

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO ABORIGINAL YOUTH SUICIDES**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
MONDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**SESSION FOUR**

**Members**

**Dr G.G. Jacobs (Chair)**  
**Ms R. Saffioti (Deputy Chair)**  
**Mr R.F. Johnson**  
**Ms J.M. Freeman**  
**Mr M.J. Cowper**  
**Ms J. Farrer (co-opted member)**

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**Hearing commenced at 2.02 pm**

**Mr CLIFF WEEKS**

**Director General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, examined:**

**Ms LUCY GUNN**

**Acting Executive Director, Accountable Government, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** I am Graham Jacobs. On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss our inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide. Let me begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land and expressing my gratitude that we are able to meet here today. I would also like to pay my respects to the local elders past and present. I am Graham, on my left is Janine Freeman, and on her left is Rob Johnson. On my right is our executive, Alison Sharpe and Catherine Parsons. Hansard will be recording this for the public record; thank you for that. The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure, but I hope not too formal! It commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. We are not asking you to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, but it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. If you have any documents that you would like to present to us, can you give us the full title for the record for Hansard.

Before we open the proceedings, there are a number of procedural questions I need to ask you; I am sorry about this. Have you each completed the “Details of Witness” form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** I do not whether one of you or each you want to just give a bit of an opening statement before we get into question time; that would be appreciated, too. If not, we will get straight into question time. Cliff, would you like to just give a little bit of an opening overview of your department and what you do?

**Mr Weeks:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** In particular, relevant, I should say, to Aboriginal youth suicide and our inquiry, if you may.

**Mr Weeks:** We have four areas in the department that we function on—Aboriginal heritage, Aboriginal lands, community development and accountable government. The one in terms of youth suicide is probably more geared towards accountable government; our role we play across other government agencies in ensuring that they meet their outcomes, and community development, to some degree as well, which is really about enabling Aboriginal people to design their own policy responses and outcomes. Lucy is the executive director for accountable government; that is why she

has come along today. We have been having a look through the transcript of other agencies and people who have provided information so we are abreast of some of the issues. But in terms of the time we have today, if you like, I am open to taking any question and trying to fill in the blanks and give our point of view and assist where we can, if you like.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I have a question written down here, and there are three parts to it. What is the DAA's role in these areas? Does it play a coordinating role to ensure that funding and services are appropriately allocated—for example, via the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee and the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-Committee? Does the DAA consult Aboriginal communities to determine where resources are needed and communicate this information with other departments that provide the services; and, if not, why not? What is the function of your department, if not to respond to such important issues facing Aboriginal people, particularly the deaths of young Aboriginal people—suicides?

**Mr Weeks:** I chair the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, which is, like, 12 agencies. Maybe the best point to start with is, in terms of government structures around how government makes investment decisions, the cabinet subcommittee, obviously, with those ministers, is the best vehicle for collaboration around making investment decisions. The AACC that I chair does not make investment decisions. I guess the easiest way to explain it is that it is left to ministers in cabinet to make that investment decision—so, obviously, making that based on advice from government agencies. One of the things I would like to clarify is that—in the last five years in the role I think I have mentioned it at just about every estimates—I do not make those investment decisions for the majority of funds spent on Aboriginal affairs. I actually manage less than one per cent of the budget.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** But you recommend to your Minister for Aboriginal Affairs where money should be spent and what should be happening in relation to youth suicides in Aboriginal communities? I would have thought that was one of your prime roles, to be truthful.

**Mr Weeks:** It is. One of the things we do is provide reports to government on Closing the Gap. There is a report on our website—it is a publicly available report—and it identifies some of the areas where we need most attention. The three areas that we are performing the worst on from a Closing the Gap point of view is the amount of children in care. Just over 50 per cent of the children in care are Aboriginal. Employment—we are not doing really well in terms of the Aboriginal population and access to work, I guess, and how they contribute to the workplace environment. Housing conditions was actually one of the others —

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Not justice—given that you have a huge representation in the justice system?

[2.10 pm]

**Mr Weeks:** If you have a look at Closing the Gap, just about every area is flashing red. Some are worse than others and I guess the thing that we have to look at is some of those gaps are actually widening. For those three that I mentioned, the gap is actually getting wider; it is not closing. Early childhood education is one of the best-performing ones. That probably gets along to the point of understanding our role with youth suicide. There is a lot of evidence that suggests if you make that appropriate investment in the early years then all the other indicators will follow that. We are realising now that even in things like school attendance, a child's behaviour in terms of school attendance is set by the time they are seven, so if we are not getting school attendance right in those first couple of years, they carry that throughout their educational career. The Telethon Kids Institute has done a lot of research in that area.

As a side issue, I sit on a Victorian board—the Australian Childhood Foundation. That board is focused on dealing with kids who suffer trauma. One of the things, from a personal and an agency point of view, is we are trying to define what trauma means, especially for Aboriginal kids.

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When you link trauma back to those Closing the Gap outcomes, it seems to be that that is a driver. If you have suffered some type of trauma throughout your life, and we know that Aboriginal kids are facing a whole range of different traumas from neglect right through to being part of the justice system, so us being able to identify some of those traumas and design interventions is our best opportunity to be able to divert kids away from not only the justice system, but make sure that they have the appropriate care and support.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** But Cliff, if you do not mind me saying so, you are the lead agency in Aboriginal Affairs. You should be the lead agency coordinating all the other agencies that need to be part and parcel of solving these myriad of problems that Aboriginal people seem to suffer. The one that we are addressing more than anything at this moment—obviously, we have to concentrate on one thing at a time—is Aboriginal youth suicide, which is over-represented in the overall suicides of young people, in fact, probably of all people, in Western Australia. There is some criticism that perhaps you are not being proactive enough to be able to try and address that very serious issue. You are dealing with heritage issues and various other issues—yes; I accept that—but one person's life is worth a lot more than those other things. I think anybody would have that view. Is there a problem? Is your funding of your agency enough to be able to do the job that needs to be done? Are you short of funds from your minister or the cabinet, should I say—it is not just your minister; it is government as a whole? If you had more funds, could you do much more in a proactive way to help try and prevent youth suicide? A big question, I know.

