

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE**

**REVIEW OF WA'S CURRENT AND FUTURE HOSPITAL AND  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

**INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF  
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES FOR ALCOHOL AND  
ILLICIT DRUG PROBLEMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN  
AT KATANNING  
MONDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**SESSION FOUR**

**Members**

**Dr J.M. Woollard (Chairman)  
Ms L.L. Baker (Deputy Chairman)  
Mr P.B. Watson  
Mr I.C. Blayney  
Mr P. Abetz**

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**Hearing commenced at 4.29 pm**

**HEFFERNAN, MS CLAIRE JOSEPHINE**

**Manager, Community and Youth Justice, Department of Corrective Services,  
examined:**

**CROFTS, MR GREGORY COLIN**

**Police Officer, WA Police,  
Katanning,  
examined:**

**BECK, MR CARL**

**Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Manager of Community Services, Shire of Katanning,  
examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I thank you for your interest and your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiries into the review of Western Australia's current and future hospital and community healthcare services and the adequacy and appropriateness of prevention and treatment services for alcohol and illicit drug problems in Western Australia. You have been provided with a copy of the committee's specific terms of reference for both inquiries.

The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly and this hearing is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house. Even though the committee is not asking you to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. As this is a public hearing, Hansard staff are making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any document or documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record. Before we proceed to the questions we have for you today, I need to ask you a series of questions.

Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes, we do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We are very pleased to have you here with us today. As you know, we are visiting different areas of Western Australia. The members of the committee here today are both metropolitan members. We are gradually getting a feel for what happens in the regions, but we are still on a steep learning curve. We very much appreciate you coming here today so that you can identify for us what you see as priorities now and for the future because of needs or gaps in services. We hope you will not mind if we interject during your evidence to the committee, because often what is self-explanatory to you will not be to us. Do not worry about going back to the

building blocks to explain to us the services provided here. If we have a level of understanding, hopefully we can make recommendations to Parliament, and if the government accepts those recommendations, there will be an improvement to some of the services here. Claire, I will ask you to go first.

**Ms Heffernan:** I have a copy of my notes, which I will provide.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We are happy for Carl and Greg to, as Claire is speaking, interject, as we will do. It will save us going back over a particular area. If Carl or Greg want to add something to a particular comment, that will be fine.

**Mr Crofts:** Certainly, thank you.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is very informal.

**Ms Heffernan:** I will give an overview of the region and I will explain a bit about community and youth, plus the services, which will help put it in context for Katanning.

Basically, I have 37 staff members in operational and support roles across the region with Albany community youth justice services being the main centre. Katanning and Narrogin are our satellite centres. Currently, we are undergoing a statewide realignment, which involves the separation of juvenile justice and community corrections into different categories. That is happening in the metropolitan area as we speak.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Juvenile justice will cover children under the age of 18. What was the other one?

**Ms Heffernan:** Community corrections, which is the adult services. We have a new title. We will no longer be juvenile justice; we will become youth justice. Community corrections will be separated into different categories. We have been amalgamated for about 10 years now and it has now been recognised that the services need to be split but still come under the same directorate.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Will you look after juvenile justice, which will cover those people up to 18 years of age?

**Ms Heffernan:** Most likely, if I go into that manager's role. There will be another manager added to the region.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Will the manager for community services look after people aged from 18 to 99?

**Ms Heffernan:** For 17-plus. I will go into the differences in a minute. For another 18 months we will remain co-located, along with the Bunbury region and a couple of other regions. It is just that the process will take a little while to complete.

The great southern region of community and juvenile justice has an approximate area of 84 700 square kilometres and includes the area from Albany to Boddington, east to Bremer Bay and west to Walpole. The region mirrors the Western Australia Police boundaries. We run with the same boundaries. There are about 150 000 people in that area. We cover shires such as Boddington, Brookton, Broomehill, Corrigin, Cranbrook and Cuballing, and that is outlined in my briefing notes.

We have three assigned prisons: Albany Regional Prison; Pardelup prison, which is about to be reopened and there will be 170 beds out there very shortly —

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Which prison is that?

**Ms Heffernan:** Pardelup, which is located near Mt Barker. There is also the Walpole work camp.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are those prisons for males or females or mixed?

**Ms Heffernan:** Male, although we have one bed for women at Albany Regional Prison, which is used for short-term remands, and that is totally separate from the male unit.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So where do the women go?

**Ms Heffernan:** The women are remanded to the metropolitan area to Bandyup or Baronia.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that not difficult for families?

**Ms Heffernan:** It is very difficult and for juveniles it is the same. They are actually transported to Rangeview and Banksia.

We service a number of courts in the region. In Albany we have the Children's Court and the Magistrate's Court. They are usually held at least weekly, and sometimes every day depending on the number of arrests. District Court sittings last for three weeks every second month and Supreme Court sittings last at least one week every second month, alternate to the District Court sittings. In Katanning we have the Children's Court and the Magistrate's Court and the magistrate is in Katanning for at least two days per month. JPs service the court otherwise; similarly in Narrogin. We also have Mt Barker Children's Court one day a month and Gnowangerup Children's Court one day a month. We have only one specialist unit in the region and that is our senior counselling psychologist. She is one FTE and is based in Albany, although she does service Katanning and Narrogin when there is a need.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Your region is also the police region and you said that the population for the police region was 150 000 people. Out of that number, how many children, or minors, would you be caring for at any one time?

**Ms Heffernan:** The current statistics for youth justice indicate that we have 10 statutory cases in Narrogin and 10 diversionary; in Albany we have 24 statutory and 32 diversionary; and in Katanning we have six statutory and 10 diversionary. What I mean by "statutory" are the young people on court orders who we supervise or are writing court reports for.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are those people still living at home? I know we have some people on court orders in Perth who cannot live at home and the Department of Corrective Services or Department for Child Protection—I am not quite sure which—have to house.

**Ms Heffernan:** It is the Department for Child Protection. These young people are actually cared for in the community rather than in hostels. We have only one hostel in the region—that is, Young House in Albany. It caters for 14 to 22-year-olds. It is a non-government agency, which is partially funded through the Department for Child Protection. We have no Department for Child Protection facilities, apart from a group home in Albany, which is virtually constantly full with really young children, including babies, who have been taken into care.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When you say "cared for in the community", do you mean cared for in the community by family or foster families?

**Ms Heffernan:** Family or responsible adults. Quite often young people will reside with other families who take up the responsible adult role. I know from speaking with Child Protection that it is very difficult to get foster carers in the region. They really struggle to find appropriate people to foster children. The majority of the young people we deal with are living with family, extended family or other responsible adults who care for them in the community.

