

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE — GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Motion

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [10.06 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house notes —

- (a) the extent to which current state government programs and funding intending to assist Aboriginal people in the areas of education, training, employment and health have been successful in addressing disadvantage; and
- (b) other approaches that may more effectively improve outcomes for Aboriginal people in these important areas of public policy and service delivery.

The whole idea of this motion today is to have a debate in this house, so I am very keen to hear from all members to discuss this issue. One thing that is fairly obvious to me and to my party is that all sides of politics would like to see Indigenous people in this country, particularly in this state, share in the full life that most of us in this house have been able to share in our time. Unfortunately, it has been a rough old journey, and we would like to see improvement. I have some suggestions and would like to open up the debate.

I would like to inquire into and report on all circumstances surrounding the effectiveness of government Aboriginal programs, particularly those that relate to health, education, training and employment. The typical old-school program does not work in Aboriginal communities. A lot of different methods have gone in and out of Aboriginal communities, remote communities and even capital cities. In so many ways, these have not worked. One of the reasons that education programs run by government generally have not worked or had much success is that they do not take into account Aboriginal life and traditions. Consultation with and involvement of Aboriginal people in those programs have been left wanting. If we were to look at Europe and we wanted to design a program for Sweden, would it work in Spain or the Ukraine? There is a good chance that it may not. People from different nations have different attitudes and customs. Aboriginal people right across Australia have those same differences. I think the one-size-fits-all model has not served us well in the past, or served Aboriginal people well in the past.

Many agencies are doing fantastic jobs. This should not detract from that. This should highlight the current service delivery model and the standards that are not working. I will give one or two good examples. The Children's Charity Network is an organisation that gets involved. It has private sponsorship. It gets next to no government support, yet it has been able to do some marvellous things in remote communities and in Aboriginal communities in big towns. That charity identified that when Aboriginal children go to school, they have trouble hearing because of hearing problems that exist in those areas. It has been able to help that situation. It has been getting involved in their health and education, and it is working. Everyone involved in that organisation has reported that it has been successful. That charity will be looking for more government funding. Recently, I have had a bit of experience with an organisation called the Murlpirrmarra Connection. It also identified a weakness in the northern goldfields. In certain towns, young Aboriginal kids were not graduating. They were finishing school at the ages of 12, 13 and 14. Kids were not going on to graduate from school. It put a program together that has really assisted in that area. In most cases these organisations are fighting against government schools, because government schools put these kids down as numbers to help with their funding, yet these kids are not attending school. I would like to see more assistance given to those organisations that identify a need, are having success and have private funding but very little government funding. I think the answer for government programs lies in partnerships with industry, companies and private donors. I really think that the one-size-fits-all model that the government can deliver will never be the answer for Aboriginal people.

Bourke in New South Wales has a youth truancy program. This program started because Bourke had a massive problem with incarceration rates. The program is called Just Reinvest NSW. It involves a reinvestment in the town of Bourke. Every year around \$4 million was being spent on incarcerating mainly young people and children in that one town. The program decided to consult very closely with the community. Now that that \$4 million is reinvested, those kids are not going to jail any more. That money has been reinvested into many programs that are helping with preventive measures—that is, helping kids to do better at school, helping people with their health, helping people to get training and into employment, and keeping those kids out of jail. Once again it was a whole-of-community approach. Government is not good at that. We need to work out ways to work with industry and private people so that we can work a lot closer in partnerships.

The disparity between Aboriginal health and non-Aboriginal health is very clear for all of us to see. It is increasing in certain areas. We are on top of some areas, but when we look at the gap, we have not done a good job in that area. I think that is distressing to all of us. As a person who sits in this Parliament, I would like to see

us change that gradually over the next few years and turn that disgusting figure around. It is something that all Australians should be ashamed of.

There are higher rates of drug and alcohol dependency in Aboriginal communities. There are also increasing rates of Aboriginal suicide in regional areas. In Leonora in the northern goldfields, there have been up to six suicide-related incidents in the past 18 months. That outstrips even the much-publicised stats that we have heard from the Kimberley recently. That is not a situation that any of us can tolerate. Youth suicide, and suicide in general in Aboriginal communities, is going through the roof. It is not just a case of people being affected by drugs and alcohol; these people do not see a future. It is not as simple as a case of drugs and alcohol. These people do not see a future for themselves so they are ending their life prematurely.

Recently a young lady by the name of Breanna Taylor won the Goldfields Girl, an Aboriginal modelling contest, for her speech that was dedicated to suicide prevention. She is a great example of a young lady we should be using as a role model to enhance those programs, yet we see these things pop up and then they are forgotten. The government needs to embrace these sorts of initiatives and use these people as role models. We see football role models and a few others, but there are not enough in the areas of education and suicide prevention. We should be picking up on that. My observation is that there are more suicide prevention seminars than there are programs. We are certainly talking about it, but we need programs. In the instance of Leonora, there is no suicide prevention professional in that town, yet for the past 18 months to two years it has been one of the suicide hotspots.

I am moving along. There are appalling rates of sexually transmitted diseases amongst adolescents, especially within remote areas. I am really questioning what the respective agencies are doing about it. Sometimes people are too scared to ask the hard questions. That is one thing that One Nation will never be accused of. We are asking questions of those agencies. We want to see the results of what they are doing about these problems. One Nation is also seeking a full review of all Aboriginal medical services, including mental health. I listened to Hon Alison Xamon when she talked about mental health recently. It is a major problem, especially in Indigenous life. We need to really look into that to see what is happening. It is not just good enough to throw money at it. Money is not the answer. It is about having effective programs that engage with each community one on one, face to face. That is hard work. We need to put those resources into the hard work of engagement. Programs work when there is proper engagement with those communities. The results are that much better because we have buy-in from that community. Not enough of that is happening.