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, it is, and I will answer it the way it needs to be answered: I would never turn back more resources to be able to do more, but I have to live within the environment that we have at the moment and —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** But do you ask for more, Cliff? Do you ask for more? Do you see areas where you think you need to spend more money—more funds—to try to address not just the other issues, but this one in particular? Do you ask for those funds?

**Mr Weeks:** What I see is \$5 billion a year from state and commonwealth dollars being spent on Aboriginal Affairs. There is more than enough money in the system.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Sorry, five?

**Mr Weeks:** Five billion dollars a year.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** In Western Australia?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** How much from the state government?

**Mr Weeks:** Three billion dollars is the Western Australian investment. There is enough money —

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Have you got that in detail? Can you give us that in a breakdown in detail? If you are spending on a school in one of the remote communities, you are going to say that the spending on Aboriginal communities, but you are spending on a school. You are spending on another school in Corrigin that may not necessarily have any Aboriginal kids in it, and you do not say that is just schooling. Are you able to give us a detailed account of where that \$5 billion is spent?

**Mr Weeks:** I can give you what I have.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** The police budget is \$1.2 billion, so \$3 billion is hell of a lot more.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Sorry, you can give us what you have?

**Mr Weeks:** I can give you what we have. The way the process actually works is the Department of Treasury provides information to the Productivity Commission and then they produce the national Indigenous Expenditure Report each year. It is only a new report. Considering the issues that we have had in Aboriginal Affairs, from memory, I think it is only about six or seven years old and it took a lot of effort to be able to establish that baseline. If you have a look on our website, again at

that report, we break down the expenditure by the building blocks. The Closing the Gap measures progress against Aboriginal disadvantage by that building block. So you will have a building block for justice, safe and supportive communities and healthy homes. In terms of program detail, one of the reasons, with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and other agencies, we did the expenditure review in Roebourne was trying to get that detail at a programmatic level. If I had the resources, we would love to do that across all the state but I think the reality is that we will find a similar scenario, which is there is duplication of funding. There are multiple programs that are sometimes aimed at the same particular outcome. We will go off and provide separate administration fees to multiple not-for-profits instead of having a better purchasing arrangement where you can provide further funds to one entity. In terms of that \$5 billion though, \$900 million is Aboriginal-specific. You are right; the way it is measured is if you are an Aboriginal person and you go to hospital, they will just take a slice of the total cost of that hospital and allocate it to Aboriginal patients.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** That is outrageous.

**Mr Weeks:** It is a very blunt instrument.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is a very unfair instrument.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** It is a disgraceful instrument in my view. The question I want answered is: what is the breakdown of expenditure through your agency, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs? As Janine says, we know money is being spent on housing, hospitals and various other things in these different Aboriginal locations, but that is not you spending the money through your agency; that is other agencies. How much is your agency funded to cover whatever areas you need to cover as a standalone agency for Aboriginal Affairs?

**Mr Weeks:** I have only three programs. The largest program is the Aboriginal community patrols, and their focus is engaging Aboriginal organisations across the state—there are 15 of them—to provide a patrol service like the Nyoongar Patrol. They will have contact with Aboriginal people who may be at risk of coming into contact with the justice system or so forth.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You fund that one?

**Mr Weeks:** We do. That is roughly about \$6 million a year and they had 100 000 contacts last year, so it is very good value for money.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** That is good but what are the other two areas?

**Mr Weeks:** The other two that we have is the PALS program. We provide small grants to schools to do cultural and awareness training, basically for school kids. A teacher will apply for a grant and we give them \$750. They school children will design a small project that they do that recognises Aboriginal culture. That is around \$400 000.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** So the third one must be in the billions, almost!

**Mr Weeks:** No. My total —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am being facetious.

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, I know; yes, I get it.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am being facetious; so there is a very little money through your agency.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Sorry; what was the third program?

**Mr Weeks:** We do a heritage grant, which is \$250 000 a year. We provide it to Aboriginal organisations to do signage around heritage sites or if they need to do repatriation of Aboriginal remains.

**The CHAIR:** How much was that?

**Mr Weeks:** It is \$250 000.

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**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** What is your total budget for your agency?

**Mr Weeks:** This year, it is about \$33 million.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** About \$33 million.

**Mr Weeks:** The majority is on salaries and overheads.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** How many staff do you have?

**The CHAIR:** How many people do you have?

**Mr Weeks:** The number is 130 FTE.

**The CHAIR:** Right, 130 staff.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** They deal with—how many millions of dollars' worth of grants and other expenditure?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is \$900 million.

**Mr Weeks:** Sorry?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Was it—how much is your budget?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Out of the five billion—no.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, out of your budget not the overall budget?

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, just under \$7 million is our programs.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** \$7 million. And how many people do you have working in that?

**Mr Weeks:** There are 130 people in our department. In that area, I think one project officer is allocated to that program.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Jeez.

**Ms Gunn:** Can I just interject? The majority of our funding is on our core functions of management of the ALT estate—the Aboriginal Lands Trust estate—and the heritage approvals and protection of heritage, which is provided for under our legislation, the AAPAH and our Aboriginal Heritage Act.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** So the lead agency for Aboriginal people in WA has a budget of \$9 million? Is it \$9 million?

**Mr Weeks:** For programs, yes.

**The CHAIR:** You have a \$33 million budget but \$9 million is to programs.

**Mr Weeks:** That is right.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** To programs, yes; that is what I am saying. Nine million dollars goes to help Aboriginal people throughout the whole of WA. I find that appalling. That is a pittance compared to what is needed to try and save young Aboriginal lives. You should be jumping up and down and screaming at your minister, quite frankly.