Basically, we are running pretty much on 50 per cent diversion at the moment; that is, young people who are dealt with under the juvenile justice team process.

[4.40 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** What do you mean by 50 per cent diversion?

**Ms Heffernan:** A diversion program is when an offender goes before the juvenile justice team, which is a process whereby the young person meets with the victim of the offence. A police officer, a juvenile justice team coordinator and the young person's responsible adult or parent attends as well. They mediate the outcome and have a youth support plan. Quite often they have to do various things to satisfy that offence. In terms of illicit drug use, amphetamine and cannabis would be the two major ones that the young people are actually dealing with.

**The CHAIRMAN:** More so than alcohol then?

**Ms Heffernan:** Alcohol is the other major one.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** That is not illicit. She said illicit drug use.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I missed that word, sorry.

**Ms Heffernan:** They are the three substances that really affect the offending behaviour that our staff deal with.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What are the ages of your young offenders?

**Ms Heffernan:** Between 10 and 18. Ten is the age that young people —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Before 10 there cannot be a conviction.

**Ms Heffernan:** No; they are not held criminally responsible. But even when you look at 10 to 14-year-olds, a lot of those issues are primarily welfare based, and we view them as welfare issues rather than offending issues as such. Quite often those young people go through our diversion programs and then go on orders unless they have committed really serious offences. The rate of youth who are subject to statutory orders in the Albany area and who are living in environments where alcohol or illicit drug use is condoned is estimated at 90 per cent. Ninety per cent of those who are being supervised on orders in Albany would be considered to be in an environment where alcohol and illicit drug use is condoned or they actually use the alcohol and illicit drugs.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** So it goes from one generation to the next.

**Ms Heffernan:** It is condoned in the family. It is accepted and young people are exposed at a very young age to the use of substances. In diversionary clients we estimate the rate to be around 10 per cent, but in those types of clients who first come to us, families are very reluctant sometimes to admit there is a problem in that area. We estimate the rate is around 10 per cent. We would say that 100 per cent of the young people we deal with in Katanning and Narrogin who come before the courts and are on statutory orders would be using alcohol and illicit drugs or living in environments where alcohol and illicit substance usage is condoned.

**Mr Crofts:** I certainly need to support that right now, yes. That is what the police files say.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Claire, if you know that they are in that type of environment, is it because you cannot find care for them outside that you leave them there? Why do you leave them there if you know? You might sit them down at a table with people but if they are going to go back into an environment where taking drugs and alcohol leads to abusive behaviour or whatever, why do you leave them there?

**Ms Heffernan:** It is one of the difficulties we have. We are not the agency that removes young people. We highlight these issues to the Department for Child Protection.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How do you highlight them to the Department for Child Protection?

**Ms Heffernan:** We do a referral if we feel a young person is at risk.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is your referral a form on which you tick a box that indicates that a child would be best cared for away from the home?

**Ms Heffernan:** We do an individual referral, so we write a case history and put that information in and then it is investigated by that department.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Your referrals would state —

**Ms Heffernan:** That there is illicit drug usage in the home.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Would it also state that you believe the child would be best cared for away from the place?

**Ms Heffernan:** It would depend on the circumstances.

**The CHAIRMAN:** If I wanted to follow up on that, what would I ask for? What are those referral forms called? If the Department for Child Protection is not taking those children away, I would be asking in Parliament how many whatever forms they are called have been submitted for children under the age of 17 for the past 12 months.

**Ms Heffernan:** The referrals do not have a title, but the police referrals would have a title.

**Mr Crofts:** We deal with it in two ways. If it is a domestic violence incident, we follow very strict protocols. We fill out an incident report, which automatically goes to our family violence intervention officer in Albany. They refer it to a central point in Perth and they contact DCP immediately. That is one way. There is a protocol and a structure in place for that. The control mechanisms are pretty tight.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There might be a control mechanism for it going up there, but it is obviously staying there. How do we get the figures for what has gone up there so that we can then ask DCP, "Why are you not doing more for these children?"

**Mr Crofts:** We would certainly have the records of the number of referrals from this district and every policing district throughout the state. They are accessible.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I was asking Claire before whether a recommendation is made to remove that child from that family unit because there is a known history of alcohol and illicit drug use and because Claire's department does not feel that is a good environment and that the child will actually improve his behaviour if he stays in that unit. We need to find where that information is, who is getting that information and possibly sitting on it.

**Ms Heffernan:** That would be referrals to DCP. Youth justice clients have usually been to several other agencies before they hit the criminal justice system, so they have actually been highlighted through Education, Health or DCP. Many of the young people who are on statutory orders are already clients of the Department for Child Protection. My understanding from speaking with the district director of the Department for Child Protection is that they are very understaffed. In terms of its resources, the department has to look at the very high-end type cases. We have had a number of serious abuse cases of very, very young children and babies and much of the Department for Child Protection's resources are used in those extreme cases. The teenage people we deal with through youth justice do not have the critical needs that some of these other clients do and they have to choose where they put their resources. They are severely underfunded. It is not for lack of wanting to assist these families where there is extreme drug use; it is a funding issue.

[4.50 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** The story that we heard from the Child and Adolescent Health Service is that it provides services according to the budget that it is given. It does not provide services according to the need that it knows there is for children's health, particularly in the early years. With the budget it has, it can do this but it cannot do all these things.

**Mr Beck:** I obviously have a reasonable working relationship with the DCP office here. Just from talking over coffee and things like that, we know there is a problem but we have to prove it is so far down the line. If we were to take one child from a family and there was even a remote possibility that that child should not have been taken, the ramifications are so massive and we have to cover our back so much before we can do it. If there is a problem, we need to remove that child. We can do 20, 30 or 40 but a large amount of resources are needed to take one. Because there are such limited resources, we have to pick which one is most in need.

**Ms Heffernan:** It is also a matter of where we put them if we do take them. There are no hostels, certainly not in Katanning. There are very few foster placements. The metropolitan hostels are full. It is a very, very difficult situation for DCP staff. We highlight the issues and then we try to work with the families in that environment.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Once they get into the justice system with drugs and alcohol and all that, you have missed the boat in terms of trying to take them out of that environment and giving them a better start because they are already that far down the track. That really should have happened five, six or seven years earlier.

**Mr Beck:** It would obviously have been much better if it was done five or six years ago. There will always be some hardcore cases that we will never be able to solve. We would be able to save a large percentage of the ones that I come across with a good bit of guidance and a few good role models in their lives.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Different things have been done in Perth for the young people who cause problems, like curfews to try to get children off the streets. Are there measures that you think could be taken? Carl has just suggested that the children undertake more activities to try to keep them busy. What do you think is the answer, particularly for young children, because they are turning to alcohol and drugs? How can we stop them and if they have turned to alcohol and drugs, how do we get them off the drugs? What do we do?

