

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE ARTS
IN REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT ESPERANCE
ON TUESDAY, 11 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**

[3.10 pm]

JOHNSON, MS DALE

**Artist, Esperance Community Arts,
examined:**

WEST, MS CATHERINE MARGARET

**Media Liaison, Esperance Bay Music Club,
examined:**

PATERSON, MRS LOUISE JANE STRANGWAYS

**Administrator, Esperance Community Arts,
examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome our next three witnesses. This 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 Parliament may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Unless otherwise directed by the committee, your evidence is public and may be published, including on the parliamentary web site and other notable publications. You will have received some notes for witnesses appearing before committees. Have you read those notes and the witness information sheet?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask you to state the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

Ms Johnson: I am the recently retired chair of Esperance Community Arts.

Ms West: I am the media liaison person for the Esperance Bay Music Club.

Ms Johnson: She is also the new chair of Esperance Community Arts.

Ms West: I am wearing my music club hat today.

Mrs Paterson: I am the administrator of Esperance Community Arts.

The CHAIRMAN: As you are aware, the committee is inquiring into regional arts in Western Australia. Part of our scope of work is to visit every region in Western Australia and liaise with and call forward as witnesses organisations, individuals associated with organisations, artists and artisans to give evidence about the arts outcomes being delivered in the regions. This afternoon, we are very interested to gain some insight into the scope of Esperance Community Arts and its involvement in the arts and delivering arts outcomes. The music club is another important organisation and we would like to hear a little bit more about that. We would also be interested to hear from Louise about her position as administrator. I am aware that you are recently appointed. Is that correct?

Mrs Paterson: I was appointed in February.

The CHAIRMAN: Then you have been there long enough! We would be very interested to hear from an administrator's point of view about the issues faced in trying to deliver outcomes.

Catherine, you are the media liaison officer for the Esperance Bay Music Club. Can you tell us a little bit about what the music club does and is involved in?

Ms West: We are a fairly small group of musicians and people interested in music who set out to promote live music in Esperance. We have some regular gigs. We hold a jam session at a local hotel every Sunday, and we organise a host band and equipment and that sort of thing. We offer people the opportunity to get up and perform live. Also there are some annual events. There is a statewide competition for original music called the Next Big Thing. We host that event every year and send our regional winners to the Perth heats.

The CHAIRMAN: When is that normally held in Esperance?

Ms West: It changes each year. Next Big Thing has had some organisational troubles. Things keep moving around. It is held annually.

The CHAIRMAN: Is music a big cultural influence in Esperance?

Ms West: I would think so. As well as the people I see performing at jam sessions and turning up to competitions, there is a huge number of garage musicians and people who may never intend to perform but gain personal satisfaction and enjoyment from music because it is a creative level in their lives. There are limited job opportunities this far from the city, so there are probably a lot of people working in a paid role that is not their first choice. It is really important that they have some other outlet for their skills and the opportunity to develop skills.

The CHAIRMAN: Does your group also organise the Esperance music festival?

Ms West: No. That is classical music, and we are focused more on contemporary rock-and-roll.

The CHAIRMAN: I assume that music would be one arts activity that young people particularly would look at as something they could attach to.

Ms West: The music club does not have any real claim to a big youth membership or anything like that. I think the young people who are into music tend to not want to be in a club.

The CHAIRMAN: Do they get involved in the activities?

Ms West: Yes; they do get involved in the activities.

The CHAIRMAN: Do they get involved in your Next Big Thing events?

Ms West: Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN: How successful has that been? Have there been musicians who have gone through that and onto other things?

Ms West: Yes, groups have experienced the success of winning a regional heat of the Next Big Thing. Part of the prize is the opportunity to record a single, which goes on to the Next Big Thing promotional CD. Songs by artists throughout Western Australia are distributed to radio stations and important music business people all over the country. You get some big exposure from those sorts of competitions. I know of two bands which had fairly young members and which, on the strength of winning Next Big Thing, fled Esperance to the big city to see where they could go with their music. Those members have evolved and joined different bands. They have stuck with the music industry from that little bit of encouragement at the beginning.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the work of the club assisted them to explore their creative talent?

Ms West: I think so.

The CHAIRMAN: How long has the club been around?

Ms West: It started out as the Esperance bay country music club. I think that was in the early 1980s. I might be in contempt of Parliament because I do not really know these dates.

