able to source funding.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN: If that is a local problem in Kalgoorlie and the goldfields, that regional person might be able to source assistance.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: The networking part is significant. I know that the Australia Council for the Arts has realised there is an issue in that respect in this region. About a year ago it conducted a forum at the Maku Stadium, which is a very large building. Local artists, arts organisations and people were invited to come together and access information about arts funding. There were about three or four people from the region. I think there was a breakdown in communications when it came to informing the local people and knowing who is in the industry in the local region. I understand that the people concerned were from Sydney and did not necessarily have that information. However, with today's communication technology, it is not that difficult to find out information. The intentions were wonderful, and very valuable information was provided. However, it did not go quite far enough in targeting the people who really needed that information. That seems to be a common problem with disseminating information about funding programs or avenues for funding. I have heard about a new web site - I do not know which level of government has released it - which lists every avenue of funding. I do not know whether members of the committee are familiar with it. I will have to get that site again.

[4.20 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: I am aware of it.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: That is important, but not everyone will go down that path.

The CHAIRMAN: Not everyone has access to the Internet or whatever else.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes. Even once you get past knowing where to access the funds from, one of the biggest issues I have found with artists is the actual application process itself. I have done quite a few applications. It took up to a month to fill out one application form. As I said yesterday, in many cases you have to write a thesis to make the application. It is a very full-on process. Often these applications are rejected through lack of funding - there are not enough funds to cover all the projects - and not because the application did not meet the criteria. The money does not spread far enough. Hours, weeks or months can be spent on these applications. I do not think they necessarily have to be that complicated.

The CHAIRMAN: So, there is streamlining.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Absolutely. Other industries that are perhaps even more academic have simpler forms. That is a really serious area. One of the representatives from the Australia Council for the Arts raised this issue. She was an indigenous lawyer.

The CHAIRMAN: When did that happen? Was that when they were over here?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: How often has the Australia Council visited the goldfields?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: That was the only time.

The CHAIRMAN: That you are aware of?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: That I am aware of. I was not actually formally informed anyway. I was informed by a friend who is in the arts industry. A lot of people who are in the arts industry did not know.

The CHAIRMAN: Did any indigenous people attend those meetings?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: It was actually aimed at indigenous people, but there were no indigenous artists there.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that right?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: So the Australia Council arranged -

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I do not want to bag the Australia Council for the Arts, because I think it does a wonderful job, but in this case it highlights the issue of communication and getting to the grassroots level. I run an art gallery and I represent several artists. I did not receive a single flyer about the event. I knew about it because a friend of mine was working at the district education office and sent me a little e-mail a couple of days beforehand to say that this arts council thing was happening down at Maku Stadium and I might be interested in it. I showed up and I was the only person there who was representing artists. Christine and Geoffrey came along right at the end. They only found out about it quite late in the day as well. They are significant players in the region.

The CHAIRMAN: We visited the Desert Art Gallery yesterday and met one of the famous artists, Mary McLean. One of the comments she made was regarding the awareness of local artists and that some of them are more well known outside the State than they are in their own State or region in some respects. Can you give us a bit of a -

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Not really. Do you mean in the sense that they are more famous elsewhere? Perhaps while we are on the indigenous topic I could go to the point discussed earlier about what there is in this town to show our indigenous history. At the moment there is almost zero. When tourists come to Kalgoorlie they get the full view of the mining industry. However, in terms of Aboriginal history, there is very little. There is good news, which is something I will be discussing with Christine and Geoffrey. Firstly, as Christine put it, in the museum there is only a little grinding stone, a boomerang and an emu egg, if you are lucky. You have to actually find it. That is it for Aboriginal history. I know that they are in the process of developing more in that area. That is wonderful. That is being addressed. The other issue is that a lot of Aboriginal people will not access that venue. They will not go into those kinds of buildings. That will not solve the problem, but it will address cultural tourism and that kind of thing. That is pretty good. What Christine and Geoffrey are doing with the cultural centre is one of the most profound things that will be happening in this region. I am kind of surprised and shocked at how much difficulty they are having in actually accessing funds. I know that in Europe art and culture is considered a vital part of society. Here in Australia I find it really is a struggle to try to get that to the forefront of a lot of communities, in particular locally. I do not know what it is like in a lot of other regions, but in Kalgoorlie to get funding for these kinds of projects is like pulling teeth. The good news is that the ball is rolling for Christine and Geoffrey and the cultural centre will eventually be here. That will address a lot of issues for a lot of people. The good news concerns what the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is doing. It has quite a lot of initiatives in the region. I do not work for the council or anything, but I am involved in one of its projects - the reconciliation park. Have you received all the information about that?