The former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is in this house. I would be very interested to hear what he has to say about this. From all accounts, he was a very good Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. It is hard. The state government has only so much control. A lot of these programs are funded by the federal government, but I need the state government to take leadership. It needs to instigate the encouragement of change. The state government needs to say to the federal government that it will not keep going in that direction; it is not working.

I will now refer to the area of Aboriginal drug and alcohol services. People usually take to drugs and alcohol for a reason. We need to get behind those reasons and find out more. It is no good putting in resources after the damage is done. We need more preventive programs. Recently, a lot of cutbacks to preventive programs were made by the federal government. That it is the first mistake; we need to increase those services. We also want to strip directors' sitting fees from public funding. I am talking about the directors of Aboriginal groups and certain groups who sometimes get into the bad habit of holding meetings to get paid because they are short of money. That should not come out of the public purse. That is where we get private industry involved in the government's programs to support these organisations. Those fees could still be paid, but we need to look into that and make sure that directors are held accountable. As I mentioned, when we have more talkfests and meetings but fewer programs, there is only so much money and it needs to be accounted for in the right areas.

I have been involved with Aboriginal training and employment for the last 20 years. I have worked for private companies during that time and I had a lot to do with the community development program, including all the agencies that receive funding from that program. Unfortunately, in my experience, the programs fail at around 97 per cent of their duties. It is just a box-ticking exercise. The people who work in those agencies do not have the skills to even engage with the communities and, if they did that—their first responsibility—they would have a lot more success. They are running around trying to find people to work for the dole. The Work for the Dole program is a complete failure. I want people to be responsible for receiving their dole but Work for the Dole has put those agencies under pressure. The agencies spend their whole time running around trying to find Work for the Dole organisations. They have forgotten about their main responsibility, which is to find work for Aboriginal people and put them into training programs that result in work, not training for training's sake. Over the years, we have all learnt from experience that that will not work. We need to find positions in industry and government, and then train people to fit those spots. Training for training's sake will not work. Aboriginal training and employment has to be sustainable and not just a cash grab by those organisations. There are government incentives and sometimes organisations just tick the boxes so they can be eligible for the funding.

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

We also require an inquiry into Aboriginal training and employment initiatives and other entities that operate under similar Aboriginal employment program models. We need to review the training and employment payments to these entities. To my knowledge, these programs are not working very well and a lot of money is going missing. When I talked to Aboriginal people in those communities and towns, that was exactly their feeling. They feel like they have no say and that a whole bundle of whitefellas are making a whole bundle of decisions, so no wonder it does not work. Aboriginal programs should not be dictated. They should be community-led programs and have community buy-in. If the community does not buy in to them, the programs will not work, so do not do them. The government should not spend that money because it will be saying, “We’re putting all this money in and it should be working” but if it cannot get community buy-in, it needs to look at and alter the program.

We support Aboriginal affairs; however, we seek higher standards and outcomes. We believe that Aboriginal affairs deserve quality services, not sustained initiatives. If I had the opportunity to call for a select committee, I would, but I do not have that opportunity in non-government business time. I ask members in this house to look at how we are going and how much better we could be.

In the three minutes I have remaining, I want to mention some news reports. I mentioned the high suicide rate up in the Kimberley, which has been reported on a lot lately. There is talk of an inquest. We know what the problems are and they are not just drugs and alcohol. These people do not have a future. There are no jobs. There is nothing to keep the youth busy. We are not talking about kids who have great role models in their own families. They come from a background that may be different from what we are all used to, so we have to apply a different model that works for those kids. I also mentioned Leonora. It used to have a person who was dedicated to suicide prevention in the town, but they were transferred to a town up the road, Laverton, which does not have as many incidents of suicide. I do not know how that decision was made. In New South Wales, we can look at the Just Reinvest NSW organisation in Bourke, which has been an absolute success story. There are models out there and, generally, they come either from the community or well-meaning people who have business interests in areas that speak to the community. It seems to me that those programs work successfully. The reason they work successfully is that those people are invested in the community and they are talking to the local people. I am questioning the way we do business in Indigenous affairs.

I had a few meetings with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Ben Wyatt, and he has been very open. When he first took over the role, he questioned whether we really need an Aboriginal Affairs minister. At the moment, it seems that we do, but I would like to think that one day we will not have an Aboriginal Affairs minister and that all these programs are based on need and not on the First Australians because of the disparity we currently have.

I encourage all sides of politics here to debate this issue and try to make change, and work closely with industry. The most important thing is that we need to engage with the local community. We must remember they are all from different nations and different people. They all have different ideas and having one size to fit all will not work. I thank members.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [10.27 am]: I thank Hon Colin Tincknell for this motion. I think it is a really well-crafted motion and a really useful example for newer members of how to use this time. We will not get to take a vote. It is a debating tool so it is good to frame a motion in this way to encourage us to effectively ask a question. If we put paragraph (a) of the motion another way, it will pose the question to ask ourselves: to what extent can we say that existing programs are working well? The answer would have to be that programs are working well to a very patchy extent. I think it is a good way to frame the debate and I want to make some comments about paragraph (b) of the motion, which is about other approaches that might be effective. Inevitably in this debate, that is where the rubber hits the road and people seem to take kind of fixed and sometimes extreme positions on what we can and cannot talk about as being other approaches.

