

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE
COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE OF THE
FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2014**

Members

**Ms L.L. Baker (Chair)
Hon Robyn McSweeney (Deputy Chair)
Ms E. Evangel
Hon Sally Talbot**

Hearing commenced at 10.18 am**Mr GERRY WALSH****Chief Executive Officer, SIDS and Kids WA, examined:**

The CHAIR: Hello, let me without further ado read the opening statement, Gerry. On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, I would like to thank you for your appearance before us today. The purpose of the hearing is to assist the committee in its review of the exercise of the functions of the commissioner. At this stage I would like to introduce the committee formally. I am the member for Maylands, Lisa Baker; Eleni Evangel, member for Perth; Hon Robyn McSweeney, whom you would know, I am sure, member for South West Region; and Hon Dr Sally Talbot, member for South West Region.

This hearing is a formal proceeding of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses 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. This is a public hearing and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record.

I would like to ask you a series of questions. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

Mr Walsh: Yes.

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

Mr Walsh: Yes.

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

Mr Walsh: Yes.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today’s hearing?

Mr Walsh: No.

[Audio recording malfunction from 10.18 to 10.20 am.]

Mr Walsh [continuing]: The new boy tag has gone. I have been there for one year and one month.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The honeymoon is over!

Mr Walsh: The honeymoon is well and truly over!

The CHAIR: You are tarnished!

Mr Walsh: It is absolutely over!

It has been enjoyable, but I have had experience in not-for-profit. I was CEO of Rocky Bay for 10 years with Patricia Kailis and a wonderful mob down there. That was just a fantastic, magnificent place. I also had a short stint at Holyoake, so I have sort of had a bit of experience. The crew at SIDS and Kids—for the last six years I have been working for an organisation that was providing essential services, they were called, to 108 remote Aboriginal communities up in the Kimberley and the Pilbara, essentials being literally electricity, power, water, sewerage and, increasingly, municipal services.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: What organisation was that?

Mr Walsh: The acronym was KRSP, but it was Kimberley Regional Service Providers. Gary Johnson has been up in that neck of the woods for years.

[Interruption due to audio malfunction.]

The CHAIR: Gerry we might start, and let Hansard continue to try to fix it in the background. We will leave these guys to get to it.

You do not mind being called Gerry?

Mr Walsh: No, absolutely.

The CHAIR: I am Lisa and I am sure my colleagues will be first names as well. Perhaps if you could start by just giving us an outline of SIDS and what it is.

Mr Walsh: As the acronym SIDS implies, sudden infant death syndrome was the original premise of the organisation. We have been going 37 years. We had somewhere along the line a merger with Stillbirth. Really, the name SIDS is a bit of a problem for us at the moment because —

[Audio recording malfunction from 10.29 to 10.36 am.]

Ms E. EVANGEL [continuing]: — sleeping them on their side.

Mr Walsh: Me too—and on the tummy.

Ms E. EVANGEL: That was probably just before. We were not allowed to put them on their backs; they had to be on their sides. Just a few years later it just kind of changed.

Mr Walsh: Eleni, I am going to read you this because I am not really the person; we have got our people.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I have been dying to find out.

Mr Walsh: There is just a sentence that might be of value to you —

Sleeping on the back reduces the risk of SIDS. Tummy or side sleeping increases the risk of SIDS. Healthy babies placed to sleep on the back are less likely to choke on vomit than tummy sleeping infants.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It has been on the back for years.

Ms E. EVANGEL: What about the side though? That was the reason why they told us to put them on their sides, so they do not choke on their —

Mr Walsh: I would think so, too.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: They have done so much scientific research.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I would think that if they are on their back, they are more likely to choke on their —

Mr Walsh: It is mainly on the tummy, and, of course —

The CHAIR: Because their mouths are closed, I guess.

Mr Walsh: Yes. Aboriginal families, of course, do a lot of co-sleeping and babies have suffocated with mum or dad rolling over.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It has always been a bugbear of mine, that co-sleeping is chucked in with SIDS and it should not be. It should be co-sleeping and then babies dying of SIDS, but they are in together.