Mr L. GRAHAM: We will have to jail you!

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure we will be flexible and lenient.

Ms West: I think it lasted in that form for 15 years or so. It became the Esperance Bay Music Club because the interest in country music declined and the blues people forced a massive takeover and threw the cat amongst the pigeons. Nothing like that really happened.

The CHAIRMAN: It makes a good story.

Ms West: It adds colour! Tastes change, and the people who had the time and energy to devote to the club changed. The club is probably a little more blues and contemporary pop-oriented now.

The CHAIRMAN: What are some of the key issues facing your club?

Ms West: Finding volunteers. All the committee members in our club work full time and are often in bands. They have serious music commitments, as well as children and other things going on in their lives. It is a bit hard to get time to do anything beyond the basic commitments that we make to the club each year, such as the competitions that we run and the jam sessions every week.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you apply for funding or anything of that nature to assist you in your activities?

Ms West: We have not done so directly in the past few years. We have supported funding applications, such as that for the youth arts coordinator. The ECA put in an application for Rampage funding. We provided letters of support for that. We also offer in-kind support for those things through our members being at gigs to do crowd control or help organise and that sort of thing.

The CHAIRMAN: Have you been involved in the Kiss My WAMi competition?

Ms West: There has not been a WAMi competition in Esperance for at least three years, which is how long I have been in Esperance.

The CHAIRMAN: Was the club involved in the competition when it was last held here?

Ms West: We have missed out on the WAMi competition for the past few years.

Ms Johnson: Cole Bishop was involved in looking after the WAMi competition.

Ms West: Cole Bishop is a local guy who is a professional promoter. He gets bands into town. He is the first point of contact for bands and organisations who want to get their music into Esperance.

The CHAIRMAN: Louise, your role is as the administrator of Esperance Community Arts. Is that full or part time? How is that structured?

Mrs Paterson: It is a casual contract. I work the hours that are required, bearing in mind that Esperance Community Arts does not have very much money to pay me. It basically allocates me a certain amount of hours. It works out to be about five or six hours in the course of a month, but they might all fall in a week.

The CHAIRMAN: What does your role entail?

Mrs Paterson: I do what the volunteers used to do for the organisation. I look after the minutes and the record keeping. I do not do the book keeping. Somebody else does that. I apply for funding for the organisation if it needs it. I handle all the correspondence and help organise events when we take on a project. Esperance Community Arts decided only this year to put someone on in a paid position. I think that is because it was getting harder to find volunteers to put in the hours.

The CHAIRMAN: Would it be true to say that otherwise the organisation would have been at threat?

Ms Johnson: I have been the secretary for quite a long while and handled most of those things. I definitely wanted to retire. Yet, year after year we would get to the decision about who would be secretary, and there would be thundering silence.

The CHAIRMAN: Everybody looked the other way.

Ms Johnson: Out of the blue, at the beginning of the year, Sheila McHale announced that category A organisations would get an extra \$10 000. That made all the difference. I could suddenly see that people would be much more interested in taking on positions in Esperance Community Arts if somebody would do the everyday legwork.

The CHAIRMAN: Was that a positive? Did that \$10 000 make a difference?

Ms Johnson: It has made a very big difference.

The CHAIRMAN: That is good. I refer to the going concern of the organisation and Esperance Community Arts. How much do you turn over in a year?

Ms Johnson: That is hard to answer in that funds come in and we devolve them. As I said, at the moment we get \$35 000 a year from the State Government.

The CHAIRMAN: That is up from \$25 000.

Ms Johnson: Yes. Until now, the Cannery Arts Centre has received nearly all that money. This year the cannery has \$18 000 and Esperance Community Arts has retained the rest. Other than that, Esperance Community Arts gets about \$4 000 from the Shire of Esperance towards its administration. Is that right?

[3.25 pm]

Mrs Paterson: It think it was \$4 000

Ms Johnson: The shire provided \$12 000 altogether this year - \$4 000 for administration, \$5 000 for youth arts and about \$3 000 for managing the Shire of Esperance art collection.

Mrs Paterson: Then there is also the \$80 000 for the youth arts program. That came from federal funding.