I have limited time but I will list some of the programs that this government is going to pursue. I want to make some initial comments to agree with much, although not all, of what Hon Colin Tincknell just said. For whichever program we choose to evaluate and look at, the key characteristic of a successful program is that the community leads the program. Community leaders must be engaged in the development of the program, they must take ownership of the program and they must be deeply and heavily engaged in its implementation. An example of that working well and becoming an internationally recognised success is the work of June Oscar and the women of the Fitzroy Valley in the north west. They took on the issue of the sale of alcohol in the community. They took it on with risk to their own safety at various points. June said to me that at one point people were trying to get around the ban on the sale of alcohol in her community by driving around in their cars with rifles in the boot, and people like June were at serious risk. That was a great example of the women of a community standing up and saying that enough was enough. As a direct result of her work, which has now been internationally recognised, presentations in the emergency department dropped and attendance at the school increased dramatically—almost immediately. Despite all of the fuss and objection, and there was much from people seeking to make money out of the sale of alcohol, the work that June and her team did fundamentally

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

changed that community for the better. When looking at how to have success in this area, that is the model that needs to be engaged. That was the point made by the honourable member in his contribution.

We need to recognise that although governments of all persuasions have implemented programs and some have been more successful than others, there is still a huge gap in life expectancy, economic status, educational outcomes and health outcomes. By any measure, there is still a disproportionate disadvantage to being born Indigenous in this country and we need to do more and be ever vigilant about how we tackle it.

I will come back to some programs, but I want to touch on the second part of the motion, which refers to other approaches. When the Labor Party was last in government, I was Minister for Child Protection. This was in 2007–08 and there was a national debate about cashless welfare and how real carrots and sticks could be put in place to address serious neglect of Indigenous children in particular, but not only Indigenous children. The proposition was put that when a state agency is aware of ongoing neglect of a child related to the consumption of alcohol in a household, some agreement ought to be entered into by which the state could share the information about the neglect of the child with the federal government and the federal government could take steps to quarantine a certain amount of welfare payments. A lot of people took umbrage at my point of view, which was that, as Minister for Child Protection, I would not stand by and watch children not be fed and be neglected because of alcohol and take no action to do something about it in the short term. I completely accept that in the long term so much more than a cashless welfare program needs to be put in place, but in the short term if it means that that family is spending money on food and that child is being fed, I felt I would not doing my job properly if I did not say that it needed to be looked at, and so I said that. The reaction from some people, which I suppose is not surprising in one sense, was as though I had suggested that we cut off people's heads or something. There is a fundamental difference between a program like that, which is directly linked to evidence of neglect, and what I call the postcode version of cashless welfare by which a program to quarantine welfare is applied to a whole postcode irrespective of how people are living and managing their finances. I do not subscribe to that at all. I think these are very blunt instruments and people are being punished with no evidence that they have done anything wrong or that they are not able to manage their money. If welfare quarantining could be linked to making a direct improvement to a child's life, I was prepared to engage in conversations with the then federal government about how it might proceed.

On Monday night I was at a function and I was talking to Nicola Forrest and the people from the Minderoo Foundation, and Matt O'Sullivan in particular. One version of welfare quarantining that "Twiggy" Forrest had proposed was related to school attendance. We were having a debate about whether that was a good idea. My view was that an enormous amount of alternative infrastructure would need to be put in place for a program like that. If welfare payments were stopped or quarantined because a child did not attend school, it would need to be ensured that the kid was getting fed. Often when children with poor school attendance do turn up, they are the ones who turn up to the breakfast program, they are the ones fed by the school at lunchtime and they are the ones for whom the school has a spare set of uniforms. I would not want a blunt instrument used due to the child not attending school to mean that none of those measures to look after the child were in place and I would not want to see a version of welfare quarantining based on postcode. Something like that would need to apply when there was demonstrable evidence that it would make a difference. I do not subscribe to the proposal that Twiggy Forrest is talking about as it sits now, but I think that we need to have a conversation about how we do things better. Twiggy Forrest has some great relationships with Indigenous people, but he is not an Indigenous leader. The work needs to be done and owned by Indigenous leaders if it is going to have any real success. I think there are conversations to be had, but this government would not support a blunt-instrument approach to that kind of policy and we would want to make sure at the end of the day that the child was at the centre of the policy, that we knew things would be better for the child and that the child's community was seriously engaged in owning any policy that went down that path.

This is a time-limited debate and I just want to touch on some of the good work I think has been, and is being, done by respective governments. One of the employment programs that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is engaged in talking to local communities about, which we took to the election and is being implemented, is the WA Indigenous ranger program to protect the environment and leverage jobs, and subsequent social and economic success will come out of those jobs for Indigenous rangers in regional and remote WA. We have committed an additional \$20 million over the next five years for the program to look after the WA state parks, Indigenous protected areas and Indigenous tenures. We have also announced a commitment to an Aboriginal procurement policy to award three per cent of all government contracts to Aboriginal-owned businesses by 2020. If that program is not implemented in a way that ensures that there are real jobs as a result, it will not be successful, but there is a genuine commitment to ensuring that the procurement process is real. A whole range of measures in the health portfolio in particular have been successful. One of the things that happened under the previous government—so, giving credit where credit is due—was the review of existing Indigenous health programs undertaken by former Minister for Health Kim Hames to see to what extent they were successful. The

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

results were pretty good. The results were that 90 per cent of the state's Aboriginal health programs were outstanding, very good or good, but that a small number of them were not performing. The report from that review informed the programs that will continue to be funded by the state. That was the 2015 Holman report. If the honourable member has not seen a copy of it, I direct his attention to it to look at which programs were working well in the health space and which ones were not.