**Mr Crofts:** In one sense there is a very easy solution. We need somebody to pick the kids up from their homes. I am talking about the young kids who want to play Auskick. If somebody was in a position to pick them up, pay \$50 for their Auskick fees and take them to the footy every Saturday, the kids would love it. I have coached Auskick personally. I see the little kids hanging around. I talk to them and ask them why they do not have their footy boots on. They say their mum missed the registration time. At the age of five and six they are trying to make excuses for their parents as to why they cannot be there. We engage them and they are allowed to play. The Shire of Katanning has a wide range of activities for all different age groups and all different interests. The problem is getting the kids there.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Is that primarily Indigenous children?

**Mr Crofts:** Not so much in Katanning. It is a fairly low socioeconomic area. The majority of the people that the police deal with in law enforcement are Indigenous. However, we need to intervene early in their lives and get them engaged in the community. They are well accepted in the community; they just do not seem to be able to get to places. Carl will support me. They hate paying the \$3.50 entrance fee, yet they will have a \$50 note to spend at the shire's canteen. A lot of people think there is a barrier in charging people entrance fees to the Katanning recreation centre. If we had someone to pick the kids up and take them there, they would certainly have a different life.

**Mr Beck:** I strongly agree. Every time we go to a meeting, people will throw up the \$2 or \$3 as a barrier for kids coming to activities. As Greg said, on Friday night it costs \$3 to get in to rollerblading. The kids will walk around and take a \$50 note out of their purse and spend the whole \$50. Rollerblading runs from six o'clock until 8.30 and some of these kids will spend \$50 at the kiosk in that amount of time. I do not know how they can drink so many 600 millilitre cans of Coke and buckets of chips but they manage to do it. Wherever you are in Katanning, you are only two to three kilometres away from whatever activity is going on, even if you live on the furthest corner of Katanning. It is fine for my kids. If they want to go somewhere, I tell them to get on their bike and go. That is all the encouragement they need. If parents are saying that they cannot drive the child, it is too far to go and they cannot go, the kid says, "It's too far to go. Mum can't take me; I can't go." If mum or dad would give them that little bit of encouragement and say they will take them or say, "It's only a couple of kilometres, get on your bike or walk or grab some mates or ring someone and get a lift", the problem would be solved. We have to have that parental involvement. Being the father of a 14-year-old son, he would miss hockey at 12 o'clock every Saturday morning if I did not get him out of bed at 10 o'clock, give him a bit of a nudge and say, "Remember, you got hockey on. There's your breakfast. Go." He will get there. If no-one does that, or if I am still hung-over from the night before and I do not get out of bed until his game is over, he will not get there. There has to be that parental involvement to give the kids a little bit of support and encouragement to get to that

first step. Once they have a habit of going to things and being involved and being accepted, it is fairly easy. If they turn up at the game halfway through and the coach gives them a bit of a razz, when they are only a little late the next week, they will not go.

**Ms Heffernan:** That is one thing that I have put in my summary. Some of our clients are going through the diversion process, which involves increased support and information for youth and the parents through the education system and we have some early intervention programs, which involve parental support and multisystemic therapies and parents' issues are looked at. If mum and dad do have a drinking problem and a mental health problem, somebody is actually working with the parents to solve the problem.

**The CHAIRMAN:** With the family unit, however that family unit is structured, whether it is mum and dad or mum or dad or mums.

**Mr Beck:** That is why the Building Stronger Families program is really good because it does take that whole-of-family approach. Rather than just working with individuals, it looks at the whole family.

**Ms Heffernan:** With our restructure, some of those services that support parents will be introduced to the region. The pilot programs in Kalgoorlie and Geraldton have been very successful. The work that has been done with some of the long-term families, particularly the parents, has been very, very good.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Peter and I and some of the other members of the committee have just come back from the ARACY conference, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. Session after session came back to trying to support the family unit and working with that family unit to provide some encouragement. It could not be done outside; it had to try to come from within. I do not know how it is going to come from within with some of the families that you have just spoken about.

**Ms Heffernan:** I have seen it work myself. We have youth support officers, who are mentors. We have employed them to work with the mothers. The mothers have changed their behaviour and dealt with a lot of issues in their lives. That has had a positive flow-on effect for the young people.

[5.00 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** Also supporting the mother so that the mother is better able to care for the child.

**Ms Heffernan:** That is right. That is where I have seen over the years a lot of the issues are. Young people are often parenting their parents. Those types of programs are really something that will help. Another thing was mentors who have a therapeutic background, so we actually have a few drug counsellors mentoring, going out and taking them down to the football. But actually having that skill in the drug counselling as well would be something that would be really helpful.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Where do you tap into funding for these programs to help?

**Mr Beck:** Youth programs; that is probably my portfolio. The Office of Crime Prevention is absolutely awesome. They are providing us with massive amounts of funding for things like camps and getting rollerblading up and going. The Foundation for Young Australians is very good. Lotterywest is very supporting, probably more in the way of equipment and stuff like that that we need to get programs up and going. The criminal confiscation act grants have funded our youth development officer, and that has been extremely successful. We have had grants from all over the place, and even things like rotary and APEX and Lions regularly contribute to our youth programs. It is almost a full-time job for someone to gain the funding and acquit the funding. It is one of those catch 22 things: once you have got the funding for the person, the rest of the funding will come, but you cannot get the funding for the person —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Unless you have got a dedicated research officer to write up the program.