Ms Johnson: That was over two years. That money employs Phil Shelton - I think you have already met him - and amounts to \$80 000 over two years from the regional arts fund, which is federal money.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we explore that a bit. The position is only part-time and about 30 hours a week from memory. Where did that come from in terms of need? Did the organisation say, "What we really need is a youth arts officer because"?

Ms Johnson: It started a long time ago when I was the chair of the Cannery Arts Centre. The cannery was having problems because it had been running Cool Art for children and also a youth arts organisation and it was having more and more trouble keeping the volunteers. The Bijou Theatre ran Petit Bijou, which it probably told you about, and it was having trouble with that. The music club was definitely wanting to do stuff with kids and it seemed like a good idea to get in a dedicated person. We thought it would be as easy as winking to get money for this. About five funding submissions later, and some really big ones, it was obviously not going to be all that easy. However, we decided probably 18 months down the track that it was a better idea to try to do this through Esperance Community Arts because we were the umbrella body and we could say to funding bodies that we had a membership of 600 people. The beauty of having peak bodies is that you can add up all of the membership and talk about impressive numbers instead of it just the Cannery Arts Centre. However, we were suddenly able to get this money. The first lot of money we got through the regional arts fund was \$30 000 for one year. Lyndel Taylor was our first community arts officer, who you will meet today with the others from the Festival of the Wind - if you have not already met with them. Lyndel had the job for one year and the shire put in \$10 000 with \$30 000 coming from the regional arts fund. It was funding over one year so all through that year Lyndel spent a lot of time trying to find money to keep her job ongoing - that whole year we bit our fingernails. She got to the end of the year and left. We then had a period with no youth arts

coordinator but an obvious need for one. We were successful in the next round of RAF and with the \$80 000 we employed Phil Shelton.

The CHAIRMAN: That money was from last November until November 2004. That still present a problem in terms of how you fund that in an ongoing capacity because you cannot reapply to the RAF.

Ms Johnson: No. It has been made clear that we would not be successful again and we have been told to start looking at some of the government funds like -

Mrs Paterson: Regional solutions. The regional partnerships program was facilitated through the area consultative committee.

Ms Johnson: Yes, and they are big applications but it is going to be Louise's job to start that round again at the beginning of this coming year.

The CHAIRMAN: I think you mentioned that Lyndel had that problem. Although she is employed to do a particular job, she is also spending a lot of her time trying to make sure that things continue into the future.

Ms Johnson: Now Esperance Community Arts has Louise, who is very proficient at writing funding application whereas Phil is not. This is often part of the problem. Someone is employed to work with youth and they spend half their time writing funding applications when they are not obviously always good at both. However, Louise is very good at it and she will take that on and Phil will not have to spend time on it. He is still going to have to produce the facts for her but it will be much better.

The CHAIRMAN: It will help identify the need and feed that into the requirements of the funding submissions. Can we explore this whole funding process. Given the experience that Esperance Community Arts has already had with making applications for funds through a variety of sources, what is difficult about that process and what would make things easier?

Ms Johnson: A lot of the difficulty is not being fully funded. Healthway is particularly bad at this - I am not knocking Healthway, it is great to get Healthway funding. However, we just finished a big project at the Esperance show this year called Arts Ally at the Show. We put into Healthway a funding application for \$12 000 and we received \$5 000. The turnaround time for Healthway is four months. You wait a long time after your application to find out that you have only got \$5 000 of the \$12 000 you asked for, and then the project is getting pretty close and you have to either cut back, tailor it to suit or whatever. Those things are more of a frustration and annoyance than a disaster, because we suspect all the time that that will happen - you sort of build in for it. Country Arts WA decided to knock back people entirely or to fully fund people so that they were not always being set up to fail.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Dale, have you ever raised that with Healthway with any of your hats on?

Ms Johnson: I am sure that I have spoken to Lindsay about it over the odd beer but not in any official capacity.

Mr L. GRAHAM: We do not report until June next year. With one of your hats on you might like to drop Healthway a formal line on that matter because I had a series of meetings with it not long ago and it is in the process of reviewing its entire application system. That would be a very good thing for Healthway to know about.

Ms Johnson: Okay. The four months turnaround seems to be ridiculously long. Country Arts WA manages to turn around its applications in four weeks, which is much more achievable for groups. Most groups work year by year. At the beginning of the year they work out what projects they are going to do that year. Most of them are not that organised but they are working a year ahead or something like that so they need to know quickly what the outcome of their application is.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Should they have funding rounds or should you be able to apply all year round?