**The CHAIR:** You do not have to comment on that.

[2.20 pm]

**Ms Gunn:** There is the Mental Health Commission, obviously. There are other lead agencies that are concerned with service delivery in these areas.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** But you are the agency for Aboriginal affairs, and people look to your agency to be the lead agency and to be able to guide people in what direction they need to go and to ensure there is funding for all the different projects that are needed, whether it be health, mental health, housing or whatever. It should really be done through you in many respects.

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**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** We are talking about the Mental Health Commission and its role. I will give you a specific example and ask what involvement you had. How did you find out about the suicide coordination roles that were announced across the Kimberley? Was it discussed with you? Did it come through the AACC or any of those areas in terms of the formulation of those roles?

**Mr Weeks:** I think the first I became aware of it was Tim Marney, myself and Russell, the health DG, we met with Wes Morris and others from KALACC, who down came to talk about Yiriman and a range of projects, and that was probably the first time I heard Tim mention that they were going to employ Aboriginal coordinators. Aboriginal employment within the public sector is one of our biggest issues. I am the only Aboriginal director general in the country. When you consider the amount of government effort that goes towards Aboriginal disadvantage, understanding that sometimes Aboriginal people are best placed to be able to be co-designers or designers of those policy responses, we have five Aboriginal people in the senior executive service in the WA public sector out of 500. So we do not have the scale or the economy of mass to be able to influence at the levels of each individual agency as we should be. My perspective is there should be Aboriginal executives on each corporate executive for government agencies. They should have their own expert advice within their agencies. I would love to be able to have a greater say over where government is investing. But the silos within government still remain. Agencies will work with ministers, and they will design policy solutions. If we are lucky, we will get involved in that. But my advice is an opinion. It does not bind anyone. I have a very collaborative relationship with the majority of agencies and directors general. But, ultimately, they are the policy experts, because their agency delivers outcomes for people other than Aboriginal people. So I have to lobby and I have to advocate that, in the majority of cases, Aboriginal people are their clients with the highest need. There are times that you will not see how I have to agitate and disrupt within the sector. That is not necessarily something for me to talk about—I have to rely on good relationships. But we are at the precipice. We are at the point where the states and the commonwealth cannot afford the level of disadvantage that they have now. We are spending more and more money and the outcomes are not aligned with that investment.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Would they be if the other agencies listened to you more?

**Mr Weeks:** I do not want to put it across as if I am the panacea for all things Aboriginal.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am not taking it like that.

**Mr Weeks:** I have got no doubt that if they had an Aboriginal person or persons within their agency that they could talk to about particular issues, they would be in a better place to design policy solutions and they would be more grounded.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Going back to the Aboriginal suicide coordinator roles and that whole aspect that they would be better in terms of designing and coordinating, we have had evidence today that the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia—the peak body for the Aboriginal medical services—found out about those suicide coordinators by media release. So, when Tim Marney told you that they were going to be employed, and then he told you something that had been already decided upon, was there at any stage discussion about what they were going to look like, where they would be housed and how they were going to operate, or was it all done just in isolation of including you? You became informed because of a meeting that you had, but not about that. Given what you are saying about that coordination, that responsiveness and that inclusion, what happened when it was discussed with you?

**Mr Weeks:** I am just trying to remember the context. I think the context relevant to that is that there was a lot of effort, I think, about five years ago, especially in the Kimberley, with developing action plans at a local level. I think even at the time we had staff who were part of the remote service delivery partnership with the commonwealth, and I think the question coming from Wes and KALACC was there were people on the ground who were driving these action plans, so how was the state government going to ensure that the new strategy is going to be driven in the same way?

I think that is the context of when Tim mentioned that he was going to have Aboriginal coordinators based throughout the state.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Have you had any input in how they will look, where they are going to be placed, what they are going to be doing in those communities or how they will fit in with the local action plans around suicide?

**Mr Weeks:** I have not intimately. I am not sure about my officers. Obviously, I could go back and find out. But to me personally, no.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Can you let us know that?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Would that fit in with one of your three roles, which is that you do the across-government coordination? Would that become part of that cross-government coordination if they are delivering services to Aboriginal communities?

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, it would. I think Grahame Searle and Ralph Addis are due to present after me. There has been some talk about the relationship between DAA and the reform unit. DAA was the one that put up the cabinet submission, via the minister, to create the reforms. That is something that we have been party to for the last two years. So there is a definite joint intent around the fact that some reforms need to happen at a government service delivery level. There is no doubt about that. The Roebourne review demonstrated that. So the reform unit has been playing a role in some of the areas where traditionally the department or the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee would have.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Are you on the committee within the reform unit? How do you have input into the reform unit?

**Mr Weeks:** Yes. Agencies are represented at the reform unit.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Is that you or someone else?

**Mr Weeks:** That is me, or my proxy if I am not there.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** We are always worried about the fact that DGs very often send proxies rather than attend themselves, which lessens the impact, I think, on those sorts of forums. I certainly found that some years ago when I was a minister.

**Mr Weeks:** It does; you are right. One of the things that I was trying to make clear is that each year I turn up to estimates, and each year I cop the barrage for all the poor outcomes. I do not make the final investment decision. So, one thing I did want to demonstrate is: Is our agency part of the problem? Are we actually contributing to some of the dysfunction? Are we contributing to the model in the way it is now? I was quite keen for a new group to come in and have a look at what we are dealing with. Is there a better way to do it?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Have they identified that you are part of the problem?

**Mr Weeks:** If they have, I have not heard about it!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You will probably be the last!