**Mr Beck:** Unless you have got someone chasing it. You have also got to be able to say, “If you give me the money for this, we are going to be able to run all these programs.” But you cannot guarantee you can run those programs until you get the funding, and once you get your officer on deck it takes three to four months for the rest of your funding to come through and those kinds of things. Also, a lot of programs, once we have run them for three to six months, become pretty much self-funding. Rollerblading is a classic. It took us six months of running it with five or 10 kids turning up until they all got the hang of it, and that it was on, that it was a regular thing and that it was consistent, and then they all started showing up. Unfortunately, when I cancelled it the other night we had 96 kids there. It just got a little bit too big and too successful, but that is the way it goes. There is lots of funding there for youth and there are massive amounts of funding there for Indigenous youth. Whenever I have an Indigenous adult come forward with an idea, it is extremely easy to get the money to implement those ideas. The problem is getting the Indigenous adult involvement and things like that, so you can access the thing and also make sure that you are going to get the kids there once you have done it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Greg, I think you agree with Claire on alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines. The cannabis act was meant to have had educational sessions, which no-one took up. That will be coming back, I think, later this year. The recommendations from the review that looked at that act said to decrease the legal amount of cannabis possession from 30 milligrams to 15 milligrams. Whether it is 15 milligrams or 10 milligrams, I do not know; I know that the Liberal Party went to the election I think on 10 milligrams rather than 15 milligrams. I know the review said 15 milligrams, and it said that the educational sessions should be compulsory for all young offenders. In relation to alcohol and drug use I have a couple of questions for you. If you are into behaviour change, you know that people are not going to change their behaviour unless you get them at the right point in time. Some of those sessions will not necessarily be useful if a child, a young adult or an adult is not ready to change their behaviour. What do you think is the way to go for those young offenders who are caught with alcohol and illicit drugs? What about the younger adults, the 18 to 24-year-olds, when it is a first time? You said that you have three prisons here. The current Attorney General has been talking about having a lower level for younger people, but a lot of people are concerned in the community that as soon as someone has been in prison, even just one visit to prison, when they come out they are a much more hardened criminal than when they went into prison. What do you think for those younger people and those older ones? You do not have to solve all the problems, just some.

**Mr Crofts:** It is very interesting. I suppose, if I could quickly talk about this subdistrict here, it is ironic how drug offences in Katanning, commencing the financial year, are huge; we are up 250 per cent. We are actively targeting drugs at the moment, and really all we are finding is cannabis. We have had some seizures of ecstasy tablets, which would be the first time in years, I would say, that have been found in Katanning, and LSD tablets here as well.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We heard that is back on the market.

**Mr Crofts:** Yes. From that and the amount of work we are doing in the drug culture here, we are told that their drugs are drying up and a lot of people are going to ground. There is not much in town. But recently up went the abuse of alcohol. For research, there might be a thesis in that. In most of the tasks that we are attending certainly alcohol is a prime motivator for any offences that are being committed. I have to say it anecdotally, but 80 to 95 per cent of every task we attend is related to alcohol. Why I say “anecdotally” is because there are that many forms for police officers to fill out, they cannot remember what to do. They amount of time that we have got to spend on tasks is critical, so sometimes things get missed. Yes, there is a box that we can tick for attending to alcohol-related offences, but logistically it is very difficult to achieve. In saying that, most of the cannabis we are finding in town is certainly the 25 to 40-year age group. It is rare that we find amphetamines in any other group—very rare for a number of years. There is a lot of talk around town that there are a lot of speed problems and such, but we are not finding it in the street, we are

not finding it in the public domain per se. We are not finding the vision of Northbridge, where it takes 10 police officers just to hold down someone who is crazed. We do not have that in Katanning.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You do not need Tasers.

[5.10 pm]

**Mr Crofts:** Yes, Tasers. Last year we went through a stage at one particular hotel where they were not serving alcohol responsibly. The licensee has changed the manner of service and we have not used a Taser for a long time. It is rare for us to use a Taser. The amount of violence in the community is very low and it is isolated. If you are going to get punched, it will be by someone you know and because of an argument that you are having. There are very few random acts of violence in Katanning.

The drug problem: the 25 to 40-year-old age group who have a drug problem have had it all their lives. They are quite comfortable with it. They tend to be able to manage it in their lifestyle and it does not particularly affect other people—in their view. However, I do not think that they understand the health consequences, but that awareness is growing given the media advertising lately and the government driving home the effects of cannabis in particular. People are certainly linking psychosis and mental health issues to cannabis use. I see and hear from the people I talk to that they are starting to turn away from cannabis. We hear about young kids who smoke dope given to them by their parents or by an adult responsible for their care. However, we are not finding drugs on kids per se without a search warrant. We do quality vehicle stops in which we search cars and people who we suspect may be holding cannabis. We get phone calls telling us that Johnny Blow has just been kicked out of school because he is high on dope. We follow up that call and there is nothing to suggest that that is true. The children living in these same environments are, I dare say, quite comfortable with it. They have grown up with it. They see their parents or their uncles smoking it and do not seem to be too concerned about it. Our intelligence gathering in Katanning is quite good. People ring us up to tell us that they have heard about someone doing drugs, but there is often no other information to support it. As far as policing goes, the drug scene does not appear to be as significant as the local people suggest, but alcohol certainly has a greater effect on our work. Again, as I said earlier, there are parents and guardians who do not object to their kids as young as 12 and 13 drinking alcohol. The majority of burglaries in Katanning are of licensed premises and generally involve kids stealing alcohol; they may even break into a house to just steal alcohol. The numbers are not high, but certain recidivist offenders commit burglaries just for alcohol. These are the same kids that we were speaking about before—the kids who do not use the shire facilities or sporting programs. When these kids are under judicial court restrictions, we struggle at times to find a responsible adult to care for them and they seem to flit from one house to another. Wherever they go it is the same environment—drugs and alcohol. We need to somehow break that environmental link. A lot of the recidivist offenders that we meet are not from Katanning. They are simply here because they are not turned away by the families.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you saying they are in Katanning because they are not turned away?

**Mr Crofts:** Yes. Most of these people are Indigenous. They tell me their culture is that if somebody rocks up needing a house, they will give them a roof over their head. Because they are not violent and there seem to be no house rules, the children are very happy living there. Unfortunately, they are left to make their own decisions and a lot of the time they are left on their own—sometimes for weeks at a time. They are often left alone on weekends by the people responsible for their care; the people who have signed a court assurance just leave them on their own, and some of these kids are very young. The modern mentality takes over and they are introduced to alcohol and drugs from a very early age and are used to it; they freely speak about it. There are no court-imposed consequences to persuade them that this behaviour is not acceptable from society's point of view.

There are certainly no consequences in their family unit or immediate circle of friends to suggest this behaviour is unacceptable. For these kids it is Monday or Tuesday and nothing else changes.

**Ms Heffernan:** That is about three per cent of the young people that we deal with. Eighty per cent of the young people who come before juvenile justice teams—which is the diversionary program—we see only once. Eighty per cent of the remaining 20 per cent who return, we see only two or three times. We are looking at a very, very small percentage and a very small percentage of young people in the community, but this small percentage use up a lot of resources across all government departments and create a lot of problems in the community.

**Mr Crofts:** There would be about 20 recidivist problem children and —

**Ms Heffernan:** In Katanning.

**Mr Crofts:** Yes; and that is about it. The rest are fine. The diversions work well. They get cautions and they work well. But the hardcore group of kids who live in hardcore houses are difficult to get through to. You speak to them individually and they are the greatest; they are lovely kids. They know what is right and what is wrong. They do their best, but sometimes they say, “If I don’t do this, mum says she will not give me some dope.” It is certainly a family unit situation. Where we can get through to them, we are working with some families who are —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are they Indigenous and non-Indigenous families?