There have been a number of key developments in the education space—for example, ATAR achievement. The number of Indigenous kids who are successfully completing ATAR with a qualification to get into a university is increasing; that is a good thing. Literacy levels are improving and that is a good thing, but the gap is still huge and attendance remains a serious issue. All the research shows—in fact it is commonsense—that the greater amount of time a person spends not attending school, the worse their educational outcome will be. It is still the case that Indigenous kids are way too disproportionately overrepresented in that group. We really need to focus on ways of engaging those families so that they see the benefit of getting their kid to school. There was a fantastic little story on the ABC this week, I do not know whether members saw it. It was about the school at the remote community at Punmu, which I visited about two years ago. It is fantastic. It has this little train, made up of cut-up 44-gallon drums, that goes around, collects the kids and takes them to school. It is a gorgeous little story, but it is an important initiative about making sure that those kids attend school regularly to get the benefit that they need to improve their education.

Hon Colin Tincknell: It has been an outstanding school for many years now.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, it is a great school. I had a great visit when I went there. But there is a lot more work to be done in that space.

I am going to run out of time. I could talk about this issue a great deal more, but I want to thank the member for putting up the motion today. It is a really important conversation to have. We need to come at it with open eyes and ears and we need to do two things. We need to engage with the community, so that all the programs are community led and community owned, and we need to put the kids at the centre of them.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [10.42 am]: Unfortunately, with only 10 minutes I do not have much time to speak on this motion, but I thank Hon Colin Tincknell for bringing it to the chamber. It is a very important motion. I think the member will find it will have unanimous support; I thank him very much for that. Having said that, I addressed a lot of the issues within this motion in my Address-in-Reply speech and I spoke about this for about three quarters of an hour. If the member would like to see my more expansive views on some of these issues, I draw his attention to my Address-in-Reply speech. Having said that, once again, I thank the honourable member for bringing this motion to the chamber.

He is quite right. We spend a lot of money on Aboriginal affairs—about \$5 billion annually—yet why in the twenty-first century have we still got such appalling outcomes for Aboriginal people compared with their non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters? I said that in my Address-in-Reply speech—it is just unacceptable. I said exactly what the honourable member alluded to. When I spoke anywhere as Aboriginal affairs minister I used to say that, ideally, I would like a situation in which we do not need a minister for Aboriginal affairs and that the quality of life and outcomes for Aboriginal people are identical to, if not better than, their non-Aboriginal counterparts. As the original Australians, they deserve that. Even with \$5 billion—it is a lot of money—the outcomes are still no good in a lot of areas. That is why we need to do things better.

I will move to some of the areas that we addressed in government and that I personally took great interest in in my six and a half magnificent years as Aboriginal Affairs minister. I loved that role. I have said that I am not an Aboriginal man, but I grew up with the Wongi and have a deep personal affection for Aboriginal people. I thought: we have to do something different; we have to direct the money differently. We need to have different management of the ways in which we deliver services with Aboriginal communities and for Aboriginal people so they can have better outcomes. With that said, we established the Aboriginal Affairs Cabinet Sub-committee to ensure that there was much more coordination between departments. That worked particularly well; we did not have a silo effect in decision-making but, in effect, government decision-making was a collective approach. That was working well. I understand that is not happening with the current government. I strongly recommend that the government reinstitute that, because it really works well. We will go back to that same old adage of the departments just doing what they like. We reinstated the WAAAC—the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council. That is a part of the statute but had been dormant for many years and we re-established it in 2009. In 2014, I held a summit and all the mobs, right throughout Western Australia, came. It was a great feeling of unity of purpose. By the time the election came, I still had not had recommendations from the WAAAC on that summit, and I would like to think that Hon Ben Wyatt will follow up on it. As I have said previously, I have great respect for Ben and I think he is a good man in that position.

Regarding what we could do for long-term outcomes, alluding to the motion, of course any education system should best prepare its students for life beyond compulsory education to ensure that they can move seamlessly into employment. Unfortunately, that has not been happening for generations for Aboriginal people. It just has not been happening. That is why, as training minister, I instituted the Training Together–Working Together program. We went all over the state, consulted with Aboriginal people and asked them what they wanted: what is the best way we can provide better outcomes for Aboriginal people? That Training Together–Working Together program was phenomenally successful from which we can see some tangible positive results. We established five Aboriginal workforce development centres, one each in Broome, Geraldton, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and Murray Street. We have now seen tens of thousands of Aboriginal people go through those Aboriginal workforce development centres. Those centres act as a conduit between Aboriginal people—not just those leaving school, but generically Aboriginal people—and employment, with mining companies, retail outlets and other employment facilities, and tertiary education. I would like to ensure that all Aboriginal people have that assistance on that pathway. They are provided with assistance and advice on their CVs and for job applications. They have been phenomenally successful and I am delighted that the current government is retaining them at this stage. I really hope that it continues in that field.

In addition, as Minister for Education, one of the things that came out of working with the universities in the Higher Education Council was a higher education plan. One of the pillars of that plan was better outcomes for Aboriginal people. If members look at that plan, they will see that the universities are now specifically generating opportunities for Aboriginal people. I talked and met with all the student bodies and also the alumni to develop mentoring programs to assist Aboriginal people. It is easy enough to open the doors for them to go to universities, but if they do not have those support mechanisms, often it is very, very difficult for them. When they come in from the lands or from the north, the midwest or the goldfields, in a lot of instances they just want to go home, so having those support mechanisms is important. That job of work has started and at this stage it has been very successful. I like to think that the minister will continue working with the universities in that field.