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, that is right! One of the things is that is where we are at. We want total transparency around this. This is not about me posturing around what is my responsibility and what things I need to be doing. This is about the more hands that we can help out with the heavy lifting, I am open to it. There is more than enough going around in Aboriginal affairs. There are always going to be competing issues with directors general and there are always going to be relationship issues. But that was the whole drive behind the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-Committee. It was meant to move the discussion up a tier so that the authorising environment makes the calls around it.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** How often do they meet?

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**Mr Weeks:** I think it was 10 times last year, and I think it is on track for similar this year, or just under. The final meeting for the year, I think, is going to be next month.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** This was established when?

**Mr Weeks:** I think it was two and half years ago.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** What successful outcomes has that committee had?

**Mr Weeks:** The reforms are obviously the peak one. It actually took a lot of courage to go up to government and explain, “Do you understand how much money you are expending on Aboriginal affairs?” I saw the ministers’ faces. There is a genuine appetite to make this change. I just think that the message has been softened for so many years, for whatever reason, that there was a disconnect. This is no different to any other area. Just because it is Aboriginal does not mean that we should not be making sure that contracts are managed in the right way and stakeholders are engaged in the right way. So, we are trying to bring some normality to Aboriginal affairs. Too many times I see people treat it as something which is different—whether that is a taboo, people are unaware of it, or they are scared of it, I am not quite sure. But this whole process has been about putting the spotlight on it. In terms of the ministers on that cabinet subcommittee, Minister Collier is the chair of that committee. There is the Deputy Premier, Liza Harvey, on the committee; Minister Mitchell; Minister Redman; Minister Francis and Minister Day is now on the committee as well.

[2.30 pm]

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** So Education, Police, Mental Health, Regional Development, Justice and Health.

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, and Child Protection.

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask a question? I sense, Cliff, that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs probably has not got the traction it requires to make a difference and that it has a relatively small budget, does not actually do—it advises around allocation of resources but what you are saying is that those allocations of resources are really the responsibility of the ministers in those particular portfolios. In order for you to get a little more traction and put your input into this subcommittee, have you noticed any difference?

**Mr Weeks:** Yes, there was a certain period where I have no doubt that DGs were probably concerned around what I was taking to the cabinet subcommittee. There are not many DGs who get access to that level of exposure to cabinet, so one thing I can say is that those ministers are now well versed in some of the issues. I understand what needs to happen across the bureaucracy. I think for me it was more a matter of, in my mind, if we are going to be discounted, then I do not want to be a convenient layer of insulation for things not improving in Aboriginal Affairs. The cabinet subcommittee was a way of being able to give greater authority to the department. If I sat here and said, “Well, the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act is the piece of legislation that does give the department and those other agencies a coordination role”, that act, apart from a legislative change about two years ago around Aboriginal people who die intestate, has remained relatively unchanged, so we have a 40-year-old piece of legislation. If I am looking for the oomph, if I am looking for the mandate, then changing that piece of legislation and giving some clarity around what the department can and cannot do is probably the most obvious thing that needs to occur. If I were the Auditor General coming in and looking at programs, I would have a lot more flexibility in what I can say and what I cannot. That is just the point of view; I am not putting it there as whingeing around the situation. I just think, for me, the discussion has come to the point of: where are we going to value-add? If you want me to value-add, then let me in the game; if you do not, then government has a discussion around this agency.

**The CHAIR:** Please do not take this the wrong way, but the question then is one of relevance, is it not? The relevance of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I have to say to you that my personal experience in the goldfields was that I got kicked around between DAA and a commonwealth-

funded group called I think the Indigenous Coordination Centre. I really struggled to find out whose jurisdiction was some of the social determinant issues in the community and how that was leading to social dysfunction, but I could not get any sense out of either. What happened was, often those roles fell to the Goldfields Land and Sea Council which, I understand, does much around land and native title determinations and whatever, but end up almost by de facto doing all this other stuff in the community around Aboriginal affairs, which you guys do not seem to do.

**Mr Weeks:** I remember going to the opening of a Training and Workforce Development Centre in Kalgoorlie five years ago, and I remember being there with the minister, and the minister said that his goal and my goal was that, at some point, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs would not exist. That is when we have agencies that are delivering what their responsibilities are, Aboriginal people are taking advantage of that, and we are getting some shift and some change. I made the decision to shut the Kalgoorlie office 12 months ago, so we have not had an on-the-ground regional presence in that region for 12 months. For me, meeting with the police last week and talking about the Kalgoorlie riots, I think the reality of the matter is that we are still required. Mainstream agencies are not at the level that they need to be to be able to engage with Aboriginal people, to change their structures, to be more adaptive, to be more open and inclusive with the Aboriginal people, especially in our regional areas. On a philosophical level, absolutely; I would like to get to the point where Aboriginal people are enjoying the same life opportunities as everyone else, so philosophically, I would love there to be no need for the department to exist.

**The CHAIR:** One of the matters we grapple with is that in order to introduce reform and improve Aboriginal youth suicide and the statistics—and it is multi-factorial; we understand all that—who would you see as a body or an agency to lead that? Because we have heard, and you have talked about the Roebourne experience, where there are 93 different agencies going to that small area, that small place, to actually deliver services. We have heard today from Tracy Westerman about a small community of 200 people that was serviced by over 53 agencies, some of them government, some of them non-government. In order for us to recommend some improvements and implement some improvements, one of the things that really seems to be missing is that no-one—I was of the belief that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs would be that person that would lead that and take ownership of that, but I find that is not the case. Who would you see as an agency or a body that could actually lead that, have ownership for it, coordinate it, collaborate it, and we do not get this multiple-agency service, some overlap, some gaps and then overspend?