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Okay. That initiative will be developed on land at the top end of Hannan Street. At the moment it is a big, bare piece of land. One of the artists I represent has actually provided the design for the park. I am a multimedia designer and I put it together as a package for presentation to the council. That has been accepted. Basically, it will be an outdoor venue that will be accessible to tourists and particularly to Aboriginal people who come in from outlying communities. It will not be a closed building. It will have no roof or walls. It will be a park, but not in the sense of a barbecue-type park. It will involve more information and inspiration. There will be a time line from the pre-colonisation period and since Paddy Hannan showed up in this region. There will be 38 000 to 40 000 years of history recorded in an outdoor venue. That is taking a lot of research and involves putting together a lot of information. That will be available there. The time line will then come to the point when gold was discovered in this region and then continue with information on when water was brought to the region, the infrastructure was built, electricity was provided and trains arrived. As the legislation also changes nationally, it will be recorded in this time line. It will have a local level of history and also a national level. It will provide details of the different laws that were changed over the years. That will show the progress that has been made since a lot of the awful laws were thrown out.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Monika, what about the Warmun and Balgo art centres up in the Kimberley? That sort of model, from my knowledge of those centres, has taken up the issue of getting the portfolio of artists together. In many ways they are case managing artists and dealing with the horrendous stuff with GST, which has impacted so badly on artists. What I am picking up from you is that there is probably more of a commercial arts centre role in a private gallery, and that there is not even an arts centre here.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Not with that facility. We do have an arts centre, but there is not that kind of facility. Normally, to enter a commercial market, an artist needs to be prepared. I am very flexible, but when these guys go to Perth they have no chance. Some who have made inroads have done so only because I have gone down there personally to present a lot of their stuff. I do a lot of the stuff in my spare time. It is not commercially viable for me to do that. Normally it is easier for me to knock people back and to tell them to come back when they are more prepared for the industry.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Heaps of federal money has gone into Warmun and Balgo, and that seems to have empowered indigenous artists.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I see. It is working, in other words.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Clearly, none of that money has come here.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes. Just on what I was discussing then, one of the things I have on my list of things to do is to go to Kojonup, because I have heard about the wonderful place they have there. I have spoken with the people who designed it and provided the information and 90 per cent of the artefacts. They have personally come to see me and invited me to have a look at that. That is all part of my research for this time line.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I went through the Kojonup one about a month ago and the accessibility is amazing. It is that time line, because you have tourists coming in and suddenly they realise that it is not just 200 years, but 40 000 years. Our committee went to Geraldton. The Western Australian Museum has created a building on the waterfront, but there is an Aboriginal art gallery at the end of it. Indigenous people go through this museum, which is beautifully shaped, almost like a mia-mia, so it is not an imposing building. There is

indigenous ownership through the attachment of the gallery there. An Aboriginal women's corporation is actually doing the art up there.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: It usually takes the women to do the work.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Exactly. What about other private galleries such as Art Place in Perth? There are other people who have worked, say, in the Kimberley. They seem to have been helping out.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Barry is one of the best people who has ever come to this region. He is an indigenous person. That has been the key. He is very professional as well as being able to relate. The problem is that Barry is one individual. Once he goes back to Perth, the Artists Foundation of Western Australia provides a call system and artists can ring the foundation and someone will ring back. That will not work. A 1800 number would probably be a better option. Ringing someone up and asking them to call back is not a functional way to operate. The fact that it is based in Perth means already that it is a case of people asking where they are from. Just having someone local would solve the issue, or at least if Barry could come out here more frequently and people would know when he could be accessed.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The Art Gallery of Western Australia has an indigenous section and indigenous people. It certainly has an ambit to look at the development of indigenous art. Is there much return?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Communication?