We have talked about the exit level. Of course, if we get the entrance level right, the exit level will take care of itself. That is why as a government we worked very, very hard to assist Aboriginal people and families to improve literacy and numeracy standards. We opened 37 Aboriginal kindergartens, spread throughout Western Australia, to provide early intervention literacy, numeracy, speech therapy and parenting workshops. As I said in my Address-in-Reply speech, I would like to think that they will ultimately become much more like child and parent centres, providing more of those wraparound services, because that is very important. We have to empower the families and make sure that they also are part of the child's education. Ultimately, I am convinced that if the KindiLink program and those Aboriginal kindergartens are retained, we are going to have a net benefit in the years ahead of improved literacy and numeracy standards, attendance at school and outcomes. Then when they get to secondary school, there will be motivation to stay at school and succeed and that, of course, provides great foundations for employment post–compulsory education. In addition, I introduced the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework within the Department of Education. As I mentioned, a line has been drawn in the sand in our schools nowadays to ensure that Aboriginal culture is inculcated within the curriculum throughout Western Australia. We were the first state to do it. We did it, and I am very pleased with that.

Another big area of reform that is important to me has occurred in the Aboriginal Regional Services Reform Unit. Its work is based upon the appalling quality of life in a lot of remote communities. This is a sensitive issue, as members would be aware, and I was really offended when the Minister for Regional Development made false accusations about me in this area. I will continue to follow that up and if by the end of today things have not worked out quite how I want them to, I will follow up the matter after the recess. Suffice it to say, the regional services reform unit is working very well. I spent almost three years working with my colleagues Terry Redman, Helen Morton and Kim Hames to make sure that we consulted with Aboriginal people in those communities so that they could be a part of the solution. Service delivery within that unit is very much targeted to empower Aboriginal people to make decisions so that it is not the white fella coming in and imposing decisions on those communities; they are part of the decision-making. That is why that reform unit is so vitally important. That is very, very important to me and that is why I took the minister's comments personally.

Unfortunately, we have a limited time to speak, but I want to talk about the Kimberley Schools Project. That is one area of the reform unit that I launched about eight months ago. That is going to be terrific. Twenty-two schools have decided to opt in and be part of a very targeted education program on attendance, literacy and numeracy, and empowering families to ensure positive outcomes in those communities. But the important point is that we are not going in and telling those communities what is good for them from an educational perspective; communities are going to be part of the decision-making process. I am absolutely convinced that program will expand across the Kimberley and the Pilbara and as a direct result the quality of life in those communities will be

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

enhanced and improved. The current situation cannot continue whereby dozens of Aboriginal children have taken their lives.

A number of other matters I would like to draw attention to are youth services reform, the Aboriginal business directorate and a number of other services. Suffice it to say, we were proactive and always consulted with Aboriginal people, because we wanted to ensure that the ultimate outcomes for Aboriginal people either mirror or are better than the outcomes for their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [10.52 am]: I would like to thank Hon Colin Tincknell for moving this motion because it discusses issues and presents ways forward rather than makes observations about other political parties.

I take on board the very important point that Hon Colin Tincknell made at the outset, that in many cases we are dealing with up to 95 Aboriginal nations in Western Australia with different cultural directions, pursuits and outcome drivers. We also have to remember that that can be broken down into three subsets: urban Aboriginal people, rural Aboriginal people and remote Aboriginal people. I go to the Tjuntjuntjara community, but nobody there speaks English. Luckily, I speak Yindjibarndi and they speak pidgin Jarra and we have a bit of a conversation. We have to get away from the idea that Aboriginal people are one people; they are not. Even in Roebourne there is a great difference between the Ngarluma, Yindjibarndi, Mardudhunera and the Wong-Goo-tt-oo. We should be starting from the premise of catering for individual Aboriginal nations rather than Aboriginal people. A report into the effectiveness of supplying services into one community found that 100 services were going into that community. One of those services was teaching people how to knit and another was teaching people how to use a washing machine. Does any member know anyone who knits these days? As for having washing machines in that community, it was not likely. Also at the cost of several thousand dollars a website was to be set up but it ended up being only a Facebook page; it did nothing else.

We have to be mindful about services that we put into Aboriginal communities. The one-size-fits-all approach is out. We really need to focus on two major issues—glue ear and the foetal alcohol spectrum disorder—if we want to increase educational levels and address the issue of incarceration. For those members who are not aware, glue ear is a problem for many children in those communities because when they go to school they cannot hear and they become disruptive in the class and are not engaged. Therefore, a peer process results and it all falls down. We need good health inputs into these communities. Members have already heard about a community nurse who has been trying to do her best to cope with all the issues in one community. She works 24 hours a day—there is no backup or support—and because of a lack of services she has to run a power cable from the nursing quarters to her home so that she can get her fridge in her home to work. They are the sorts of conditions facing people who are put out there to help those communities.

I have listened to every member so far and the majority of what they have said is right on the money. We need to go back to community development employment programs. They were one of the best programs and helped people by providing education, jobs and income streams, and they lifted the cleanliness and the betterment of Aboriginal communities. The moment they were taken away, many communities literally started to fall apart. I was very pleased to hear the Minister for Regional Development talk about contracts. In 2002 and 2003, when we had the good old Homeswest contractors in Derby, Aboriginal-run businesses were contracted to maintain government housing. They were allowed a 10 per cent increase to assist in their ability to tender. In my hometown of Derby, after going to competitive tendering quite a few years ago, and because regional employment dropped off, those houses are now being maintained out of South Australia and many of the young men who had jobs, a future, a pathway forward and respect in the community are now sitting on the pavement. We have to look at big-picture economics, not just the microeconomics, because big-picture economics recognises the implications of bad health outcomes, social disadvantage, criminality, and how they are rolled into one package.