**Mr Crofts:** They are mainly Indigenous families.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Right. Are their elders in the area that you can work with?

**Mr Crofts:** Now we are going to talk about —

**Mr Beck:** If there are, I would like to know who they are.

**Mr Crofts:** From my research, there are no traditional ties for any Indigenous family in Katanning. They say, “We have been here the longest. This is our town. We have been here longer than that family.” A lot of the time there seems to be a fifty-fifty split in Katanning. An Indigenous family is currently employed in the health services and in some of the Aboriginal corporation services in the town. As long as they are running those services, at least 50 per cent of the Indigenous community is disengaged and refuses to mediate or to deal with —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that because the other family is involved in that service?

**Mr Crofts:** Yes. As soon as these family members or their associates meet, it is on! There is a lot of antisocial behaviour between a small group of people. We have tried mediation through a number of services, including the Southern Aboriginal Corporation that you may be familiar with. The Katanning Aboriginal Corporation sits under that. The Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Attorney General’s office and the resolution or Aboriginal dispute —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Dispute resolution service.

**Mr Crofts:** Yes, it has a huge name and I apologise for not getting it right. Unless people agree to mediate, those services do not have the scope to facilitate further assistance. They lack so much scope that Carl and I and other members of the committee have had enough of the services that sit outside Katanning. We are starting, dare I say, the Katanning Way Forward group or association. It is in its infancy.

**Mr Beck:** We are signing a memorandum of understanding primarily between four agencies to get it started.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Between what agencies?

**Mr Beck:** The four agencies include the police, the high school, DCP and the shire. The MOU is an attempt to formalise our working relationship and to give us the ability to try to engage with these other agencies that sit outside Katanning.

**Mr Crofts:** The idea is that we live here, we know the kids who go off the rails and we know the families with drug and alcohol problems and other social issues. On top of that, we know that a lot of services will put their hand up and that if I hold a domestic violence meeting in Katanning, I will have a room full of 30 people. If I ask them what they have to offer Katanning, they will tell me that anybody can go to Albany where most of the services generally are—or to Perth. They will tell me that we have done this or that or something else wrong. But their services do not work. They have nothing tangible to offer Katanning. We are in the process of developing a network of community leaders. A leader could be John who runs the deli or mum who has some spare time and is well regarded in the community. It could be an ex-schoolteacher. We know those people exist in Katanning. They are the people that the Katanning Way Forward group will call upon to pick up the kids to take them to the footy. They are probably driving past their house anyway. From the very selfish point of view of problem solving for Katanning, a group is getting together to try to work out who is available to help, what they can do to help and will then just do it. All these GOs and NGOs do not have anything tangible to resolve our needs in Katanning. It will be interesting to see how this goes. Even in early discussions, the magistrate is very keen to be involved with the group and what it is going to do. She supports the need for those people responsible for providing care to meet with this group to know what the community expects of their behaviour. We want the kids to know that we are here to help them re-engage with instead of being ostracised from the community because they did this or they did that. The community does not want that. The purpose of this group is to re-engage the kids in the community. To some extent, we are not seeing enough being done to immediately help the kids when they need help. As simply another community member and not always as Senior Sergeant Greg Croft—just Greg Croft, because I live here—I know the kid up there needs some help, so we should get together to help the kid. I am sure that that will have some positive effects on some individuals. That is one reason community members who live amongst all the social issues in Katanning feel that they have to go down this path—we are doing it for the youth. For the older people, I think we need to continue a strong push to educate them through the media and, dare I say it—I do not know if this is the arena to talk about such ideas—by restricting alcohol access for some individuals. One of the things that has successfully worked, particularly with adults aged 18 and above, is our liaison with the magistrate. If somebody has been picked up for disorderly conduct or any offence, we notify the court officially in the statement of material facts of not only what they did, but also the fact that they were affected by alcohol. Generally in my experience, someone picked up in Perth for disorderly conduct will, for argument's sake, receive a \$50 fine, as will the next person and the next person. Here, it is a little bit different. The magistrate will ask, "Why did you do this?" and the person will respond, "Oh, I was drunk" and "Yes, I have a drinking problem." They will freely admit to the circumstances. Instead of the magistrate dealing with it there and then with a small monetary fine or some other order, she—that is, Magistrate Hamilton—will at times remand them for what ends up to be a significant period of time. Instead of fining them, she will say, "Okay, I will see you next month. During this next month you are not allowed into any licensed premises; you are not allowed to blow over .07 or .05"—whatever level she indicates—"and you must present yourself to a police officer on request for testing of alcohol." That enables us, when we see them in the street, to simply administer the prelim test that we use for drink-driving offences. If they blow over, we have the ability to detain them and present them back to the court. They do not want to go through that. When it started, we had a few people held in custody and put back before the magistrate. Of course, it does not take long for word of that to get around. Over the months, these people do not go into licensed premises because they will get caught by us. Within reason we will knock on their door any time of the day or night to test them, and they stay under. We find that those individuals do not reoffend because they are not consuming alcohol. As I said before, they are great people. If you take the alcohol away from certain individuals, they contribute to the community, they treat their partners a lot better and they live a much healthier social life. They freely admit that. As soon as they are off the restriction, they are back onto the alcohol and the problems recur. I think it is worthy to note that in Katanning it is having a

significant impact on the number of times the police have contact with these people when they are not drinking. It has dramatically reduced, as in almost to the point of zero.

[5.25 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** So would that be a community or what kind of a call would that be? What do you call that? It seems to be working.

**Mr Crofts:** It does.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Do you have a name for what the magistrate does—that procedure?

**Mr Crofts:** It is just bail conditions. On top of that there might be a curfew and their bail conditions set by their court. Logistically, it is working okay at the moment because we do not have too many people on that but there are some inherent problems; if half the town were on that we could not knock on all their doors. But we present that to the court and the magistrate will assess it and when they are on these restrictions through bail, the 16 police officers sit back and they can relax and know at least that they are not going to that house for another six months. It is as dramatic as that.

**Ms Heffernan:** But that targets the really high-end, really at-risk adult offenders. About 20 per cent of the adult offenders that we have on the books have dual-diagnosis issues, so they have illicit substance abuse problems, alcohol problems and mental health problems. Five per cent to 10 per cent of those anecdotally would not engage in any treatment services at all. They would not take any of the medication; they would be self-medicating, so extreme bail conditions are really only used for those really high-end people.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Carl, obviously, Greg has claimed one of the things that the Katanning Alcohol Action Program is involved in, but what other things are you involved in to help change the culture towards alcohol? Is it alcohol and drugs or do you mainly focus on alcohol?