Mr J.N. HYDE: Yes.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Not really. I have not heard anything, unless Alison is doing something with it. I am not aware of anything. There is no development. You need only look at the history of the Art Gallery of Western Australia. It has recognised Aboriginal art for less than a 100 years. It was only in the early part of the twentieth century that that happened. It is not that long ago that art was considered under archaeology or another department. It is only relatively recently that that art has been recognised as art. It was around the 1950s that it actually started to enter wider markets. In the past 20 years it has really become a very strong economic market. It is quite a young industry, but in terms of communication for the goldfields region there is none that I am aware of.

Mr J.N. HYDE: There is the issue of cataloguing, because I think it has made amends in recent history and has been putting money into indigenous art. Maybe if we are looking at the cataloguing issue -

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: It is quite profound. We have artists in this region who have actually passed away and there is no record of them ever having existed.

Mr J.N. HYDE: One of the big issues in indigenous art is the authentication. Certainly a lot of the indigenous art I have bought provides that guarantee, and that is usually your track record. Again, does that system discriminate against desert people?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: It is not really working in this region. I know that there have been all kinds of models. We have had quite a few forums in this region in which they have discussed these kinds of ways of authenticating. One system comes through and then it is replaced by another system. I do not know whether you are familiar with the systems. There have been about three in the past 10 years. The current one seems to be the most consistent, but it has still not infiltrated to every corner of the country. It probably does discriminate against some people. I am not really that familiar with the current process, so it is not really something I could comment on.

[4.35 pm]

Mr J.N. HYDE: If you are selling Aboriginal art and you are not aware of it, then the system is not working.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes, that is a problem; the system is not working.

The CHAIRMAN: I want to go back to an issue you have just mentioned, and I am hoping that you may be able to give an example. You said that there is no record or anything of that nature of the life or art of indigenous artists who have passed on, because their art has been dispersed everywhere over a period of time.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes, that is right.

The CHAIRMAN: Yesterday we met another indigenous artist called Dinni. You highlighted some concerns about Dinni's expertise not being carried on. Can you perhaps take us a little further into that?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Dinni is an elder in the region. He is one of the last remaining people in the region who sits down and makes ancient-style artefacts in the traditional way, such as weapons, spears, woomeras, boomerangs and that kind of thing. A lot of people are making boomerangs and things using power tools and that kind of thing, but Dinni does it the real McCoy way. He often has kangaroos sprawled all over the place and he rips out their sinews to use for woomeras. It is quite gruesome, but it is authentic. Basically he wants to teach the kids - the next generation. He is having an extremely difficult time. Generally the kids are just not interested. It is very difficult for him to get their attention to teach them these things. However, there is good news. We are working on some programs. We are trying to get a system whereby children are referred to him. I am talking about Aboriginal children who know very little about their culture and who are not particularly interested in learning about their culture. Through the education system and the pre-sentence process they can be referred to programs in which they can be taught about their culture. This program would probably also include Geoffrey at his venue. However, at this stage there is almost nowhere for Aboriginal youths in this region to learn about their culture unless their parents are teaching them.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not necessarily always going to happen. Would it be true to say that by engaging someone like Dinni and other senior indigenous elders, programs could be developed for which they could get some remuneration to share that learning with younger interested people?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Again it is a priority issue.

The CHAIRMAN: Would it address a number of other social concerns?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Absolutely. A classic example is that from day one of the school holidays in this region, the crime rate immediately goes straight through the roof. A funding application was made for Dinni and a number of other people from a local group to run a two-week holiday program with a number of Aboriginal people. It would have had traditional weapon-making workshops, Dreamtime storytelling workshops, a rainbow serpent project and a heap of other projects. However, it was knocked back because of the paperwork. The people who knocked it back were from the Department of Indigenous Affairs, actually. No real assistance was given to them on how to fix the paperwork and what to do about it, nor on how to address the issues. It was just, "Sorry, it didn't comply." The application process was not that simple. I just feel people give up.