Ms Johnson: Being able to apply all year round is good but perhaps that is one of the problems with Healthway needing a four-month turnaround. If you had a funding round then it all happens and it is over and done with. I do not know what Healthway's thoughts are on why it does that.

The CHAIRMAN: I suppose if you are applying to different sources the rounds are different. A \$5 000 application to Healthway might have to be in by next week, and, yet, the funding from Lotterywest or whatever is on a different timetable so that can create a problem as well.

Ms West: And you often need to have one set of funding nailed down before the second body will allow you to take on the second lot of funding.

Ms Johnson: And then the shire has a financial year and Country Arts WA has a calendar year. You are always adjusting your moneys according to what time of the year they are coming in and so on, which makes it hard for new people to take over an organisation. They have to know all this stuff to be able to run it.

Mr L. GRAHAM: To do anything.

Ms Johnson: Yes, it makes it hard.

The CHAIRMAN: How do you as an organisation react to a devolution model of service delivery by ArtsWA or Country Arts WA? As part of our travels we went to Victoria and New South Wales and looked at their model, which was similar to the model that the Department of Sport and Recreation has over here, in which sporting associations, groups and local government deal with somebody in a regional office first. That information then goes through to the departmental hierarchy in Perth. New South Wales has a similar model for the arts in which there are the regional arts development officers. From a regional perspective would you see any benefit in having something like that in Western Australia?

Ms Johnson: I can see two outcomes with that. If people are employed in Perth and sent down here, they would take the first year of their employment to get to know the place, to build up a network and be able to work with people. If a local person was employed to do that work, then I could see it working.

The CHAIRMAN: If that were the case and, as part of the advertising, the job asked for somebody who has demonstrated local understanding and experience, to what organisation would you attach them? One of the other issues that has arisen in exploring this type of model is that rather than establish a shopfront office, these people would be out and about in the community rather than stuck behind a desk answering telephone calls. It has been put that you could attach that person to the network that already exists, whether it be a development commission, local government direct or another organisation. What would you see as being -

Ms Johnson: I have seen first-hand the disaster in attaching that sort of an officer to the Shire of Esperance.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you give us a bit of detail?

Ms Johnson: How bad do you -

The CHAIRMAN: You do not need to mention names.

Ms Johnson: We had four community arts officers here. I do not think one of them was successful in delivering any arts into the community. We already have strong arts organisations in the community. The officers were stuck up in the council offices - a cut-off, isolated place. It is not the sort of place that kids will drop into to talk to the community arts officer.

Mrs Paterson: And those officers had to work under the constraints of the shire, which is probably slightly different to a state government funded position being housed here. Even so, this shire has

done that with other funded positions and they have just ended up being another shire worker. It is hard to get them out into the community.

Ms Johnson: They were cut off.

The CHAIRMAN: If we cross off local government, what are the other options?

Ms Johnson: Yesterday we talked about Nikki Biggins from Kalgoorlie being attached to the development officer. I was the chair of Country Arts WA during that time. Country Arts WA would agree that it was an unqualified disaster. It did not work either.

The CHAIRMAN: Part of that was also resourcing. She was there only two days a week and she was supposed to cover the whole region.

Ms Johnson: Yes, it was two days a week but it did not work. There were a raft of reasons why it did not work. However, I do not believe it was not a good plan to start with.

[3.40 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: What about if that person was attached to Esperance Community Arts?

Ms Johnson: That would be better, because that person would then be working with the youth arts coordinator and somebody who is already the administrator and so on, but, of course, Esperance Community Arts does not have an office as such. That is probably the best organisation. I think that the shopfront is probably exactly what is needed. Since Phil moved into the shed slap bang in the middle of town, he has found it so much better because all the youths find it accessible. They can just wander in and so on. I cannot see any problem with a shopfront, quite frankly. I think it would be a good idea.

The CHAIRMAN: From the point of view of Esperance Community Arts, that model could be made to work.