It is also rather interesting that we, as a bunch of wetjalas, are having a debate about Aboriginal people in here. It would be rather good if we could have a three or four-day forum in this place, with Aboriginal leaders on one side of this place, telling us what they want, not us telling them what we want to give them.

I turn to some of the many reports over the last 20 years written by eminent legal people who have articulated what Aboriginal people want. I turn to the “Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice” of May 2001, which articulated many of the things Hon Colin Tincknell and Hon Sue Ellery have outlined. We can also go back to the “Hear Our Voices: Community Consultations for the Development of an Empowerment, Healing and Leadership Program for Aboriginal people living in the Kimberley, Western Australia: Final Research Report” of March 2012. “Hear Our Voices” is a report on Aboriginal people asking, “Listen to us; we have a way forward; we know the answers.” But no; consistently, we, as white fellas, say, “We are in government, we are in power, we are here

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

and we are saying we know what is best for you.” We have got to get away from that. I might sound a little more passionate than I usually do, but this is an area I have worked in. I worked for Gough Whitlam in the outstation movement in the 1970s, which put people back on country. Understanding the cultural connections, the strength of culture, where that comes from and how that can be used to drive advancement in communities is something that we have to acknowledge. It is all well and good to sit here in these lovely red chairs and make observations, but we need to get out there, sit on the ground in a community for a couple of months and listen to what the community wants.

I remember an incident when a minister came to community and said, “I want to give you this, I want to give you this and I want to give you this.” The community said, “Yes; lovely. Great.” The minister did not ask what they wanted so they got a bunch of houses in the wrong place, which sat there for about 20 years and were demolished two years ago. Nobody ever lived in them. It is about listening. This idea of having a conversation or consultation has to be about listening to what Indigenous people aspire to and what they understand that individual nation and that individual community can provide for the betterment of their community. Top down does not work. Every single report, including the mental health report of March 2013, the “Elders’ Report into Preventing Indigenous Self-Harm & Youth Suicide” of 2014 and the “Close the Gap—Progress and priorities report 2014” have all indicated time and again that we need to listen to people. Engagement is about listening. Consultation usually involves walking in and saying, “I’ve got a great idea. What do you think about it?” That does not work because in the end, Aboriginal people are very, very respectful of us. They see us as their leaders. They will acquiesce to whatever we put forward. Quite often we say, “Oh, isn’t it great?” because we put forward an idea and everybody said yes. But they are being polite because that is the very nature of Aboriginal people—to be polite and to listen.

It is a great motion. I have tried to encapsulate a lot of my thoughts in a very small amount of time. I would dearly love to see this chamber talk to the Bunuba people from the Kimberley. There is even a difference between the people from the West Kimberley and those from the East Kimberley.

HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [11.02 am]: I thank Hon Colin Tincknell for bringing the motion to the house today. It is exceptionally important and timely as the government prepares to deliver its budget and looks at what areas of Indigenous affairs it seeks to support. I know that the government will support areas of Indigenous affairs and I congratulate it for that. In listening to the minister speak on this issue today, I know that it is an important area of investment for all of us in this house. Sometimes the way we approach policy development and how we like to see outcomes delivered and the way we do it tend to be a little different. It is good to have this debate because it brings to light different ways of approaching the issue and certainly different ideas on how we can engage with Aboriginal people to move forward.

Maybe it was me, but I heard a couple of mixed messages in what Hon Colin Tincknell said about how we should move forward to support Aboriginal people. One of the common themes of the speeches made by members in the house today is that this matter is about discussion and consultation. Sometimes it can take a frustrating amount of time to achieve that, but in Aboriginal affairs it is exceptionally important to gain the trust of Aboriginal people, understand their issues internally and understand how they work with ideas so we can move forward while also working with their culture. Unfortunately, sometimes those things can be deemed talkfests, which the member referred to today. That can frustrate the issue. But it is fundamentally important in how we move forward to ensure that the program that we are seeking to introduce to try to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people is driven and owned by Aboriginal people.

I concede that some of the conversation that the member mentioned around sitting fees and things like that is a separate issue from what we are talking about today, but it is something that comes up. I am sure that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, in his comments to the member questioning whether we need a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, would have been saying that in questioning where Indigenous affairs are going in the state. I am sure that he knows more than anybody that we need a department for Indigenous affairs and we need a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs because, after all, Aboriginal people are the First Australians. I hope they play a role in any level of government moving forward and how we represent the interests of First Australians.

The key—I think all members have talked about this—is community leadership and Aboriginal leadership. Many programs have gone into this space. In my limited time, I want to talk about a couple that I have been exceptionally pleased to be involved in, being in government previously, although not as a minister. I have not had the privilege of having that title but I have certainly worked with my colleagues in trying to find a solution and consulted with Aboriginal people I know in my electorate. I want to highlight some of those programs that have predominantly been funded by royalties for regions. I am pleased that the minister is listening to the debate. I know that she will consider where these programs go in the budget.