Mr Walsh: Lisa, I will just quickly give you the other five —

... Keep head and face uncovered

So, do not pull the rugs and goodness knows what over. I am just very quickly reading these notes —

It is important that a baby does not get too hot while sleeping. Many babies who have died from SIDS were found with their heads and faces covered by bedding, which probably caused overheating and an increase in their arousal threshold.

That is the worst thing. The worst thing is when parents come and they do not know why their child has died. I was just down Bunbury only a couple of months ago where this beautiful family did a ball for us and raised 40 000 bucks, which is just fantastic. Two ordinary knockabout folks said, “Hey, I have got to do something for this”, and raised 40 grand. It is so sad. The guy came in and I was talking to him, and he said, “Eleven months, my child. We just put him in the cot. Every other day of his life he was fine and the next morning he was dead.” I do not know, but I do not you can recover, Lisa, from something like that. That is obviously why we are here at SIDS and Kids. The next one is hardly a surprise —

... Keep baby smoke-free before and after birth

That is a problem in our Indigenous communities, much bigger—much more smoking than in non-Indigenous environments. The next one is —

... Safe sleeping environment day and night

Cots, mattresses and environments that are unsafe increase the risk of sudden unexpected infant death.

It is about safe cots and mattresses. There is a whole raft of recommendations that we talk to people about. The next one is —

... Sleep baby in safe cot in parents room

That is with that co-sleeping issue. The last one, which some people think yes and some people think no, is to breastfeed babies —

Breastfeeding babies more than halves the chances of a baby dying suddenly and unexpectedly.

That is according to the research. They are the six things that people who are providing that education give, whether it is to Indigenous folks or not. It is slightly skewed a different way, because Indigenous folks use the slings a lot more.

[10.40 am]

The CHAIR: Yes, there is a problem with that too, is there not?

Mr Walsh: They are those little cradle-y things, whose name has gone from my mind at the moment. So they do some different things, some more safe than others. That is all in that second component of that education trying to prevent the number of unexplained deaths.

The CHAIR: Gerry, do you work with the child health nurses? When your two Indigenous workers go out, do they work through there or do they go directly to the community?

Mr Walsh: Both. Certainly in town, King Eddie is the big link with us, because that is where, sadly, most of the babies die. We also have a good link with PMH, because the youngsters go there once they are children. So, yes, we have committees that deal and they are made up of, quite often, midwives, social workers and our support staff, and they meet on a monthly basis and talk about the issues that are significant. It is very, very strong to have that link. But if you are going out to Broome or somewhere, yes, we link with Broome hospital. But then, not just in Broome—we have to get out more and that is something have not done enough of in the time. That is one area I would like to improve on. It is good talking to health professionals and it is important to talk to

professionals, but—actually, we were only talking about this last week—let us not forget the grassroots people who want to get out and talk to Indigenous mums who are 18 or 20 and tell them.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Or 14.

Mr Walsh: Or 14, yes, absolutely. Get out and give them some information that can help them.

The third wing, or string, is in research. We are not so strong on that. Research is funded by donors and, to be honest, it is mainly people who have lost a child and the main thing they say is, “I don’t know why—no-one can tell me why—my child has died.” Right now we are having a joint research project with the Telethon Institute. Dr Carrington Shepherd is working with us and we have had three donors who have put in some reasonable money, totalling about 50 grand, to get a qualified researcher to trawl back through the last 10, 20 or 30 years of data. According to Dr Shepherd, we have fantastic data and with new thoughts and new ways of looking at things, they are hoping to try and get some answers to parents who have lost their child and do not know why. It is sort of a trial. If we can do that for, say, six months—we can get someone funded to that for six months—we might be able to go to the state or federal governments and say, “Look, this is a terrific project, can we get some real funding to do it?” It sort of is our core business, but we do not have funding for it, so unless we can get the public to donate money for that specific cause, it would not happen. It is happening at the moment because we got that 50 grand donated.

The CHAIR: Can I ask you a practical question about the economics of running SIDS? You are a charity?

Mr Walsh: Yes.

The CHAIR: So you do fundraising very well. I am just asking a question about the trend in fundraising. Has that gone up or down? Are you finding it harder to get money from people or is it easier?