Ms Johnson: I am no longer on that committee. The Esperance arts organisations are very well organised. They all feed into Esperance Community Arts, so it is not a fractured arts community; everything comes through Esperance Community Arts. Esperance Community Arts being the umbrella, everybody knows exactly what is happening around town and who is doing what in the arts. The person coming in will already have a well-established network of community organisations to work with, so they will not need to waste any time on establishing those networks or working out what the priorities are, because all these groups are already doing that and feeding that into Esperance Community Arts. That is reflected in the business plan and the strategic plan for the next few years.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we talk about the youth arts officer position, which is valid for two years? We met with Phil yesterday. That position is obviously something that can and does deliver some really good outcomes, particularly for young people. What are some of the impediments from the Esperance Community Arts' point of view that impose limitations, apart from the limited tenure of that position?

Mrs Paterson: Working in isolation, in that he is for the arts. Yes, he has got the support of the committee and he has got my support and the support of other volunteers who can help him, but their time is limited, so he cannot sort of keep imposing. He is employed for only 30 hours a week but he is working full-time plus more and delivering the most amazing program. As a physical worker he is doing that on his own. I think he relishes the opportunity - he certainly said it to me - when he has got other arts workers to go on and communicate with. He went to the Karratha regional conference and came back -

Ms Johnson: It was great.

Mrs Paterson: Other people are doing the same thing. Being the only one is a bit of a -

The CHAIRMAN: The regional conference is held annually, is it? Is that the one he went to in Karratha?

Ms Johnson: No. It was the Country Arts conference in Karratha, which is held every second year. Both are every second year. The regional arts conference run by Regional Arts Australia is every second year - there is a year in between.

The CHAIRMAN: That is national, is it not?

Ms Johnson: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I meant the Country Arts one. We had a witness before you from the Ravensthorpe Arts Council. Her purview was that it was an important experience for regional people to have an opportunity to come together to share what goes on in their various communities.

Mrs Paterson: There is Country Arts, but there is not any real, structured exchange, other than through Country Arts, as to what other regions are doing. Those people are all doing fantastic things for their community, but then maybe down here we are reinventing something that was done in Karratha two years ago. When they get together and are able to exchange their ideas and take work in other areas and maybe bring it here with a bit of adaptation, or some of our programs go to other areas, it just saves so much time and resources. It really is a fantastic opportunity.

Ms Johnson: I have to say that I went into the Country Arts experience believing that conferences were a waste of money. I have come out of it believing that it is probably one of the most important things that Country Arts does. I have eaten my words after all that. I have found them absolutely invaluable.

Mr L. GRAHAM: I think there are a few converts around.

The CHAIRMAN: We have asked this of many of our witnesses. In a general sense, what can we do to underpin the importance of the arts and what the arts are doing in communities? Is there any way of presenting the arts? For example, if the State Government suddenly said that it will cut arts funding by 50 per cent because it does not believe it is delivering outcomes in regional areas, there are better ways of doing it and too much money is being wasted here, there and everywhere, what would you do to defend the arts funding and how could you demonstrate that it is important and critical and that the funding is delivering outcomes? I do not want to give the impression that the Government will do that, by the way.

Mr L. GRAHAM: It is a good rumour!

Ms Johnson: If they cut it by half, they would not be giving very much.

The CHAIRMAN: I suppose you could give one example today by saying that the \$10 000 has enabled you to do X.

Ms Johnson: I think as I said to you when I gave evidence to you earlier today, the arts in regional areas do not ask for large amounts of money. I think that we have demonstrated time and time again that when given a small amount of money, it grows enormously when it hits a regional area, because people are so dedicated that they make things happen. I think we would always be very adequately able to demonstrate, if we sat down and put our minds to it, exactly how we go about doing that. We could probably document it quite well if we ever needed to. If we ever actually tried to sit down and put together the value of the volunteer hours that are worked in the arts, Governments would be astonished. I do not think that they would believe us. They would think that we were absolutely exaggerating. I do not know how you would prove it. Most of us freely give of our telephones, cars, fuel and all those other things that none of us ever charge for; they are just a given.

Mrs Paterson: We could quite clearly demonstrate how many people a year participate in either an active or passive way in the arts in this community, because we keep records. It would run into the thousands.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Can I ask you for that? Part of the difficulty that we have got in dealing with our terms of reference is trying to quantify those things. We have not got much specific information. Without wanting to load you up, if it is freely available, is it something you could give to us?

Mrs Paterson: It will take a bit of collating, but what we could do -

Mr L. GRAHAM: Do not burst a boiler over it.