**Mr Beck:** It is purely alcohol. We are funded under the federal binge drinking strategy and we have secured two years of funding for a part-time project officer, who is out the back making the mocktails, and all the operational costs that go along with that. Therefore, it is aimed at 12-year-olds to 24-year-olds trying to reduce binge drinking so we are working in the schools with the School Drug Education and Road Aware program. It goes into the schools and does presentations to grade 7 classes and then all the high school classes to try to get more alcohol education happening in the schools.

**The CHAIRMAN:** From grade 7?

**Mr Beck:** From grade 7, so 12-year-olds. We find we actually get a better response from the 12-year-olds, possibly because when you go into a class of 15-year-olds, you always have one or two in there who say, “I had so much to drink on Friday night and I was this and I was that” who want to be the tough guy who —

**The CHAIRMAN:** You still get them before they have backed themselves into a corner with bad behaviour.

**Mr Beck:** With the 12-year-olds you do not tend to get that. It also goes into sporting clubs and things like that when they are having a function and runs some interventions—it has displays, it has the breathalysers so that people can have a go on the breathalyser, explains about standard drinks, explains about eating while you are drinking and not just guzzling down the stuff.

We have trialled the Who’s DES Tonight program—the designated driver program—through all the licensed premises in not only Katanning but also Tambellup, Broomehill, Woodanilling and all that as well. That was relatively successful and we will have another go at that coming up into the Christmas campaign.

There is a range of alcohol-free youth events and that is where it ties in with our youth development officers and that. At the moment in the gallery there is a youth art exhibition, *if u weren’t drinking*,

for which about 60 kids have come up with a piece of artwork. Each piece of artwork shows something that they would like to be doing and that they have more chance of achieving if they do not drink. There are some that say “I’m going to be a world famous soccer player” and some that say “I’m going to be a BMX star”. The piece that looks like it is going to win is actually by a kid who went around Australia and picked up rocks from all over the place and put them in the artwork. His message is that if you do not drink, you have the money to go travelling and all that kind of thing. Therefore, 60 kids have come up with a piece of artwork and they have all said why not drinking is a good thing and that kind of thing.

We have regular youth socials alcohol-free. Blue Light Disco has been very active in Katanning for a number of years but it only attracts primary school aged children—it does not attract any teenagers at all. My children have just got to the age of 13 and 14 and about two years it became suddenly uncool to go to a Blue Light Disco because it is for little kids, so we are trying to fill that market with regular socials and things like that.

[5.30 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** What do you call those socials?

**Mr Beck:** They are what we refer to as a teen activity club. It is just a teen social, a social mixer, or whatever, and what effectively happens is that the kids on the teen activity committee come up with a theme. The last one was a bling ball, so they all got there in their fancy gear and they had a ball. They had a DJ, dancing and mocktails—which is what the girls are preparing for us at the moment—and those kind of things.

We have spoken about interventions at sporting clubs. Anna also spends a fair bit of time trying to get stuff into the media about Rethink Drink and things like that. We have funding in the project for some paid advertising in the local paper, on the radio and things like that, which is again just pushing the Rethink Drink and “whose the des”—who is the designated driver—kind of messages. Anna coordinates people such as Greg and myself to get into the paper whenever we can and have little media releases focusing on anti-drinking messages. We have displays at pretty much any community function that is going on, pushing the standard drink-type message and all those kind of things. Anna has a DVD that runs on an endless loop, putting out some of the TV advertising-type stuff that goes on. She has been running a lot of responsible service of alcohol training courses in conjunction with Scott. Scott is the police officer who comes and runs the training courses. It is Anna’s job to go to the sporting groups, and we are targeting sporting groups that have a large base of junior players, such as football clubs and hockey clubs and things such as that, and trying to give as many of those people as possible responsible service of alcohol training.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What is that responsible drinking course about, Greg?

**Mr Crofts:** It is to stop binge drinking. It is linked to the liquor accord and the government drive on premises not being allowed to sell shooters any more.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Allowed to do what?

**Mr Crofts:** Sell shooters, or allow skulling or drinking competitions.

**Mr Beck:** You are not allowed to have an event whereby \$50 includes your entry and as much as you can drink-type things, because obviously that encourages people to get in there and drink.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What about happy hours? Are they still going?

**Mr Crofts:** They have gone.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Have they?

**Mr Crofts:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that in both regional and metropolitan areas?

**Mr Beck:** Supposedly.

**Mr Crofts:** Generally the liquor accords that we have are local agreements, and most publicans have now come to the conclusion, in my experience, that to have a drunk on the premises is bad for business. It is in their best interests to stop that, because if people become too intoxicated too early, they have to deal with the results.

**Mr Beck:** They drive away the rest of the people.

**Mr Crofts:** Generally, across the board, happy hours are certainly gone.

**Mr Beck:** When a club wants to get a temporary liquor licence for an event, it is also a requirement that they have to have staff there who have gone through the responsible alcohol training. That means that Johnny off the street cannot turn up and run the bar for the footy club and keep pushing as many drinks down people's throats as he can.

Anna is also working to get a local chef to go to the sporting clubs and look at their menus to try to encourage them to realise that they can make money out of the canteen or out of their bar meals, or whatever, so that they do not need to make as much money out of their alcohol sales. A lot of regional sporting clubs see the sale of alcohol as the lifeblood of their club, and when you go to them and say, "Let's run an event and not have alcohol" they say they cannot do that because they need the income to keep their club going. They see alcohol as a major revenue stream for their clubs. Anna is going in there and getting the chef to explain to them that if they make their burger a bit better, then instead of charging \$3 for it they can charge \$5 or \$6 because it is of a better standard. She is also telling the chefs about foods that are appropriate to soak up as much alcohol as possible, and stuff like that.

Anna is also about to implement the Party Safe campaign locally for the Christmas break and those kinds of things. As part of the project, they are doing a pseudo under-age liquor survey. We actually got some youth to come up from Albany—the health department organised it from down there—who were over 18 but looked 16, and we sent them into the local bottle shops to see if they were asked for their ID. We are expecting the results of that fairly soon. There are a lot of different bits and pieces.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When will you have the results from that?

**Mr Beck:** I think in about a month. It was actually contracted out to someone in Perth. There was also a phone survey of some teenagers, asking them if they had ever purchased alcohol and whether they were asked for their ID and all that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When that is published, would you be able to send a copy to the committee, because that would be very useful for our review into alcohol and illicit drugs? We are not sure yet, because alcohol and illicit drugs is such a big area, how we might break it down.