Mr Walsh: Trends in fundraising everywhere and are going like that—down. All of our SIDS graphs are going one way. I will just go back. The budget is dependent on fundraising to the tune of 84 per cent. The other 14 per cent is essentially that commonwealth funded program for Aboriginal folks, and that is fantastic; it is terrific. Just to give you the actual figures, that is \$200 000. The overall budget is about \$1.6 million, so the rest of it we have to fundraise. Traditionally, the organisation has been a very events-based fundraiser. You have a run or you have a golf day or you have raffles. They are everywhere. We have a Sunshine Beach run—I am glad it is in-house—and it made nothing. The Red Nose Day last year made nothing. It is putting a tremendous amount of pressure on our organisation. When you are 85 per cent on fundraising and a couple of your major fundraisers just do not do as well as you needed to—in the budget you had a profit of \$80 000 or whatever number might be—boy, that puts a lot of pressure on the budget. I actually had to come in and restructure the staff, with the board’s approval, of course, because we just were not getting the income.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Are you part of a national body, or does each state have its own?

Mr Walsh: Yes and yes. There is a national SIDS and Kids, but in each state and territory, and the Hunter Valley region, there is a SIDS and Kids. They have their own constitution and they have their own board, so they are essentially independent groups. We are not beholden to the national group for any funding—we get a tiny bit—and they have no direction on where we go or how we spend our money or the services that we provide. However, it is a very interesting question, Sally, because right now, due to our really not-so-great financial situation, the board has taken a recommendation from itself that we consider merging under the national umbrella. The national is really strong; they get some terrific national contracts to places like Target and Coles, who want to be seen nationally to be supporting the community, as they should. It is much harder for me to knock on the Coles door here and say that I need some money for us, when they can get national exposure. They have just got a \$600 000 contract from one of their big sponsors, and you know that

is the concept. That is certainly where we are heading. To be absolutely honest, Lisa, I think I would have been closing the doors halfway through next year if we were not going down this track. The fundraising is just not there; it is just not there

The CHAIR: We hear the same thing from other charities.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Is that beach run done by Perkin?

Mr Walsh: The Sunshine Beach Run is in memory of —

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, she is my cousin, or she was —

Mr Walsh: Oh, right—okay, Chris Perkin.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: His wife.

Mr Walsh: He lost his wife and baby. He had a strong link with the Eagles, and they support us a lot. The problem with these things, Robyn, is that you have to pay a crowd. We pay a crowd; it is called I Katcher Events. We do not have the resources. I have eight staff.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: You pay them to run the event, so that cuts into the money.

Mr Walsh: We do not know how to run it. We just do not have the expertise or the time or the contacts to run a major event like that. The event runs beautifully; it has done so for three years. We got good money in the first year, moderate money in the second year, and not so much in the third year, but we paid I Katcher the same amount every year, and we were locked into a three-year contract. The details of the contract were not overly good for us, so I said to the board, “Hey, listen, we can’t keep doing this; we’re not making a bean here.” We now have a new contract in place where we are paying—I did not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. They have been doing it for three years; they run a good event.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, because it is a good people around it, is not it? It is just that you have to pay for —

Mr Walsh: Absolutely, and we get good PR and good marketing, so I have got him now on a flat rate, plus an agreed budget so that everything on top of that comes to us. He is happy with that and hopefully we will get some cash this year. We have just got to change the way that we do fundraising. We have the ubiquitous raffles; lots of them do. I remember at Rocky Bay, you could not walk into a shopping centre anywhere and not see one of our car raffles. We still have it, but again we need a third party, and the third party is the Royal Lifesaving Society. Why them? They have a telemarketing centre down in Manjimup. Some years ago there was a push—I think when the logging went in Manjimup —

[10.50 am]

The CHAIR: Really? Yes, I remember that.

Mr Walsh: — the jobs went. And I think it was probably the state government put some money on down there, and that was good and it gave some employment for folks. But we have to pay. It has that same concept. The outsourcing is a good strategy, simply because we do not have the people nor do we have the expertise to run those big events, but it costs us, so there is always that fine line between how much it is going to cost and how much we are going to get, so I can write this budget and so I can pay for counsellors and educators and what have you.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Red Nose Day would bring in a fair bit, would it not?