Mrs Paterson: We could go back over the past 12 months or so to demonstrate how many people have been to an arts-related event in Esperance. In August we had 500 spectators and 100 participants in the annual arts awards.

The CHAIRMAN: That is great information for us to have. It really is. It is very, very important.

Ms Johnson: I have brought you a show bag.

The CHAIRMAN: Let it be known that the witnesses came bearing gifts!

Ms Johnson: This is the only one of which I have a spare copy. This is our 2000 "Dare to Wear", and this is the catalogue that goes with it. It talks about the history of the event. This is way we do our annual arts awards that Louise was talking about. If we just talk about this year's arts awards, we had 70 people involved. Just in "Dare to Wear", which is a very youth-oriented event that Phil Shelton coordinates, there were something like 40 people involved in the wearable art event. You can have a look. Before this takes place, we have an Academy Awards-style presentation when we honour our volunteers. There are various awards for which all the various arts groups can nominate a person who has made an outstanding contribution in the past 12 months. There is then the major award, as in a Logie, but it is called the "Martyred Mannequin". It is one of those wooden mannequins that artists use. It gets body-painted by an artist every year. That is presented to somebody who has given an outstanding long-term contribution to the arts. Although it sounds tongue-in-cheek, it is quite serious in its nature because people are awarded it seriously. We have that and then we have either a dinner or a supper. This year we also had an art exhibition. We had a silent auction on that evening and raised nearly \$3 000 or \$2 500 for the arts program. We got 420 people plus the people who were in it, so we got about 500 people involved and attending who paid.

The CHAIRMAN: That is evidence of just what the scale is.

Ms West: A music industry skills course is being run at Curtin at the moment, so all those students did the sound engineering and lighting for the shows. There are always more adding on to those numbers.

The CHAIRMAN: So it continued value adding, I think was the point made.

Ms Johnson: We brought a guy, Kevin Harris, down from Perth. You might know him. He is a lighting expert. He came down to our workshops this year and carried out workshops. We concentrated on lighting. We made the lighting of the show much more adventurous. We try to have a focus to build skills onto this event. This year also, as I mentioned briefly when we were talking about funding, we had arts alley at the show. There was a very large, white marquee that had all sort of events happening in it. It had a stage area. The arts community was responsible for some of the entertainment - not all of it - that went on in the stage area, but it went on for two days and nights. There was constant entertainment. Some of the arts groups did workshops in the space. Phil had this amazing ute that the kids had done and entered into the beaut ute contest. It even had this great metal, ugly looking dog in the back of it.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Does anyone go to work in Esperance?

Ms Johnson: That was part of this whole thing. We had a junkyard art exhibition. The group we brought down was called Junkadelic. The members play on junk.

Ms West: They made instruments out of junk. We had videos of the recent bank competition.

Ms Johnson: Esperance Community Arts did that because it was bringing all the arts organisations together to be involved in that event at the show.

Mrs Paterson: The Esperance show has 80 per cent of the population going to it; 10 000 people attend.

Ms Johnson: It is worth the arts being there. You can say that we have over 10 000.

Mrs Paterson: I am responsible for acquitting it, and, quite frankly, 90 per cent of the people at the show came though "Arts Alley"; that is, well over 9 000 people. The youths particularly spent such a large amount of time in the marquee making noise that we ended up moving on to the lawn outside because it was getting a bit untenable in there.

[3.54 pm]

It was fantastic. It really was the most amazing event, and attracted many kids from the age of five up and that really difficult-to-target age group of 13 to 17, which is when they do not want to do anything. They were really engaged and kept coming back. It was just fantastic. It was the best event we have done, other than "Dare to Wear", which I just love.

Ms West: It certainly was the most broad-reaching event.

Mrs Paterson: It was the most broad-reaching event we have done.

Ms Johnson: I also have the regional arts fund cards. This is the Esperance card, which is the great Esperance odyssey, and it was RAF funded. I think we told you about it yesterday. All these projects are RAF funded, and not all are from Esperance. This was a huge project that we did in 2000. Lots of kids were involved in it, which is why we have all the kids on it. An audience of 3 000 attended and nearly 300 artists participated in it in one form or another. It was a nightmare. It was very successful. I have also put in there the history of the Shire of Esperance art collection. Esperance Community Arts has taken a lot of time in bringing the shire to heel over its art collection, which has just languished for many years and never been looked after. The shire has now started to commit money each year, and we are managing that and are bringing the art collection up to some sort of a reasonable curatorial level. It is all documented now and we will have an person looking after that on an ongoing basis. I have brought a history, which was written in 2002, of how Esperance Community Arts came into being. A few of these things have been written recently because I am retiring.

