

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**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 PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2010**

**SESSION TWO**

**Members**

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

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**Hearing commenced at 10.05 am****JACKSON, MR ALLAN RICHARD****General Manager, Climate Change, Water and Environment, Rio Tinto, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to 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 inquiry into 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. This committee is a committee of the Assembly. 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. This is a public hearing and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the record. If you refer to any document 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?

**Mr Jackson:** Yes.

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

**Mr Jackson:** Yes, I do.

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

**Mr Jackson:** Yes, I did.

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

**Mr Jackson:** No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You have had an opportunity to look at the terms of reference. We have been conducting this inquiry now for well over 12 months. We have held hearings in the metropolitan area, in the regional areas and in the Kimberley. We have been looking at the social and financial costs, and we have been finding that alcohol has been the main problem, but that some other drugs have also come up as major factors, particularly in some other industries, but it has varied. Having looked at the terms of reference, could you tell us, from your industry's perspective, what the issues are?

**Mr Jackson:** I should just talk a little about what Rio Tinto does, if that is okay. Rio Tinto has a document called "The way we work", and I am more than happy to table that; I have it with me. It clearly outlines what we expect of leaders in terms of the health of not only our workforce, but also our service providers, bearing in mind that we have several towns and most of the people in those towns are employees or service providers to Rio Tinto. There are several towns—the towns of Dampier, Karratha in part, Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Pannawonica and Wickham. The policies that we have in place cover people not only at work, but also at home. "The way we work" document clearly defines at a high level what those requirements are. Also, Rio Tinto has a number of standards, and the standards are global. One in particular, which covers our health standards, is about fitness for work. Within that fitness for work standard is a requirement for testing for alcohol and other drugs. The sites do that through various processes, and I can talk about that a little in a

minute. It really falls into four parts. There is alcohol and other drugs; what we call employee assistance programs, so that people who are having problems, whether it be with alcohol or other drugs, are able to get independent company-funded advice; a fatigue policy; and a wellness program, which is conducted by an external provider for individuals if they so wish to go through a whole fitness regime, which covers alcohol and other drugs and the amounts they should or should not take et cetera. Our alcohol and other drugs policy, which I believe is where the committee is coming from, is one of the keystones of our fit-for-work requirement. It also falls under our duty of care under the Mines Safety and Inspection Act and other acts that we are connected to. It is really important that the testing regime that we have is first class. In terms of alcohol and other drugs, we test before people commence work with us, if they are being employed by Rio Tinto. Service providers are tested prior to entering the site. There are two other testing requirements. One is for cause, so if somebody has an accident or someone has a concern—some particular person may say, “I think there’s somebody on my work team who shouldn’t be there today”—that person will be tested. And there is random testing, so people are tested randomly. In the year to date, something like 5 000 tests have taken place. The employment of five people has been terminated as a result of that, and last year 12 people had their employment contract terminated as a result of alcohol or other drugs. That just gives you a bit of a broad overview.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Five people out of how many employees?

**Mr Jackson:** Several thousand. But everybody is aware of the testing regime, Janet. It is well communicated. It is part of people’s induction when they come into the operations, whether they are a service provider or a future employee. It is pretty well communicated that that is what goes on. Bear in mind that the behaviour that we expect of people in the workplace tends to flow into the towns themselves. We have seen over the years a change in behaviour. People certainly come to work in a fit state, and that is not just for alcohol and other drugs; it is also for other reasons. There are processes that people can go to that will help them manage certain problems. The alcohol and other drugs policy also is “two strikes and you’re out”. People are given a second chance and they go through a counselling process not only with their leaders but also through the employee assistance program group, which will help them. They are psychologists we employ through a contract. It is very comprehensive. But I would like to also state here that we still have a long way to go; it is not perfect. We think that the impact in the townships that people live in should flow into those areas, and it does. But it is not perfect. The big issue around drugs, in my view, is changing over the years. Alcohol is becoming less of a problem. The problem that is emerging is more around THC, which is cannabis, and/or methylamphetamine, the party drug. We are starting to see an emergence of that. The problem with the party drug is that people can partake on their rostered days off and then be pretty clean when they come to work.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** When you say “pretty clean”, do you think they are still affected?