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

The Mowanjum irrigation trial that is currently underway is a Water for Food initiative in the Kimberley. It is a partnership between Aboriginal people and the state government that seeks to deliver a project on the ground to develop opportunities to gain training and employment where people live. I fundamentally believe that education and training and employment can provide a change in the direction in which we are heading at the moment in Aboriginal affairs. Mowanjum is a well-known, well-renowned and often talked about project. I have spoken about it many times in this house. All programs in this area have achieved really fantastic outcomes. There is no doubt that there is still work to do. We have a long way to go. It is multigenerational; it is not something that we can turn around in one generation.

The Ord–East Kimberley expansion project received an enormous amount of funding from royalties for regions—some \$333 million. This national project has really turned the Ord around and is something that we are all very proud of. Part of that expansion included the Knox Plain Aboriginal development package agreement between Kimberley Agricultural Investment and the Miriuwung Gajerrong Aboriginal Corporation. It is a fantastic program. A fundamental principle of that agreement is the jobs and opportunities for local Aboriginal people. The Ord expansion has already delivered more than 200 direct jobs for Aboriginal people, about 100 jobs outside the Ord project, almost 300 nationally accredited training certifications and support for 14 Aboriginal-owned businesses. It is early days and there are early starting points, but it is a change in the direction of what we are doing in the Kimberley.

The Aboriginal justice program has received funding from royalties for regions for the enhanced driver training program in Roebourne, Lombadina, Kalgoorlie, Broome, Derby and Kununurra in particular. The program aims to overcome difficulties associated with obtaining a driver’s licence in remote and regional communities and to stop that circle that Aboriginal people find themselves in when they are charged for driving without a licence and then go to jail for not paying the fine. We are not teaching anybody anything; the program was instigated to try to put a stop to that and enable people to get their driver’s licence so they can get a job. That has been quite successful. The Clontarf Foundation has been a very successful and major foundation. Royalties for regions money has been spent on improving water quality in remote Aboriginal communities. Remote Aboriginal health clinics have been exceptionally welcomed by the community. The previous state government provided services, particularly through royalties for regions, to try to enhance the lives of Aboriginal people and provide opportunities for jobs, education and training. I fundamentally believe that is the way to change direction of opportunity.

I want to touch on the Aboriginal Regional Services Reform Unit because as does my colleague, Hon Peter Collier, I believe it is a very important program for remote communities in WA. It was never about the closure of Aboriginal communities; it was brought together as a unit purely to ensure that we worked together as a state government—I hope the current state government will continue to invest in this area—so that we can work directly and in consultation with Aboriginal people about what they want to see changed, what opportunities they want to develop and what educational opportunities they want to see their children take advantage of. Much is happening in the regional services reform unit but it is early days. When traveling with my colleague Hon Terry Redman, the Minister for Regional Development at the time, we took a real grassroots approach to how we engaged with Aboriginal leaders and communities. I have to say that in all my time dealing with Aboriginal people, this has been an area in which Aboriginal people and their families do not want to see the status quo continue. They want to be the drivers of change. The embracing I saw of the Regional Services Reform Unit by community leaders throughout the Mining and Pastoral Region was astounding. I hope that the belief Aboriginal people have in that unit continues to be supported by the current state government along with the aspirations Aboriginal people are trying to achieve in working with government, because they need government to do that on their behalf.

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral) [11.12 am]: I thank Hon Colin Tincknell for bringing this motion to the chamber. I want to touch on a few areas from my experience as a young person. I have come from the Northern Territory, which has experienced the same sorts of issues that seem to be happening here in Western Australia. In the Northern Territory we worked very closely with the Larrakia and Gurindji. I am very interested in the history of that area and the involvement of the Maritime Union of Australia, which I was with and which was involved in the Wave Hill walk-off, and how people got behind the community and supported the Indigenous people. When I came to the Pilbara region of Western Australia, I was saddened to see the issues we were seeing in the Northern Territory replicated in the north west region. As a young person, throughout my schooling, I saw no education on Indigenous culture. We had to learn about it ourselves from experiences and from Indigenous friends whom I grew up with.

It was disheartening to see how a lot of the friends I grew up with in the Northern Territory were treated differently when they were trying to get work. One of the main issues I do not think state or federal governments have understood is the need to focus on ensuring that when they get a job, they are supported the whole way

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

through it. One of the great initiatives in Western Australia came about during the boom times at the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson. Eighty-three Indigenous men and women were employed, which was 20 per cent of the workforce. Support programs were put in place to ensure they were supported throughout. At the time, it was a high-wage industry. It was disheartening at the start to hear from people involved that an employer commented that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be put on trainee wages because they would not be used to the high wages and that could have a negative effect. It is shameful to think that the first step of the proposal was to reduce their wages rather than put in place counselling and financial counselling services. Those services should be delivered by elders within their culture and government should assist that. That their wages should be reduced should not be the first thing an employer says. That is an insult when we are attempting to get them into the workforce. As I said, the AMC was very successful in employing Indigenous workers, who made up 20 per cent of its workforce.

As a seafarer with seven years at sea, I ran into one Indigenous seafarer in seven years. That too is a real shame. That industry was vibrant when I was working in it but there did not seem to be programs aimed at getting Indigenous seafarers to sea. Through negotiations, the Kimberley Ports Authority took on board the need to increase Indigenous employment. People in the workplace at the port authority took a stand to make sure conditions were in their enterprise agreement to increase Indigenous employment because a lot of Indigenous people were out of work. This is the sort of key industry that should be driving Indigenous employment, supported by government and the local community. When I was working in the Pilbara region as a union official, there were fewer Indigenous wharfies than I can count on my hand. Three years ago there were well over 250 stevedores working between Port Hedland and Exmouth. In that time, I ran into fewer than five Indigenous employees. It was hard trying to get engagement. Hon Jacqui Boydell mentioned the Clontarf Foundation. It struck me that Clontarf offers great programs that help people to become disciplined and organised, but what happens after that? Industries in the Pilbara are major industries. Why are we not harnessing opportunities for people ready to take the next step into the workforce? We should be grabbing them and companies should be saying, “Okay, if you’ve missed out on the sporting side, we can offer apprenticeships and training.” We should get them in the early stages, before they get into job lines and find themselves struggling. We need to capitalise on programs that are doing well and then move them onto other programs. It seems that once a program plays out, there is no transition to the next step. That seems to me to be where we are failing the most.