The CHAIRMAN: Was that program arts-based?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: It was arts-based and culture-based. It was going to be held on a patch of dirt at the top end of Hannan Street, which is the proposed reconciliation park. The people who were going to run the program were not even fussed that it was not grassed. They were quite happy to clear away the prickles and set it up in the style of a traditional camp, like they have in Uluru with coverings, and run the camp. This was an initiative from the Aboriginal people themselves. I found it quite disheartening that it just got knocked on the head, particularly in this region. If we had programs coming out of our ears, I would understand that we were fully catered for, but we do not. These are just some of the issues. There is some good news. As I mentioned yesterday, there are some education updates. There is not a great deal at an open entry level for people to learn about Aboriginal culture. Usually the courses are at an associate level or higher up, and you can then start learning some serious stuff. However, there is very little in this region for the average person who wants to learn something about Aboriginal art, art history or art culture. I have been told by Paul Connor, who is the academic course coordinator at Curtin University of Technology, that as from next year there will be a national training package in Australia so that the courses will actually be the same in every State, which is quite fascinating because we are all in the same country. As from next year there will be a certificate 2 course run locally at Curtin called Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Cultural Art. That is fantastic news, so that there will be a lot of information I can give to people. Another question is how Curtin will disseminate that information and tell local people about this course. Will it be just posted on its web site and that is it? Will there be a couple of ads in the paper?

Mr J.N. HYDE: Is this the course from the University of New England that has been adapted?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I do not know where it is from. I just got this information yesterday. Often with a lot of the artists I deal with it is assumed that if they have talent and are of Aboriginal descent they naturally know everything about art, all about art history and everything there is to know about painting. It is the same as it is for anybody else: if you want to be an artist, you still need to learn the skills, the process and the mediums, and it is helpful if you know about art history.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Can you give us a view about the current proposal to change copyright, which will impact a fair bit on indigenous artists; that is, once an artwork is resold, the artist will get a commission? Do you have any view on that?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: The main view in that area is to address the issue of an original piece being sold for \$100, and then someone down the road making a million bucks from it, and if the artist is still alive, he or she basically does not get any benefit from it. I suppose that would be very difficult to track. I do not know who is handling all the paperwork. Often I can never find an artist the next day, let alone 20 years later. It is very difficult. Often we have supplied canvases and materials and we have not even seen the artist. I find it a fascinating area for monitoring. It is a great principle because really it is an industry in which art appreciates; it is an investment area. It is an interesting concept. I do not know a great deal about who will do all that, how it will be monitored, what the recording process will be for a piece of art that is sold, and who will give information as to who the artist was and who bought it and so on. What will the registration process be?

Mr J.N. HYDE: It is a federal process. My assumption was that the later system of authentication was more widespread than perhaps it is. For example, if a Mary McLean or whatever was sold for \$5 000 this year and in 10 years it was sold for \$400 000, the original authentication would still be there and at that point it would be picked up. I do not know whether the proposal is that the resale will kick in when an artwork reaches \$50 000 or

whatever. We should probably consider that issue and make a recommendation in our report. At the moment it is a federal proposal.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Have you spoken to Sotheby's and people like that about their processes? I have spoken to them and they have often explained their processes to me for paintings or artworks from the 1980s. Certain types of art need a 10-year period before they can be considered for auction at Sotheby's. I do not really do a lot of that anyway.

The CHAIRMAN: I suppose it is an issue that we can take note of. I do not know whether that fits within this committee's terms of reference, except perhaps that we could make a note and a recommendation.

Mr J.N. HYDE: But you are a parliamentary chairman; you have immense power!

The CHAIRMAN: Indeed! Monika, you mentioned a number of issues relating to indigenous arts, and you highlighted a number of concerns about how outcomes are being delivered locally. You also mentioned a number of positives, I suppose, on those outcomes, and you said that doors are opening.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes, some projects are in the pipeline; things are changing.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other issues that you believe this committee should be aware of related to our terms of reference from your perspective as a person who has been working with indigenous artists for some time?

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I do have one little issue, but only in the sense of how art and culture is perceived in Australia. We are often looked upon as having quite a bland sort of cultural standing compared with a lot of other countries around the world, and I think we have a long way to go. I know how powerful art can be to people's individual lives. I mentioned to you an incident that stood out for me of a lady who does local paintings and quite often paints the theme of reconciliation. She comes from a background in which there has been violence and she has experienced, as she says, racist incidents in local establishments. She said in one particular case there was an incident in a pub; it was not in Kalgoorlie. She said she was about to get involved and was going to get quite loud, but she stopped herself because she remembered her painting of reconciliation. She said she would have been a hypocrite if she had behaved in the way she was about to behave yet was still painting those works. I find it quite a powerful thing that a painting can actually affect a person's thought processes. Obviously artwork is visual communication. As you know, Aboriginal history does not have a record that has been written. A lot of the paintings depict very important details of life, such as food gathering, ceremonies, songs and belief systems. It is a very powerful educational tool for the culture of the indigenous people of our country. It is therefore a very powerful area, and I think the industry needs a lot more recognition than perhaps it gets.