**Mr Jackson:** They are fatigued. They could be very much fatigued. That is something that we are trying to impress through our fatigue policy process. The other important part of it is that the leaders in the business are very well trained in observing their people to make sure that they do look okay and they look as though they are fit for work, and there are various simple things they can do to check that. Fatigue is an issue, especially with shifts et cetera and the rosters that we have today. There is a lot of work that goes on in our operations about trying to ensure that, firstly, people are fit for work; and, if they are not, we have other processes to handle that. I think I have answered your question.

[10.15 am]

**The CHAIRMAN:** How many have you lost, say, in the past year, from the two strikes and out?

**Mr Jackson:** I will pull some detail out here, if I may. I have brought some stats just to be more specific. I can actually give the committee the number that have been tested. If we look at August, year to date, 55 000 tests have been done across our business. All those people who have been

terminated would have been on two strikes. However, there is one little caveat that I will put on that: if someone is in a major accident, and it is found that they are really high—I mean well and truly above the .02, for example, for alcohol—then that would be considered a fairly serious offence, given what they have been trained and their knowledge of the company requirements. That is the year to date. As I said before, five people were terminated over that number of tests. There is another process; if they are between zero and .02, that is called a “not negative”. If it is a not negative, they see their supervisor, and he makes a judgement on whether he thinks they are fit for work. That is a judgement based on their training and the sort of work that people are doing, or the level of risk involved in people’s roles.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I visited some of your facilities last year up in the Pilbara and I was quite interested in the way you are proactively trying to assess causes of accidents, or likely causes of accidents, and trying to fix them before they happen. When you do have the odd industrial accident, how often can you relate it back to alcohol or drug use?

**Mr Jackson:** In all accidents, people are required to have a drug and alcohol test. It is probably a very small amount; I could not give the exact number, but it is a very minor number. That is the testing regime we go through, but there are a whole bunch of other factors that could be the root cause of those particular accidents. The one we find most difficult to judge is fatigue, because if someone has just had an accident, they will be bright and wide awake.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are your programs used by your subcontracting companies as well?

**Mr Jackson:** Yes—not all of them, but most of them. What we do is judge their programs as part of our contractor selection program. It is a prequalification that their programs meet our requirements. Our requirements are basically set under the Australian standard.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Do you have a zero-tolerance drinking policy? Even the staff in the city are not allowed to drink at all; is that right?

**Mr Jackson:** Correct.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** What about when staff come off shift, for example? Qantas has told us that it made some changes to its flights in terms of alcohol service because of issues. Is that affecting your staff as well, in terms of the fly in, fly out people?

**Mr Jackson:** When they are rostered off and they are heading back to Perth, for example, some people do partake, especially if they have been on site for a couple of weeks, but we do a lot of counselling and communication with those people. We had a couple of incidents, but we get onto that pretty quickly. Not everybody who flies on those planes are Rio Tinto; there are a lot of other people on those planes as well. But it is something that we are onto pretty quickly, and I think the behaviour of our own people is really important in the public eye.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The committee recently went on a trip to the Kimberley. You have talked about your mines in the Pilbara. I am not sure whether Rio Tinto has mines in the Kimberley as well; Ian, Peter and possibly Lisa have more knowledge about where different companies have their mines. In some of the towns in the Kimberley where miners would go on their days off, we actually found that drinking problems for non-Aboriginal people who worked on the mines in the Kimberley were just as bad, if not worse, than for the Aboriginal people. When your miners go into towns, how many days do they have off? If they are week on, week off, do they also have alcohol problems? If they have alcohol problems, and they have seven days on and five days off, do they drink for four days and dry out on the last day or so before they go back to work because they know they have to be dry and clear to get back on the mine site? Is it the case that they might then stay dry for five days and then go back into town and drink for the other days? We have a problem of a culture of drinking in the communities. Is there some way you are able to look at your workers to see whether they may have a drinking problem on their days off, and maybe give them some assistance if they

may have a drinking problem? Have you done anything in the past to maybe assess whether they might have a drinking problem that you can assist them with?