**Mr Weeks:** I do not think it is necessarily picking out an agency and giving that responsibility across the whole breadth of government. I do not think it actually works that way. When you look at every indicator in Closing the Gap and just about every area is failing, you need multiple agencies. The model that we have pushed through the AACC is that, yes, there needs to be a lead agency. From a starting point, that should be the agency that has the number one responsibility. There will be some other, periphery agencies that have some relevance or some involvement in that outcome area as well.

**The CHAIR:** Why cannot that be you, Cliff? Why cannot that be the DAA?

**Mr Weeks:** Well, it could be.

**The CHAIR:** But it is not, is it?

**Mr Weeks:** No.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Because you do not have the money.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** If you had the funds, should it be you?

**Mr Weeks:** I actually think the key ingredient is that you actually need some senior Aboriginal representation.

**The CHAIR:** You could get those, could you not?

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**Mr Weeks:** I would love to.

**The CHAIR:** And then kick some heads, make some difference. Get out there and get some allocations happening and make the money spent well.

**Mr Weeks:** I actually have been speaking to the Public Sector Commissioner and the minister around an Aboriginal executive development program. One of the things I would like to ask for is for me to get four to five Aboriginal executives each year, they come in-house, they work with me closely, I do some developmental work for six to 12 months, bring them up to speed with what it means to be a senior public servant, and then they are outsourced to agencies so they go to that agency's corporate executive. They are still employed by my department, but they now become a resource. I look around at some of the central agencies and I have not seen an Aboriginal senior executive in those central agencies, so that would be part of being the most senior Aboriginal public servant in the state. That is something I do, in mentoring and other things with other officers, but I think there needs to be a more formalised response where five Aboriginal senior executives is not enough. If we could get to the point in two or three years where there is 20 or 25, you would start to get that critical mass where agencies could draw on that experience and be able to have some intimate discussions with corporate executives and others.

**The CHAIR:** Cliff, what is the conduit now between Aboriginal communities and DAA? How do you communicate information?

[2.40 pm]

**Mr Weeks:** We still have five regional offices, where we have regional locations; so in Kununurra, Broome, Geraldton, Port Hedland, Albany. And we are about to re-establish a new office in Kalgoorlie, and that model will almost be a triage-type model, where it is a referral centre. Any Aboriginal person who walks into the office, we will literally have officers at the front desk who have access to a Rolodex: what is your issue? We will find the appropriate person for them to talk to. If they have to jump in a bus and we have to take them to that appointment we will, so we are getting more hands-on in terms of making sure that Aboriginal people are connected with service providers. Our other main conduit is we have four statutory boards and out of those boards we have 18 Aboriginal senior leaders represented across all of the state, so they are —

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Are they the strategic regional advisory councils—the statutory bodies?

**Mr Weeks:** No, they are different. The SRACs are not statutory. My three boards are the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee, the Aboriginal Lands Trust and the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** With opening up Kalgoorlie again, how many staff do you envisage being there?

**Mr Weeks:** At this stage we are looking at three as a starting point. What we would like to do is—we have designed an office layout where we have a hot-desking arrangement, where other service providers can actually come into our office. They can have a hot desk where they are available to meet with Aboriginal people who come in off the street for pre-made appointments.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I missed something. I heard you say you closed the Kalgoorlie office. When did you decide to do that?

**Ms Gunn:** About 12 months ago.

**Mr Weeks:** And now we are re-opening it.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** And now you are re-opening it?

**Mr Weeks:** I guess the point I am making is it is not going to be the same model. This is going to be more around having services resolved —

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**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Why did you not just change the office to your new model? Why did you have to close it for a bit and —

**Mr Weeks:** When I say “close it”, I might probably be a little bit dramatic. We had a regional manager who left and we only had one staff member, so it was cost efficient to put them—our post into another agency rather than having a big office for one person.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** How many people will you have in the new Kalgoorlie office?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Three staff. With these three additional officers in Kalgoorlie, are they in addition to your existing staff?

**Mr Weeks:** No. What we have been doing as part of the efficiency drive around positions is if we have had some senior officers who have left—I guess the best example is I had a couple of senior positions leave over the last six months and I created five level 2 positions. So, with the front counter person, we would be looking at either level 2 or level 3 Aboriginal specific, so a couple of 50D positions and a manager.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Because otherwise you would be going against the government policy of taking on new employees or additional employees. If somebody leaves, you are not supposed to fill that position, particularly unless it is somebody within the organisation at a lower rank or whatever. So you are adhering to that policy, are you?

**Mr Weeks:** What we are trying to do is be able to—obviously our salaries have decreased over a period of time, but we are trying to maintain our level of FTE. Every time a position leaves and you have to change that responsibility, we go through and look at whether some of those responsibilities can be picked up in another area. We cut across it. Is that something that we need to be doing? But, for us, being able to maintain the FTE is the most important thing.

**The CHAIR:** Are you going to co-locate your new office with other Aboriginal organisations, such as Goldfields Land and Sea Council or are you going to set them separate?

**Mr Weeks:** I have spoken to Hans at out a Goldfields Land and Sea Council about maybe out-posting one of our officers, but I think it makes better sense to offer, for Hans, for one of his officers to come into our centre and be based there with other service providers. We know there are a whole range of service providers and agencies. We want to be able to bring that to one focal point. The rationale is there is no wrong door: if you come in through our front door, we will make sure that you are connected with the appropriate service provider or government agency. I think that is a significant missing part. We know all the services are there and there are Aboriginal people with a huge need. This, I think, is a way of testing out whether we can make that connection.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** When you say “make that connection”, does that mean you will advocate for them? If someone comes in and says, “I am homeless”, are you just going to say, “You have got to go and apply for a Department of Housing property. Here is the address; this is where you go” or do you actually advocate and help them? Is that the new role or are you just going to point them in the direction?