I want to also mention East Kalgoorlie Primary School, which I have had the pleasure of visiting twice in the last month. The teaching there, the way the programs are being run and the respect at that school is phenomenal. Judith King, the principal, and Bernadette Delaney, the deputy principal, are doing a phenomenal job. They work tirelessly on ensuring that the kids’ needs are met, and they go above and beyond. They pick up kids in the morning and take them to sports training and to games. They try hard to adapt to the challenges the kids have when they come to school. Hon Robin Chapple referred to Indigenous kids with ear infections. They are disadvantaged in a lot of ways when they get to school. East Kalgoorlie Primary School goes that step further and homes in on those disadvantages and ensures that the kids feel as though they are part of their fellow student groups. I am really happy to say that they drive many things such as healthy eating. I think sport is another really important part of it. These teachers are not being recognised. A lot of the work they do is volunteer work and they do it after hours, day in and day out. They are not after someone saying that they are doing a great job; they are after change and they want to see change.

I am looking forward to getting out in my region. I feel that the Mining and Pastoral Region faces many issues, particularly in the Indigenous sector. I am looking forward to seeing what programs are in place and how we can improve on them. I thank the honourable member for moving this motion.

HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan) [11.19 am]: I want to congratulate my colleague Hon Colin Tincknell for raising this issue and, particularly, Pauline Hanson’s One Nation for raising this issue. I hope that we three One Nation members are slowly changing perceptions about who we are and what the WA One Nation Party stands for.

I want to briefly raise a few issues and discuss Aboriginal incarceration in not only Western Australia but also the whole country. As everyone is doubtlessly aware, there is an overwhelming disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in custody, and this should be of significant concern to members in this house. The disparity in incarceration rates really comes down overwhelmingly to two things: violence and reoffending. More than 50 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners are imprisoned for violent offences—that means assault, murder, sexual assault and robbery. According to recent data I have been examining, Aboriginal people make up just three per cent of the population but they make up 43 per cent of those imprisoned for assaults, and 18 per cent of those are imprisoned for murder and sexual assault.

Aboriginal people are also disproportionately victims of murder and assault offences. Family violence has a huge part to play in these offences. From personal first-hand experience, I can relate to the house that 99 per cent of

Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Charles Smith

police work in the bush is dealing with Aboriginal domestic violence. More often than not, both parties will be highly intoxicated, with a woman being the victim of an assault of some nature. However, women frequently do not wish to make a complaint to the police or provide a statement. This is just another issue we have in the bush with bringing Aboriginal men to account for domestic violence issues.

Recent data from the Australian Institute of Criminology's national homicide monitoring program between 1989 and 2012 found that 67 per cent of the Aboriginal murders were classified as domestic violence murders, compared with 26 per cent of non-Aboriginal homicides. The report also found that 70 per cent of Aboriginal murders involved alcohol, compared with only 22 per cent for non-Aboriginal murders, despite drinking rates among Aboriginal Australians being overall no greater than those for non-Aboriginal people; in fact, a higher proportion of Aboriginal people are non-drinkers compared with non-Aboriginal people. The report also found those who do drink are more likely to drink harmful amounts. Family and community violence thrives in socioeconomic disadvantage and its bedfellows—social dysfunction, alcohol abuse, unemployment and sit-down money.

Another major factor in disproportionate Aboriginal imprisonment rates is reoffending. Of the 2015 prison population, 77 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners had a prior sentence, compared with 50 per cent for non-Aboriginal prisoners. Believe it or not, members, there are known factors to indicate whether reoffending is likely. One important factor is having accommodation available to offenders post-release; one would think that would be pretty simple to solve. The report shows that reoffending is likely if accommodation is not secured within 48 hours of release. Another important factor is getting drug, alcohol and mental health issues under control, and the offender not reconnecting with the same networks of associates post-release. Changing one's network can be very, very difficult if one comes from a small community or close kinship group, but that issue has to be addressed.

Comprehensive and targeted rehabilitation is the only way to tackle reoffending. It needs to start as soon as a person walks into the gates of detention. If rehabilitation programs start only after conviction, some offenders may never receive assistance. In my experience, many offenders never receive any assistance or access to programs, even in detention. Rehabilitation should include helping secure a job. The best programs work with willing employers, and enable the employer and the offender to get to know each other before release. There are some great programs out there, some of which Hon Colin Tincknell has already referred to.

Finally, governments and commentators must move past the narrative that Aboriginal offenders are victims of racism, colonisation and intergenerational trauma, and that they deserve pity rather than the consequences of their actions. Mr Warren Mundine AC states that it does not help those offenders and it certainly does not produce good policy. We will never get anywhere unless we respect Aboriginal people, recognise their difference, and let them take control of their lives. Targets for closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal incarceration rates miss the point entirely. Incarceration rates are a symptom of the more fundamental problems that I alluded to earlier. I strongly urge the government to focus on these issues, and imprisonment rates will start to drop.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.