**Mr Jackson:** I am sure that that occurs—there is no doubt about that—but we do not see it in huge amounts among our own employees. If I look back to my past as a mine manager, particularly at Paraburdoo, normally if someone had a drinking problem, it tended to manifest itself by members of the team saying, “So-and-so has got a bit of a problem; is there something we can do about it, because we don’t feel safe and we’re concerned about his welfare?” We had a system where we would send people off, on full pay, to a place called Serenity Lodge. I do not know whether it still exists.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Yes, we visited it the other day.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Peter and I went there just last week.

**Mr Jackson:** We would send people off to Serenity Lodge. There were some successes and some failures, but we still continue to pursue that approach. It would normally manifest itself through concerns from team members or team leaders, and we had that process in place. I think the workforce thought that was pretty positive in terms of caring for our own people.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** The good thing about that is that they know if they talk to you about it, it is not going to be a matter of instant dismissal for them; you are there to help them. Workplace safety means that with big machinery, you do not want people there who are badly affected by alcohol.

[10.25 am]

**Mr Jackson:** Absolutely. You cannot afford, in terms of not only your duty of care, but the duty of care of the people who actually work with those people. You really have not only a legal obligation but a moral obligation to raise the flag and say, “We’ve got a little problem here, can we solve it?” And if they know, as you rightly point out, that that is going to be solved in a non-threatening way—we did keep those people’s pay running in the hope that they would come back because they were all pretty good people—we can work our way through that. That is one of the setups that we had with the employee assistance program where they can get independent counselling and help on those things.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** So you do not still use that facility?

**Mr Jackson:** I have not been back in operation for a while, but I do not think that we do. We tend to use the employee assistance program process, but if someone had a real big problem, we would certainly work through some processes for them. That could very well be the result, with people going to some facility like that that would help them. It is an illness, not some sort of an affliction, if you want to put it that way.

I go back to the four points I was making: the employee assistance program is one aspect of it, the alcohol and other drugs testing is more a—even though it is a bit draconian—a deterrent; the fact that people know it is there. But, thirdly—I think to pick your point up, Janet, that you were making—you have to have some different strings to the bow. One string is that you have some sort of wellness program, which actually is a full medical program with independent advice by medical practitioners and other experts in the field, which is individual to you—we do not know about it—to help you to have a healthier lifestyle. There is a whole range of things, whether it is diabetes, diet, alcohol, just general fitness or whatever. That program has been up and running now for about 12 months. A group called Ford Health run that for us on our behalf. That is a worldwide Rio Tinto program, by the way; it is a global program.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So they run that on site for you, do they?

**Mr Jackson:** Yes. They can be based in Perth, but they will make a phone call to an individual, or anyone, and ask, “Are you interested?”, “Yes, I am”, and they put you through a full medical. Then you have an individual who will advise you on a program and then they monitor you on the

program. There is a whole range of things, but it is all about being fit for work and having a healthy lifestyle. I guess from a business perspective, people are going to be at work, they are not going to miss work, they are going to be more productive, they are going to be more engaged, and they will be better team members. We have found that the results of this are pretty positive. It was designed by one of our doctors in Rio Tinto, Dr Rob McDonald, in Melbourne, and it has been rolled out globally. So what I am saying is that there are a lot of different bits to it. Alcohol and other drug testing is one element, but there is a whole bunch of other things that you have to mix in with that. In terms of the problems in the Kimberley that you referred to, I think it is the companies and other organisations really getting into people's heads about this, and you can do it in a non-threatening way.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Allan, if you do not feel that you are the right person to comment about this and Rio Tinto, that is okay, but I will ask anyway. I know that you guys have some fantastic programs around dealing with the recruitment of Aboriginal people at your mines and for your mines as a workforce. Are you in a position to talk to us a bit about any issues that Rio Tinto may have picked up in terms of getting Aboriginal people to become part of the workforce and possible issues around—you mentioned obesity and diabetes—alcohol, which is another one of the issues that we are interested in? Can you make any general comments—any specific comments would be good, too—about the kind of programs that you run and how successful they are or what you have learned?