**Mr Weeks:** Look, the way I would like to see the model work is an agreement with the Department of Housing: who is your person who deals with homelessness? Whenever we get a client who comes in who has that issue, we want to be able to send them to you and we want to know what the outcome of the meeting was. In terms of advocating, absolutely, by looking at what the outcome was. If someone did not get to that meeting, we need to make sure that they do. If the advice was not to the level it should have been, we will go back. There is a level of accountability there. Too many of the mob get referred somewhere and, in between getting to that appointment something else happens and they do not get there. This is really pragmatic; it is practical. Like I said, if we have to put someone in the bus and we have to drive them to over to that appointment, then we will.

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**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** That is going to happen in every one of the regional offices or just Kalgoorlie?

**Mr Weeks:** We will just trial with Kalgoorlie to start with, but I would like to do an assessment in three to six months of it being in operation and see what the feedback from the community is and feedback from the service providers.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** When you first came in you said, “We have these three roles and one of them is coordination with government.” You are moving away from a coordination-with-government role to a service-provider role in Kalgoorlie, are you not?

**Mr Weeks:** We are moving to a service-referral role.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Can you tell us about the strategic regional advisory councils, what they are, when were they established, and are they involved at all in suicide prevention?

**Mr Weeks:** The two gents coming in after me can probably give you more detail, but I think they were probably created about 12 months ago as part of the development of the reforms. I believe there are four members on each SRAC: one for the Kimberley and one for the Pilbara. I have caught up with a couple of those members just recently. Brenda Garstone, who is on the SRAC is the Kimberley is also on one of my statutory committees, on the WARAC, so we wanted to make sure there was that connection.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Are the strategic regional advisory councils all Aboriginal members or are they both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal?

**Mr Weeks:** They are all Aboriginal.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** But they are not being set up through DAA, but through the Department of Regional Development?

**Mr Weeks:** That is right.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** What is your connection role in them? Is there not that connection role as such? They do not come and tell you what they are doing. You do not see their minutes, their progress, given you are —

**Mr Weeks:** No, we do get access to that and to the committee. I think it is next month or this month coming up that the WARAC, our statutory committee and the SRACs are actually meeting; so they are having a joint meeting.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** You get access, but what is the formal role? In this time, when we are all wanting to be properly coordinated, you have this new committee, what is the formalised process to ensure that they are suddenly not going to go out and announce they are going to set up a housing advocacy office in Kalgoorlie and you have set up this other model? How do you know this is not going to happen?

**Mr Weeks:** I think, technically their role is to provide advice to the reform unit and the Ministers for Regional Development and Child Protection in their lead roles around the reforms. I think technically that is their role; it is to provide that advice.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** But you are not sure.

**Mr Weeks:** I could find you the exact terms of reference, but from my recollection that is the way it is actually drawn up.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The Mental Health Commission in its submission to this inquiry, which is around youth suicide in remote communities, referenced a newly established interagency executive committee and an initial meeting with directors general of DAA, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Child Protection and Family Support, and Department of Housing. That is not the ACC, is it? This is a completely different committee?

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**Mr Weeks:** I believe so, yes.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** You believe it is? You are on it.

**Mr Weeks:** I do not think I have been to that one.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** When was it established?

**Mr Weeks:** If we go back 18 months—two years ago, the WARAC had five subcommittees and it had a director general responsible for each of those subcommittees. Tim Marney and Dr Russell-Weisz were the lead DGs for that subcommittee. They had terms of reference; suicide was part of those terms of reference, as well as some other priority health issues. That provided advice back to government and it has been disbanded. In the terms of, if there is a new executive committee, then it will be around driving the mental health 2020 strategic plan, I think it is.

[2.50 pm]

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** So you do not really know about this interagency executive committee?

**Mr Weeks:** Look, I am not trying to make light of it, but there is literally a committee for every outcome area. I do not go to every one. If I am not there, my proxy will be there if I have been invited.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** How seriously do you take suicide in the Aboriginal community if there is a Mental Health Commission interagency executive committee? We know that you do not do that directly. We heard before that the Mental Health Commission is that area. Is it just because it does not fall within those three priority areas that it has been left to another department?

**Mr Weeks:** No, that is a bit harsh.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It was harsh.

**Mr Weeks:** Yes. Absolutely. Aboriginal suicide is at the top of the list. How government structures up and responds to that, then, yes, I will be part of committees as far as I can be; I will provide input as much as I can. But my challenge has been trying to get those lead agencies taking responsibility. They are the ones designing the policy responses. I do not want it to be a convenient case where I am part of that discussion, things go wrong and then it is back to the department. These agencies are getting significant investment. The DGs are getting significant airtime to develop the policy response. My job, as it is starting to mature, is providing advice to government around whether they are making a difference or not. I have to choose the point at which I intersect with that.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Okay. What you are saying is you are not a part of the development process of delivering services into the community; you are part of the assessment of whether those processes have been effective.

**Mr Weeks:** That is where our role has shifted to. I alluded to at the start that Lucy is in charge of an area called accountable government. Accountability is the key issue we are facing. If everything that we have agreed to achieve from agency level was effective, we would not have the issues we have with Closing the Gap. We have had to pick a point, and it was more important for us to be able to make sure that we were getting high-level overview of where progress is being made or not being made against those outcome areas.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Did you have performance indicators? For example, have you looked at the current rates of suicide in the Kimberley and then have a performance indicator of it lessening—as being able to see that the Mental Health Commission and their new suicide coordinator roles or something like that, you know, the money that is going in there—have you set hard and fast performance indicators, if you are doing it that way, or is it more just if it is in the vibe of being able to deliver?