Mr Walsh: Red Nose Day has been a real disappointment; two years in a row we have made nothing. We made 10 grand this year. You are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. You need to buy the product from national and they get it from China. This year we wrote a budget on the premise of putting 2 000 of these boxes—they are about yay by yay, and they have got the fluffy toys and pens, and all of the stuff that you would expect to see on these sort of things—and

you ring up a business and say, "Would you put it at your front counter?", or the local pharmacy, or anywhere. We thought we would save some money this year by doing it in-house, rather than paying Royal Life 50 grand to do it, but with three weeks to go, we had only placed 226 boxes out of 2000, and you are caught. When I asked the manager for fundraising, "What the hell is going on here?" He said, "I can't get the volunteers." Volunteers are fantastic when you can get them. We can get them for one-off things, but in this case we needed them for a month. We actually wanted them to get on the phone and ring your businesses up and say, "Will you take one of these boxes?"

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It takes time.

Mr Walsh: It is a huge HR effort. It is too heavily based on the need for people. So I went to the Royal Lifesaving guy and said, "Help; if we don't do something here, we're going to be in real trouble." And, of course, he gets his telemarketing centre, and they placed another 800 boxes in four days. So we got out of it. That false economy is what I think not-for-profits have got to watch very carefully.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes, but you still got 1 000 boxes left over.

Mr Walsh: Absolutely. We have got 1 000 boxes left over, which, Sally, we can hopefully use next year. But that did not help my budget this year, because we were 80 000 bucks short, and when you are 80 000 bucks short, that is a counsellor.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It is a shame you cannot link in with the Royal Agricultural Society, on Show Day, with your red noses out there.

Mr Walsh: Yes, that is a possibility.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: They are quite open to people talking to them, for community interests. I mean, have your boxes there on Show Day, and every mother and their baby will pick up something.

Mr Walsh: I am just vaguely thinking that the snag there for us might be that every state has Red Nose Day on the last Friday in June, and there is a national marketing program that national pays for, thankfully, involving the Wiggles. That sort of thinking differently is what charities have got to do now. They cannot just keep doing the same thing, because it is not working any more. We are just not getting the income. Expenditure is the same, but there is just not the income.

The CHAIR: It is very interesting, Gerry. Thank you for that. I did think it was a tough time out there. These guys have to go in five minutes, but I thought perhaps I would ask you about your interactions, if you have had any, with the office of the children's commissioner, with the work that they do. Have you had any chance to be involved with them yet?

Mr Walsh: To be honest, Lisa, I have not; I was not aware of it at all.

The CHAIR: That is fine. Well, that is interesting in itself to us, because that is our job, to look at the children's commissioner and what work they are doing. It might not be a bad thing, it might not be a good thing, it might be a neutral thing, but we just needed to ask you that. You do not know what the commission does or how that might work —

Mr Walsh: I am sort of embarrassed to say no.

The CHAIR: Do not be embarrassed, but that is, again, an important element for us. Perhaps if I can go back to the profile, just in the last five minutes, of children dying under 12 in the state. Can you just walk me through the demographics, or perhaps bring the committee up to date? What are the trends? You said that only 10 children, thank goodness, die from SIDS, but what is the most dreadful thing that is happening, and how is that impacting? Tell me about how that works.

Mr Walsh: Nationally, there are 147 000 miscarriages, 1 750 stillborn and 850 babies that die in the first 28 days. That 28 days is a very significant number, apparently. My staff member did not have the exact figures for us, but it is 10 per cent.

The CHAIR: We know that its 10 per cent, that is all right.

Mr Walsh: We are 10 per cent of everything. So it is still a hell of a lot, and while the number of SIDS kids, just under that strict definition, is dropping, the others are not, particularly the stillborns. Dr Carrington Shepherd said that that is an area that has had very little research in recent times. He actually wanted to do the research on that, because he said there is almost nothing, but of course the people who put the money in do not know why their baby died. That is where they want to put money, and when people are putting in the money, they direct where the traffic is going, for sure.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I am curious that you have not had any communications with the office of the commissioner. So, they have never contacted your organisation?

Mr Walsh: Certainly not in the last 12 months.