**Mr Beck:** This project is a partnership between the health department and the shire. The health department, as a state government agency, obviously was not eligible for the funds, so we were the applicant, with the idea that we would supply certain things, but that the health department would pretty much run the project, because it had the specialised staff in running education programs, and doing good quality evaluation of programs and that kind of thing. We would run the alcohol-free youth events, using my youth development officer, because that is what we specialise in. Unfortunately, as part of the three per cent health cuts, about two or three key staff from here, including the health promotions officer and the physical activity officer, have had their positions cut, so out of the team of four or five of us that put the grant application together, there is now effectively none of the health department staff.

**The CHAIRMAN:** If they are paid for under a grant, surely —

**Mr Beck:** These were health department staff that were meant to be the ones doing this work. So Anna's position should have been hosted up at the hospital, and she should have been sitting in an

office alongside some highly qualified and highly professional health department staff who could have given her good guidance on how to do a properly constituted research project, with good quality evaluation and things like that. I can run the best youth program this side of the black stump, but when you ask me to run a fully functioning research project with full-on evaluation of health outputs, I do not know how to do that. So that is why the health department was going to host that. But, as I said, the three per cent cuts meant two or three people gone, and unfortunately they were the two or three people that we needed to run this project effectively. So now the shire is hosting it. I am supervising Anna, but without the kind of level of background that I really should have, and I am getting some support from the health department out of Albany, and I am obviously trying to coordinate the project.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Apart from the health department, the Drug and Alcohol Office should be able to give you some assistance.

**Mr Beck:** Yes, but, again, they are not in Katanning. We have got a relatively junior project officer running a project, and she has got all the energy in the world and all the ideas, but it would be really good to have that kind of professional support here, because currently that level of professional support is no longer in Katanning because those positions have been downsized.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am going to give you two minutes each to summarise and flag your concerns. I want to thank you very much. I know that I have certainly learnt a lot today, and I am sure Peter has as well. Would you like to sum up and flag anything that you had meant to bring up but did not get an opportunity to do so?

**Mr Crofts:** Sure. Thank you. Very quickly, we need to target individuals who have a drinking problem and develop some sort of structure where they are restricted from having access to alcohol—not just from licensed premises, but to alcohol full stop. That is particularly because of the impact on their immediate family and the wider community. It is only a small number of people. However, maybe through a more formal structure such as the liquor accord we can formalise that so that all the publicans of all licensed premises are aware that these people are restricted from entering licensed premises, for whatever reason, even if it is through the courts and the judiciary, or perhaps the licensees themselves can identify people who they do not want on their premises. They can identify them collectively with names, addresses and photographs. That would certainly support the managers of licensed premises to be able to readily identify those people who should not be on their premises.

[5.40 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** What do you think of people having to show licensee holders their driver's licence and maybe having a cross in the corner if there were conditions and they were not to buy alcohol?

**Mr Crofts:** I have thought seriously of that actually, but I mean, logistically, you only get your licence maybe every five years, so that it is not as if it is going to be current. And thinking earlier today how this would work is maybe it is a condition of the licensee to have an online database that is accessible with photographs and there is your list of names. However, the problem is then knowing who they are allowed to serve and not, and having the authority to ask for their name and address and particulars. So they might have a photograph of people. In some areas that is okay; in the larger communities, you would not have a clue who is who.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Like in Perth's Ocean Beach Hotel where goodness knows how many thousand youngsters go there of a weekend.

**Mr Crofts:** Of course. So as far as licensed premises go, possibly the only way is to have a separate licence with it, that you actually have a licence to drink. If you cannot produce an authority to drink then you will not get served alcohol and you should not even be on premises per se. If they are simply on premises, they will get drinks through a third party. However, we need to go into the

homes somehow. So what is working well in Katanning is police visiting the homes to check on those people where the courts are saying, "You are not allowed to have a certain amount of alcohol in your system"; and that is working very well. But that is more legislative requirements that would mean if it is not the police officer then I know the commissioner is talking about auxiliary staff that have powers. Possibly it would fit in the scope of that; somebody with the authority and the capabilities of knocking on the door and checking on these people, and then maybe having the authority to detain those people if they breach any of those conditions. So it could be quite complex. I mean for the small amount of people that have difficulty with alcohol, we have got to get everybody else who can use it responsibly to do something; and I have some personal conflict with that. However, I cannot see another way around it in the larger communities. In the smaller communities if we could have databases and photographs, or simply they have got to produce their driver's licence to be served a drink, then they could be matched to a database if each licensed premises has something online, because it will change daily. On top of that I think that the drive to start de-linking alcohol with either sporting success or failure is having —

**The CHAIRMAN:** So banning alcohol at sporting events; is that what you want?

**Mr Crofts:** The link with it. I daresay watch a grand final and the first photos are going to be of the guys drinking champagne and celebrating with beer, which has been done forever. And of course at the local footy, the team that loses a grand final would probably drink more in their bar, because they have a bar now at the footy oval, than the winners per se. So I think an advertising program to de-link sporting successes or failure with alcohol might also help educate people. But I think there is a real need in Katanning and places like Katanning for rehabilitation of people who abuse drugs and alcohol. I know that the hospital here can tell me who goes to hospital, how often they go to hospital and what sorts of drugs they abuse or alcohol they abuse. They put them through a detox. They have got some sensational statistics, and they know who is going to be coming on the next Friday, yet they will detox them and kick them out the door. I think we need to involve the Department of Health with alcohol and drugs, rather than just relying on law enforcement, to try to use that as a tool to fix it, because it is not fixing it. It is a very short-term remedy to control an antisocial situation there now, because we can detain people of their liberty for a short period of time—that is, an arrest. However, for Katanning and speaking to a lot of the people that do abuse drugs and alcohol, they say, "When I need to speak to someone, there's nobody here" or "I can't go into a rehabilitation program because there's nothing here in Katanning." I think that would be a fair comment to make in a lot of subdistricts right throughout the state.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There is no rehabilitation?

**Mr Crofts:** We are not talking enough about health issues. People just ask the points, "What are you doing about the drug and alcohol problem?" We will arrest people every day, if we come across it, but we are arresting the same people all the time. Yet what I cannot access is the WA Country Health Service. There are no support services apart from a detox.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** What size rehab facility would be needed for a community like, say, Katanning—a six-bed, or what sort of size facility?

**Mr Crofts:** I have not had any experience with rehab. I do not know if it works. I mean ideally there would be 50 people that I would love to march up there and put through a two to three-week program. If that took them off their abuse then you would not need a rehab at all. So I am not familiar with the amount of time that people re-enter rehab, so I really could not comment on that.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** It generally takes three months. At Cyrenian House and those places in Perth, it generally takes three months residential to get people to deal with their life-controlling issues. But by the sound of that, a six-people facility would be kept busy for quite a number of years.