**Mr Weeks:** No. If you have a look at our Closing the Gap report that I have mentioned, there are multiple measures on how we actually measure all those outcome areas. We use about three or

four different input sources from high-level government reporting. It would be the AIHW—I think it is the health and welfare report. There is the overcoming Indigenous disadvantage; there is the Closing the Gap report. We take all that information and we actually collate those KPIs. When you have a look at that report, yes, there is a graph, but we have multiple indicators that we measure against each of those. If we could be more effective around that, it would be trying to get more cyclical reporting around those indicators. Some of those have significant time periods in between, so they could be reported every four years, every three years. When you are talking about suicide and Aboriginal youth suicide, then we obviously need more on-the-ground, current, live data. That is the challenge for us at the moment. How do we get that live data and how can we start to measure if the policy responses are being effective and be able to provide that advice to government?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** What are the penalties? So you are going to review—you are going to be now regulating them, seeing if they met it, so let us say you are almost taking an Equal Opportunity Commission or that whole aspect of looking at it and going in and saying, “Well, you haven’t met these performance indicators.” What is the penalty? Does the department just say to you, “Oh, sorry, we did not manage that” or, “It was too hard”? What is the penalty? Where do you go? Who do you report to?

**Mr Weeks:** Look, I do not necessarily hand out penalties; it does not mean I would not like to. But I guess it goes back to the AACC; it goes back to those ministers; and, ultimately, it should be captured within that CEO’s performance agreement. So, it should actually become an employment issue.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Is that a recommendation you have made to your minister, that he take to this cross-cabinet and to the cabinet that as part of the performance agreements of CEOs, they will have these performance measurements in them that they meet the Closing the Gap-type targets that you are establishing? Is that something that you have discussed or is that something worth having that discussion around?

**Mr Weeks:** Yes. Look, the best example I saw was as part of the—I cannot quite remember. I think it was when the new national partnership agreements came in about seven or eight years ago. There was a requirement in CEO performance agreements around Aboriginal employment in the public sector. So each public sector CEO had that written into their CEO performance agreement. That measure was met. I think it went from something like around two per cent to about 3.5 per cent.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** So the most effective way of doing it is making sure that the CEO has to do it to get their performance through their employment agreement.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Can I just pick up on your earlier question, which I think you mentioned; that was in relation to the newly established interagency executive committee, which had an initial meeting with directors of DAA, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Housing. Can you tell me when that meeting was held and what were the outcomes of this meeting, and is this the one that you said you did not attend?

**Mr Weeks:** Yes. I can find out. There is a difference. If it is a director, then it would not be my level. If it is directors general —

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It was directors general.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Director general of DAA. Who is the director general of DAA?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Him.

**Mr Weeks:** I will find out more information.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Who is the director general of DAA? I think it is you!

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**Ms Gunn:** He thought you meant a different level director.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** That is what it says here in relation to that newly established committee.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** That is what the Mental Health Commission said in their submission —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** That is what the Mental Health Commission put. What I want to know, Cliff, is if you did not turn up, why not—or if you sent somebody else, that is your prerogative. But I want to know when it was held; and what were the outcomes of that meeting; and can we have a copy of the minutes of that meeting?

**Mr Weeks:** Absolutely. If I can find them, we will get copies and I will go back and talk to my staff.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You are involved in it, Cliff, I promise you. It says here quite clearly —

**Mr Weeks:** It did say “newly established”, so I am not sure how newly established.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** We are going to go and find their submission.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** We are going to find their submission, but, obviously, you are part and parcel of that according to the Mental Health Commission.

**Ms Gunn:** Yes, but not the lead agency. The Mental Health Commission established that group, just for clarification.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** No. Well, we are going to go find their submission and we will tell you. Because it seems that you have been ambushed by the Mental Health Commission. They have put in their submission to our inquiry about Aboriginal youth suicide that they have established—so, in response to our inquiry, they have said, “We’ve established this committee”—newly, and —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Which you are a part of.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** — then said that you are a part of it. We will go and a half a look at it and we will probably, as I say, put to the Mental Health Commission, “You might have wanted to tell the people who were supposed to attend.”

**Mr Weeks:** I am sure they would not ambush us on purpose, but I would come back to that. There was a perfectly fine AACC subcommittee looking at mental health that had structure with Aboriginal board members, directors general—it was working fine.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** But they got rid of that.

**Mr Weeks:** If we keep creating new subcommittees, then I am not quite sure —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** We just keep pushing the can further down the road.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is a good point though, is it not? Is that something that has led you to frustration in this space, in the health and wellbeing of young people and the ramifications, which is suicide, that there just seems to be lots of meetings that get established or lots of reference groups that get established or lots of reviews that get established? Is that a frustration for you?

**Mr Weeks:** Absolutely. Look, at the end of the day, a 10-year-old girl in the Kimberley in Looma committing suicide, you just have to wonder what level of frustration for a 10-year-old—my oldest boy is 10 years old. I do not imagine how you can get to that point. So when we are talking about subcommittees, when we are talking about how government departments work together, absolutely, if something is as significant and life-changing as that, just some of the bullshit that occurs in the public sector, absolutely I get frustrated.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am glad you used that term, because I agree with you. I think sometimes this sort of situation is simply kicking the can further down the road. “We do not have to come up with a final decision in this very important area. We will just keep kicking the can down there and one day someone in the future, not me, not you, somebody else can take the can for it.” I think that

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is disgraceful. I am not saying you are doing that; I am saying that is what is happening, and I find it appalling that that is happening within our government.