The CHAIRMAN: We are running out of time. I will conclude with a question. Our final witnesses today will be representatives from the Festival of the Wind. What involvement does Esperance Community Arts have with other festivals or events? Do you get involved in a coordinating role or do you simply lend support to events throughout the year?

Ms Johnson: I think the Festival of the Wind has been successful partly because of the fact that Esperance Community Arts has been there as the peak body during that time. It is the first time that all the players have sat around the same table. Seven or eight years ago when Esperance Community Arts started, that was not happening. We never spoke about the Bijou. We would watch what the Bijou was doing but we did not actually know what its problems were and we had no interaction with the music club. All of a sudden, once a month we are sitting around the same table, and you get to know one another and what one another's problems are and so on. That obviously feeds in well to a big community event like the Festival of the Wind.

Mrs Paterson: It also means that there are no scheduling problems. We do not have two amazing events happening on the same night if we can possibly help it, because we are there every month and we know about the planning that is coming up and what everyone else is doing. We just need to get a sports rep there and we will be right.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any concluding statements you would like to make or highlight before we conclude the session?

Ms West: I want to let you know that I have an Esperance Bay Music Club CD that I will include in Dale's show bag. It is all original music from artists. It is from 2001.

The CHAIRMAN: Did that come together as part of one of your events?

Ms West: No, we applied for funding to record the CD.

The CHAIRMAN: Louise, do you have any concluding comments?

Mrs Paterson: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Dale?

Ms Johnson: No.

Mr L. GRAHAM: A couple of times today people have alluded to insurance and have just skipped on it quickly. Is there anything you would like to tell us about insurance? Is it a problem or a difficulty?

Mrs Paterson: It is a huge problem.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Please tell us what the problem is.

Mrs Paterson: For a community group that is incorporated - it is not just in the arts, but certainly today we are talking about the arts - it is a nightmare to get public liability insurance. I know that the Festival of the Wind people will touch on that if you ask them, because they had very big problems getting insurance last year. Incorporation does not protect committee members or staff from prosecution or being sued by people if something happens to them at an event, so we must have public liability insurance. However, it is difficult finding the money to pay for the public liability insurance, which is now getting well into the thousands of dollars. Our youth officer has recently done some welding courses and we could not get insurance for that. Whenever he goes out to do a mural or anything like that, they have been told that the kids cannot get on the scaffolding.

Ms West: Or even climb a ladder.

Mrs Paterson: Yes, or even climb a ladder. It has gotten that ridiculous and all the advice we have is that we should not be doing these events because we are leaving ourselves open to prosecution. That is the wrong word -

Ms West: Liability.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Liable to a civil action.

Mrs Paterson: Liable, that is right.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Are those restrictions, such as not putting people on scaffolding to paint a mural, driven by the insurance industry or some other advice?

Mrs Paterson: I think it is from the insurance industry. The precautions that we have to take now -

The CHAIRMAN: Risk management stuff.

Mrs Paterson: Yes, the risk management stuff for a group of volunteers. Phil and myself have spent hours talking to the insurance companies about Esperance Community Arts and we cannot fulfil their requirements because we do not have the right welding ticket to do welding workshops. We provide as much safety as possible and parents sign to say that people participate at their own risk. However, it is as simple as someone tripping over something. Most recently at "Arts Alley" at the show we had a junkyard art exhibition. Two years ago when the show was held, the exhibition was out in the open. The artworks were made out of old rusted farm material and people could touch them and look at them and think this is made that way. This year we had to rope off the

exhibition, and we had to have someone there to make sure that nobody went near them. Anything that had a sharp end, or even something that was slightly curved, had to have sponging or something put over the end of it in case someone tripped.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Who told you to do that?

Mrs Paterson: The insurance company told us and also the organisers of the show, because it had to meet their insurance requirements as well. It is a huge undertaking.

Mr L. GRAHAM: There are two issues, or are there? First, the cost of it has escalated significantly.