Ms E. EVANGEL: They have never requested any information regarding figures about how many deaths there have been?

Mr Walsh: Not that I am aware of. Certainly not in the last 12 months.

Ms E. EVANGEL: Have they never requested any information regarding figures of how many deaths there have been? Is that just not under your time? Are you familiar with anything previous to your appointment?

Mr Walsh: Honestly, I do not know.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I do find it curious that the commissioner's office is not interested in the number of deaths that are occurring.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Sally; thank you, Robyn. We will let you guys go, and then we will just come back and finish Eleni's question. Eleni, I agree with you that that it is a bit of an issue.

Ms E. EVANGEL: Yes, I think that is a serious issue for us to look into, because we have got babies here —

The CHAIR: We can talk about that later.

Thank you, Gerry. What else were you bringing to present to us?

Mr Walsh: Nothing. I just had the annual report and budgets and that sort of thing.

The CHAIR: Is it possible for you to leave us with some information?

Mr Walsh: Absolutely, I would be only too happy to.

The CHAIR: That would be great.

Mr Walsh: Do you want the budget?

The CHAIR: I probably do not think that that would be so appropriate at the moment.

Mr Walsh: Some financial information is in the annual report, of course.

The CHAIR: Just as an aside, I was listing to a report being released this week, or it might have been last week, on charities and not-for-profits, and this chap, who was from the not-for-profit sector, was making comments such as "I can't understand why not-for-profits don't invest their dollars more effectively", and he was kind of waxing lyrical about how we could be such silly organisations as to not invest their money. I thought: was he not here for the global financial crisis; has he not seen what happens? I was quite stunned by—he did not seem to recognise that that would be a fast track to losing the faith that the community has in a not-for-profit, if they understand that you are suddenly investing in Shell, and even if you did ethical investment with your money, the risk is —

Mr Walsh: Yes, and who has the money to invest?

[11.00 am]

The CHAIR: Correct.

Mr Walsh: As I speak to you today, we have got \$200 000 in the bank.

The CHAIR: Yes, and that would be a lot more than a lot of charities that have been around for 37 years.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I have something to add on that, if you do not mind, Madam Chair. There is a cafe—I think this could be a real winner for something like SIDS—just in the piazza in Northbridge, and it is a social enterprise business. It is a cafe that is run as a privately owned cafe, but all the money, other than the wages of the people who work there, is donated to charity. I was just thinking that that was something that was thinking out of the square, like you were saying? I think you would be struggling to find a cafe that is not making some good dollars, and it does not cost that much to set one up, as well, because these days they can be just quite basic. I just think that that is the kind of thing—you can have your SIDS and Kids cafe, and that would be an endless stream of income.

Mr Walsh: We have just got to think about it differently, you are right.

Ms E. EVANGEL: You do, and, like, this family that runs this cafe in Northbridge—I do not know whether you have been in—beautiful, beautiful family, and they are just so committed. Like I said, it is a family-run cafe as if they were receiving the profits, but they just get a standard wage, and the rest just goes to not-for-profit organisations. These are the kinds of things that not-for-profits need to start thinking about, because you have got your volunteers working for you anyway; you could have them running a cafe, and you would be getting at least 100 grand a year, just like that, I reckon, if not more.

The CHAIR: The Associations Incorporation Bill, which is being debated soon, will of course give you more capacity under that, because—I do not know how across that you have been. It is probably not your core business—you are incorporated already, or you have got DGF as well, so you do not have to worry so much about this stuff. It will give you the capacity to do more in the company-limited-by-guarantee model than the incorporated association model has traditionally allowed you to do. So you can get more into that.

Mr Walsh: That could be a good thing.

The CHAIR: Yes, it would be good. I suppose I feel a bit downhearted, Gerry, by what you have had to say, just to wrap up, and I feel that if I could give you a large cheque I would do. First of all, they are lucky to have you, because clearly you bring acumen into this, particularly around the fundraising for the agency. You and I both know, because we have both been in the not-for-profit sector on and off over the years, that things come in swings and roundabouts, and it is about keeping your core stable and reining in all those operational costs, restructuring until you bring it down to the bare minimum.

Mr Walsh: Core business—that is what we have got to concentrate on.