[3.00 pm]

**Mr Weeks:** We are not running from that. I am not running from it. There are a lot of Aboriginal people who have expectations of me. The Aboriginal community will hold me to a different level of account than what government ever could. I live in this state; I have to go back home, so they are asking me to fight the good fight. You will see part of that; you might see a lot of it. At the end of the day, I am a public servant; I work within the confines of the public sector. But, do we bat above our fighting weight? Absolutely. Do we disrupt? Absolutely, we disrupt. We are not comfortable with where anything is at, but we are not being passive, and we are not shirking away our responsibility. We are trying to find a different way of getting to outcomes that make a difference for Aboriginal people.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** To be honest, my view—I am not sure whether my colleagues would agree with me—is that you are not given the support that you should be given. I do not believe you are being given the direction that you should be given, because you are a public servant and you have to take directions from your minister who takes their instructions from cabinet, which takes its instructions from the Premier of this state, basically, and that is the way it works. We are not saying that you are shirking your job; we are saying that perhaps you should have more responsibility given to you, and the funding that goes with it to be able to do your job in a much more cohesive and much more responsible way. It seems to me that hundreds of millions of dollars is being spent all over the place in all sorts of areas and there is no real, solid coordination. Surely the Department of Aboriginal Affairs should be the lead agency. You are there representing the Aboriginal people of this state, in my mind's eye. That is what you are doing, or that is what you should be doing, but if you are not given the funding, and you are not given the support by the government, then there is something going radically wrong in my view.

**Mr Weeks:** If I can make two points, I know that we are getting close to time, but one thing I will say is that I do not play in the space of politics; it is not my role, but the minister was someone who gave an Aboriginal public servant the role as DG—the only Aboriginal DG in the country. It is not something that I am trying to put up for anything more than it is, but he put Aboriginal people in positions where they can influence—where they can make a difference. One thing he has got right is that we need to do that in other places, and to a huge degree sometimes I just feel like taking the muzzle off.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You might have an Aboriginal minister next year.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** You have made that comment a couple of times about putting other people in the positions, and I do not disagree with you. I have a strong view that there should be more women in the sector, but I do not expect every woman that I see in a position in the public sector to hold the same views as I do on feminism or equal opportunity or affirmative action and stuff like that. I just think it is about diversity. I think that the idea that you should have more Aboriginal people in the public sector has merit of its own accord. They should not have to have the additional responsibility of being the Aboriginal in the room who is going to represent those views. They should have a diverse view, and they will have a diverse history, and they will have a diverse educational standard, and all of those sorts of things, and they will make the public sector richer for that. That is my statement on that, and I should not really be making statements, but my point is: do you think you would be better off having a commissioner for Aboriginal affairs in this state who reports to the Parliament instead of to a minister—you can choose not to comment on this, given that you are a public servant and this is a policy decision—or is it better to have a CEO that then gets to speak to all the bureaucrats and the directors general and the reality is that they are the ones who are delivering the services, so that is really where the influence lies?

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**Mr Weeks:** Now you are putting me on the spot. The reality is that we just need a more effective structure, and that can be a range of things. Other jurisdictions have an ombudsman who plays a role across this, and New South Wales is trialling that model at the moment. We used to have a commissioner for the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority. That was Sue Gordon. There has been a whole range of different models. People will talk about putting the Aboriginal affairs portfolio in DPC. We are seeing the Aboriginal affairs portfolio in Prime Minister and Cabinet at the moment, and there are probably a few Aboriginal people arguing that that has not necessarily been the most effective model. I think there is a whole range of models. I guess what I am trying to say is that I am getting to the point where I am getting the maximum out of what the model is now. We know that there is more required. I am not convinced that I can give more out of this model. It needs some changes; it needs some tweaks, and I think a lot of that should be drawn by the Aboriginal community. What are their expectations? They have expectations that I will be walking into the Premier's office and waving my finger; it does not work like that.

**The CHAIR:** In order for change, you might have to acquire more of what I call attraction—grunt. You need to have more grunt. It looks as though sometimes, excuse the expression, you are a bit of a toothless tiger, and a spectator.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Not you—the department.

**The CHAIR:** Not you. The department is a toothless tiger; it becomes a spectator and only monitors. You need more cyclical information and you can see whether these things are working or not working, but in the end you are a spectator.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Can we speak about being a spectator, because I think this is a perfect example of being a spectator. The Mental Health Commission, in response to us on 30 August 2016, signed by Timothy Marney, the commissioner, in answer to a couple of questions, gave us an attachment 2, headed “Status of Actions in Response to the Ombudsman's Report in the Investigation into Ways that State Government Departments and Authorities can Prevent or Reduce Suicide by Young People”. At page 5 of that attachment, recommendation 22 reads —

The Mental Health Commission, working together with the Department of Health, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Education, considers the development of a collaborative inter-agency approach, including consideration of a shared screening tool and a joint case management approach for young people with multiple risk factors for suicide.

Their response refers to —

... an initial Interagency Executive Committee meeting with Directors General (or their representatives) from the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DoE), Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS), the Department of Housing and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

That is where our question arose as to whether you had a meeting and what came out of it.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** And can we see the minutes?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** You said that you are not aware of that, and it does say “directors general”. That is a perfect example of you going back to your colleagues and saying: “Not fair—I was just in front of a parliamentary committee.”

**Mr Weeks:** No, I will. I will definitely go back and ask the question.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** And if you can provide us with the minutes of those meetings, whether you attended or not, it might be useful. The committee would like to see the minutes to see whether that initial meeting was worthwhile, and whether the outcomes are going to be measured from the initial meeting.

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**The CHAIR:** I think we had better wind up.

Thank you very much for your evidence before us today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors, if you see fit to make those corrections. Any such corrections may be made and returned, if they are going to be, within 10 days. If you do not return anything we think that you deem them to be correct. New material cannot be added by these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on a particular point, please do so when you send your transcript back.

Thank you again for your time appearing before us. We ask you to forgive us if we were a little harsh in some of the areas, but we are just trying to get to the bottom of this, and I thank you for your patience.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** If you do, walk a mile in my shoes.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Just imagine what it was like for Russell-Weisz, when he came in here and we wanted to ask him about Fiona Stanley Hospital. You have seen nothing!

**Mr Weeks:** The last thing from me is that what you are looking at in terms of Aboriginal youth suicide is the top layer in terms of what we need to be looking at.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Absolutely, it has got to be.

**Mr Weeks:** Thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 3.09 pm**

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