Mrs Paterson: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Cost and getting somebody?

Mrs Paterson: And being able to get insurance.

Mr L. GRAHAM: There are three issues. First, there is being able to get insurance, and you cannot do anything without it; secondly, there is the cost; and, thirdly, having got the insurance, there are all the additional responsibilities that are placed on you for your event.

Mrs Paterson: That is right.

Ms Johnson: There are four really. I think we all know in our heart of hearts that if we actually had to make a claim, we would probably find out that we are not covered. We talk about that a lot, because it does not seem to matter what you cover yourself for, they always seem to get out of it.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Yes.

Ms Johnson: That is a fear we have.

Mrs Paterson: I was involved in a similar event. It was not organised by the arts community, but it was a very arts-related activity. Last year, and for the past four years, I have organised the town Christmas pageant. We jumped through all sorts of hoops to try to get insurance. We had risk management plans. We did everything they asked of us and the shire agreed to underwrite the insurance for us so that the event could go ahead, because 1 000 people participate in it and 4 000 or 5 000 watch it. The day after the pageant they said that we probably were not covered.

Mr L. GRAHAM: There is a government scheme for -

Mrs Paterson: But it would not touch it.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Why would it not touch it?

Mrs Paterson: Because it is a street event and you have people in the street. Even though we had a police escort and the roads were closed, we did not have control over the people watching the event if they stepped out onto the road. They just would not touch it.

Mr L. GRAHAM: What is that insurance issue? We will ask the festival people. If that continues, what will that mean to your arts-cultural activities?

Mrs Paterson: People will stop doing them. Volunteers will stop taking the risk.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Do you have a history of litigation in your town?

Ms Johnson: We have never made a claim.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Dale, in all your years of involvement, how many times have you been sued by that dirty public out there?

Ms Johnson: Never. However, insurance companies treat you like you are getting sued every day. We have paid them thousands and thousands and thousands, but we have never made a claim that I know of.

Mrs Paterson: However, by its very nature involvement in arts activities is perceived as being high risk if you are interactive, unless you are going into a theatre and sitting and watching something.

Ms Johnson: We have done fire sculptures and we have kids who do fire twirling and so on. It was really interesting at the national arts conference in Esperance in 2000. Lachie McDonald, who is very well thought of, but who now works for the Perth International Arts Festival, was working with Southern Edge Arts in Albany. He was very highly thought of with his youth work and he gave a paper on the fact that the problems with youth these days are because all the danger is being taken away from the activities they can do and they are not allowed to be dangerous.

Mr L. GRAHAM: Do not start me on danger.

Ms Johnson: Do you agree or not?

Mr L. GRAHAM: I do. I am old, so there is no point having that discussion with me. I agree 100 per cent, but the insurance industry would say that you are perfectly entitled to do all those things, but the insurance companies would argue that they are responsible for the risk if you hold a policy with them. I do not know how you balance that out.

Mrs Paterson: As individuals who volunteer for a community group, how do we take that risk, knowing that society in general is becoming more litigious? We have had legal advice saying that incorporation does not protect us individually. Eventually, people will say that they will not put their house on the line to put on a good community event.

Mr L. GRAHAM: And that is happening.

Mrs Paterson: And that is sad.

Mr L. GRAHAM: In Port Hedland, we have a wheelbarrow race called the "Black Rock Stakes". We have never had a serious injury or a claim. It has been going for nigh on 30 years. It now costs us more to insure than the race raises in charity. We are facing a dilemma now of whether we will run the event next year to pay for the insurance costs. It has gone from \$600 to \$10 500, and for the first 20 years we had no insurance.

The CHAIRMAN: Dale, Catherine and Louise, on behalf of the committee I thank you very much for your attendance today and for your contribution. Thank you for your time and also for the informal meeting we had yesterday, which was very much appreciated. As I have explained to all the witnesses, the committee will prepare a report for Parliament, which is expected to be presented next year. Obviously your input is important in our deliberations and ultimately any recommendations that we make. When the report is presented to Parliament, part of the requirement is that the minister responsible - in this case the Minister for Culture and the Arts - is required to respond to any recommendations we make in the report, so it does have some bearing in that respect. However, we wish you all individually, and certainly the music club and the Esperance Community Arts, good fortune into the future.