The CHAIR: The whole model that you talked about is the same model that ACOSS and the COSSs have, and we went through similar argy-bargy over ACOSS generating truckloads of funding from the feds at one particular point in time, and then what was the relationship between the COSS network and ACOSS? They were getting the million-dollar cheques; they were doing major corporate sponsorship from the banks and the like, and getting big arrangements set up with a very entrepreneurial CEO at the time. Then the issue was what should be the relationship between the network of state COSSs and ACOSS in terms of dealing with that cash, so, if they get \$1 million from Westpac to do a certain number of things, they have to enter into agreements with the COSS network, and there is a trade-off of all sorts of things. With all of this, I think the mission drift is the

most dangerous thing, and when you say 84 per cent of your agency is funded from fundraising, you and I know that once you start to fiddle with that and take more money from government you end up with a real danger about where your energies go.

Mr Walsh: That is true, but on the other side I did not know how lucky I was at Rocky Bay. Rocky Bay was 92 per cent funded by the Disability Services Commission—the state government. We made a million-odd dollars through the fundraising, mainly the cars, and it just happened every quarter, but the money came in. I agree with you, because some boards at some stage make the decision to not. I think SIDS and Kids probably did 20 years ago, when they had plenty of money, and the board probably—I do not know this, but, seeing as you brought it up—a lot of boards say, “No, we are not going to go for government funding, because there might be conditions associated with it; you have to do this and you have to do that.”

The CHAIR: There usually is.

Mr Walsh: There always is, absolutely. To be honest, there is nothing wrong with that. I have worked with those government requirements for years; you get used to it and you do it. Boards sometimes get this feeling, “We want to be independent; we want to do our own thing; we want to provide our own services in the manner that we want to provide them, and not be told by a government body.” That is fine when the money is coming in the door, but it is not so great when it is not, and it is not now for SIDS and Kids.

The CHAIR: It is about balancing the risk in these things, and I agree. If you have to change that ratio—it might only be for five years that you agree to do that as a board—I think there is always the capacity to do that in not-for-profits. That is why government invests with them, because they are quick and nimble and they can make changes when they need to, and they access the voluntary sector so effectively.

Mr Walsh: That is true, but the tricky bit—I have been around to all the government departments, as you would probably expect me to at the start of this, and they were all singing from the same hymnbook. I knew what the hymnbook was—“We have just had a three or four per cent cut to our budgets, and we’re battling to pay the crew who are already on our books, no less a new boy like SIDS and Kids who’s never been on our books.” I understand how it works.

The CHAIR: That is very interesting, was it from Health that you got that?

Mr Walsh: Everyone, yes—Child Protection, Health—there is just no money. We got a couple of small one-off grants from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, just to do projects. Do not get me wrong; we are happy to have that money, but it does not pay your salary as a counsellor every year for the next five years.

The CHAIR: And you have knocked on Andrew Forrest’s door, of course?

Mr Walsh: Look, I have not; it is certainly one where the board are thinking of going down that path. I know a couple of his mates, and he would get—I am joking—one million applications a week; I mean, everyone. They have got a whole committee that filters it through. Andrew is so strong, with his wife, on the Indigenous side of things. I think it would be a good link with us.

The CHAIR: I would also suggest, if you have not spoken to Malcolm McCusker and his wife, that you go and have a chat to them —

Mr Walsh: I have read the stuff that he sends out.

The CHAIR: — just to ask for advice, basically, on where to go.

Mr Walsh: Absolutely; good idea.

The CHAIR: I will officially close this hearing, Gerry. Thank you for your evidence before the committee today—even though it might be a bit on and off! A transcript of the hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and returned

within 10 days of the date of the letter sent with the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within 10 days it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via corrections. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate, please include a supplementary submission for us to consider when you return your transcript of evidence. I humbly apologise for the breaks in technology, and thank you for your perseverance with us. It has been fantastic to meet you, and I can only say that in my heart I know exactly where you are at the moment, and it is a very stressful time. Good luck.

Mr Walsh: Thank you, Lisa.

The CHAIR: Anything we can do, I am sure as individual committee members we would be happy in our various lives to help you out, Gerry.

Hearing concluded at 11.09 am