**Mr Crofts:** Absolutely. If you were going to introduce it, you would have a spike, and you would like to just throw a lot of resources at it, like the diversion programs. Some will have a huge win

and it may change their life and they will never need to go back again. But, then, I think after we dealt with the initial flux of people into such a system then maybe in Katanning I would like to say a 10 to 20-bed facility as an ongoing program.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Claire?

**Ms Heffernan:** I guess what I wanted to flag was that one of the successful things that is happening in Katanning is the young adolescent parents program, which is run through the community drug service team. We have a lot of clients who attend this program, and they provide support around parenting. They have nurses come in. They look at drug and alcohol issues and domestic violence; and we have found that to be a very positive program. The community drug service team have very limited funding for Katanning. They have a worker that comes up once per week and they go out to Gnowangerup once per week as well. So one of the things I have put in, certainly for adult clients, is some more funding around those types of services to actually allow for full FTEs for services in Katanning, which will attract people to actually live locally. When you are offering people 0.5 FTEs down the lower pay scale, you cannot attract staff. We have been very lucky that we have actually had two staff in Katanning consistently for the past couple of years based here. But we found we had a position vacant here for four years that we were unable to fill, and that was a senior position where people were being paid fairly good money and we could not attract them to the area because there is not the incentives that there are in the Kimberley and the Pilbara for people to come here.

**Mr Beck:** It is pretty hard to live in a small community and work in a small community.

**Ms Heffernan:** It is.

**Mr Beck:** A lot of the health workers and that that live here and then go out for dinner on a Friday night will find that they are sitting next to the person they have been working with. So there are some advantages to the drive in, drive out model.

**Ms Heffernan:** There are. The other thing was counselling services for the partners and families of offenders who have alcohol and drug issues, so that they are actually getting the counselling as well, as we are counselling an offender and they are going home to an environment where their partner is still using.

[5.50 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** Co-dependence, yes.

**Ms Heffernan:** The ability to directly refer to community and mental health services: we have to request that the person attends their GP or attends voluntarily; we cannot actually mandate somebody to go to community mental health and we know that they have issues. I spoke about that percentage, the 10 per cent to 20 per cent, who will not engage.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is that the same for you, Greg, in that if you think someone needs mental health, you have to get them to go via the GP?

**Ms Heffernan:** Police have a standing order.

**Mr Crofts:** We will take them to the hospital for assessment.

**The CHAIRMAN:** But if it is something that you have not taken them to the hospital for, an acute episode, but someone who you know just from behaviours in the community, so it has not reached a crisis situation, can you refer them?

**Mr Crofts:** Only through personal relationships with mental health workers. That is the only way and that is local MOUs, dare I say it. That is the only way that we achieve a solid outcome—it is a win-win that one—but structurally there is nothing in place.

**Ms Heffernan:** That is fine in Katanning, but there are lots of outlying towns where services just are not available around any of these issues—people do not have drivers' licences, they do not have access to transport; they live in a small community so they do not get the access to some of those

services, as well. I spoke about the youth justice thing thoroughly. I think I have covered pretty much everything.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Lovely. Carl, you have one minute, because people are going to get cross with us if we do not finish!

**Mr Beck:** I suppose just a couple of quick things. Obviously, in local government we are really keen to work in partnership with Health and the police and all that kind of thing, but we have very limited resources and we do not see health as our primary role; we see that as the health department's role, so it is reasonably frustrating when we had two or three very good quality people based here in Katanning and due to health department cuts they were lost to us. There is almost an expectation that therefore the shire will pick up that void in the thing, so that is a bit of a concern for us.

I suppose another thing is that Claire was just talking about these people in the smaller communities that surround us who do not have access to service. Again, I am employed by the Shire of Katanning to provide service to the residents of Katanning. My youth program definitely attracts large numbers of youth from outside Katanning—from Woodanilling, Kojonup, Broomehill, Dumbleyung, wherever. My youth program is only sustainable with massive amounts of grant income, and when the funding for my youth officer runs out, it will be Shire of Katanning residents funding that position and, again, providing services to youth from all the surrounding communities that are not contributing anything to that. Therefore, the sustainability of a lot of our community services projects is really affected by the fact that the area that we provide service to and the area that we get our income from are significantly different. We estimate that we are providing service to 10 000 people and we have only 4 500 people in our community; therefore, more than 50 per cent of the people we provide services to are from outside our shire. That is a significant issue.

The other issue is the cuts in state government agencies resulting in less state government staff here. We just do not have the capacity to pick up the extra workload that is almost expected of us when those positions evaporate out of our community.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** I would have thought that those positions would be classified as front line and therefore they should not be cut. I would be interested to take that up but —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes, I thought doctors, nurses, physios and OTs are front line.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** I would classify those roles as very much front line as well, but hey!

**Mr Beck:** They are not here anymore; 12 months ago those positions were sitting here and now they are not. Our health department is doing that—that is not up to me. I totally understand that they have only limited resource and things like that, but when I am sitting here and it is very frustrating and we just—people still want and need the level of service, but I have not got the capacity to keep picking up extras, extras, extras and that kind of thing.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Before I make the closing statement then, it does sound like you have some wonderful programs here and you are doing really well. I am not sure that you are aware of the fact that with the royalties for regions funding, you cannot tap into that for current positions where there are FTE equivalents under the health department or any other department, but if it is a new program or a new initiative, then that is something you could put in for funding for. I have discussed what that funding is for with Brendon. If it is a new initiative or a new program that is going to service a need in the community, then I think you put it into the regional commission —

**Mr Beck:** Given that we have spoken and, being honest, a large percentage of our issues are Indigenous youth, I have been trying for some time to secure money for an Indigenous recreation officer, specifically to do what Greg was talking about—that is, to run programs aimed at Indigenous youth, to go and pick up some of the kids and get them there, to make sure they get home and all that kind of thing. Is that something you think —

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Absolutely.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I would put that in, and when you put it in I would put it in as a pilot for other areas, because if it is successful it could be taken up by other people. I would certainly have a go through that funding for that position, particularly if you could explain it in your application the way you have today.

**Mr Beck:** Because the one or two times we have managed to score an Indigenous adult as a volunteer or somebody to run a program, the numbers of Indigenous kids attending just goes up. Therefore, if we could get an Indigenous adult or young adult in that role, it would make a massive difference out there.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript. Once again, thank you very much.

**Hearing concluded at 5.58 pm**