The CHAIRMAN: It is important because it is what makes us and what we are.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes. Everything is not just economic-based. There is a very human side of art in general, not just Aboriginal art. However, the fact that you are talking to me about Aboriginal art is quite interesting. Why are Aboriginal people not running their own Aboriginal art galleries in this town? That question has been raised. It has been done. Galleries have come and gone. Several Aboriginal galleries have popped up in this region but have gone again. These were all run by Aboriginal people but they did not succeed for various reasons. One reason may be the lack of preparedness of the local people to enter the market. This again raises the issue of the profile of an artist, the quality of the work and the lack of educational opportunities. I do not know of any other reason. In our case it could be location. It could be because my husband is an artist and he basically knows about art

because he is an artist; whereas artists have not run a lot of the other galleries; they have just been run by people who thought they might be the go. It may not be for those reasons; I do not know. However, only one gallery in this town sells solely Aboriginal art. There are other people who do Aboriginal art, but not in the same sense as Desert Art Gallery. I find that quite interesting. I think, again, that Christine and Geoffrey will resolve that. They will have a cultural centre and they will have art and artefacts for sale. It is not just something that we think may happen; there is something over the horizon, so I am not too worried about that. That is not a particular issue. However, again, they will need to address the issue of entering the market at a professional level. Christine, Geoffrey and I have discussed the exhibition they said they would like to hold at the end of the year, and I will be discussing that again with them, as I am in the industry. However, I am not just in Aboriginal art. That is not the whole thing we do; it is just one component. Today we seem to have made a big focus on it. Another area of art is in schools accessing indigenous and non-indigenous artists. There does not seem to be a simple process for that. I have been to forums with teachers who have raised that issue. There is no simple process if they want an artist to go into their school and provide some expertise; that is, people who are more highly skilled than they are in their general teaching capacity. That is probably focusing more on non-Aboriginal artists. There is a process, but it is not a simple one. Not all teachers or artists in the region are familiar with the process. The ones who do know about it have told me that they must fill out a yellow form and a pink form, and it is not simple.

[4.50 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: It comes back to the forms again.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Yes, back to forms and time. Often these teachers have programs where they need artists at short notice, and they could potentially access a lot of local artists - people like Hamdi Mokhayber and Felicia Lowe. There are quite a lot of artists in this region whom they could access, but there is no simple process. I think that has been raised for years. I do not know whether that is going to be changed. It is forms. It is ironic, because art is one of the most non-form-type mediums. It is very visual. It is trying to get away from that paperwork-type process. The irony is that art has very complicated paperwork.

The CHAIRMAN: Monika, we have run out of time. I thank you on behalf of the committee for your time, not only this afternoon in terms of the formal hearing process but also for allowing us to visit your premises yesterday and meet some of the local indigenous artists. We do appreciate that. There will be a copy of this afternoon's transcript for you -

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Is that all of them or just my part? How does it work?

The CHAIRMAN: Your part will be sent to you for the correction of mistakes. You will then send it back to us. When we get the corrected proofs from everybody, the transcripts will all go on our web site. For example, if you went to our web site now, you would see all of our transcripts from the previous places we have visited, up until, I think, Broome.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Okay; so I can delete things too?

The CHAIRMAN: Only the bits that are mistakes.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: I am only joking! You made a reference to a central funding information web site. I have it somewhere, but I cannot say it off the top of my head.

The CHAIRMAN: We will get that information to you.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Do you not think that a central funding web site should be commonly known?

The CHAIRMAN: It is by subscription. It is actually run by someone who has put it together as a subscription option.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Usually the local government arts officers subscribe to it. I think it is sponsored by the ANZ Bank or the National Bank, or whatever.

Ms Dvorakova-Mokhayber: Why has the Government at any level not got a web site of the government-funded bodies?

Mr J.N. HYDE: We apparently have this thing called E-government that was supposed to do all of this.

The CHAIRMAN: We need to formally bring the hearing to a close, so I thank you again, Monika, and officially close this session today in Kalgoorlie.

Committee adjourned at 4.55 pm