**Mr Jackson:** I should say that in the private sector Rio is probably the biggest employer of Aboriginal people in Western Australia, probably in Australia actually. In my experience, just to take it a bit further, I was also general manager, operations, at a place called Weipa in Queensland and I was there for four and a half years. So there are some interesting places, Aurukun, Napranum, Mapoon, all around that area so —

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Big Indigenous population.

**Mr Jackson:** Yes, and the sort of issues you mentioned are all those issues. In terms of where we are today in recruitment, the Aboriginal employees go through the same process as everybody else, although we do have people in our organisation, some of them are Aboriginals, in more senior roles who help to mentor people. One of the things that worked very well at Weipa was each Aboriginal person had a mentor or—what is the word I am looking for—someone to look up to —

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** A buddy?

**Mr Jackson:** No, it is a bit more than that; it is someone who has been successful who is Aboriginal.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Older brothers?

**Mr Jackson:** It is sort of like that. They would sort of act as mentors, but also they would look up and say, “Look, that’s what I want to be; I want to be a supervisor” or a tradesman or whatever and they would look up to them. Those people also tended to inject other values, apart from their own cultural values. We do have some problems; we have some dropouts. But where we have dropouts, we try to have an exit interview process to try to understand why that is, so we can sustain—even if people come back, at least we know what the issue was. So the same systems apply, although we are probably, tongue-in-cheek, a little bit more lenient on some areas.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Do you have any observations about unique or different issues that you are faced with when dealing with a workforce who live in rural and remote Australia and are Aboriginal?

**Mr Jackson:** Many and varied.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I am just trying to really find what kind of programs you run that are good and what your experience has taught you that might help the committee in thinking about this inquiry on alcohol and illicit drugs.

**Mr Jackson:** If we focus just on alcohol and other drugs, our Aboriginal employees go through the same processes, but we actually try to have people work with them who will help them as an individual. Every individual is different, so we try to work through them.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** One to one?

**Mr Jackson:** Yes; it is a one-to-one process.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Okay, so it is a one-to-one program.

**Mr Jackson:** A one-to-one program, and we would definitely be putting in more effort than we would normally, and it is almost positive discrimination, I guess, dare I say it.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Affirmative action is probably —

**Mr Jackson:** Yes, that is better; it is the same thing.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** It would work for me either way, it does not matter.

**Mr Jackson:** We put more individual effort into those people than we would normally do. We think that is important for us and important for them. They are the traditional owners of the area and we are there and we need to support them as individuals so that they are successful. If we look at going forward, we have to try to—I am probably getting off the track here—build some of these people to not just operators, but tradesmen and even leaders in our business. One of my graduates is an environmental scientist, an Aboriginal guy, and he is fantastic. We tend to put more time into Patrick, than we might with the other graduates, as an example. I am not sure whether I have answered your question.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** No, that is absolutely fine; thank you.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I might bring you back now to some of the drug tests. With the tests that you do, are they done in-house and how long would it take to do the drug tests?

**Mr Jackson:** There is the blood and alcohol test, which is the straight blow in to the device. It does not take very long at all; it is probably about 10 or 15 seconds maximum. Then the urine test takes a little bit longer. So all up it probably takes for a first readout if you are negative, about 15 to 20 minutes maximum.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** So if somebody tests positive, they do not go on the worksite?

[10.35 am]

**Mr Jackson:** That is correct. Well, what we call “not negative”.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Yes.

**Mr Jackson:** And then we go through a series of steps. Janet, it would probably take about 15 minutes max.

chai: Right.

**Mr Jackson:** And that is more about the machine itself doing the analysis rather than the actual action of doing all the right things. And there is a process of labelling to make sure that things do not get mixed up; it is a little bit administrative, but that is more the time-consuming side.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you have alcohol on the worksite?

**Mr Jackson:** Yes; in our camps we do.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And do you have full-strength alcohol—full-strength beer?

**Mr Jackson:** We have both; however the time of consumption is very restricted. People are not allowed to bring alcohol on the site; it is sold only at the wet mess and the times are very restricted. For example, in the evening it might be sold from 6 to 8—maximum. It is restricted. Although there has been some consideration of selling low-strength beer.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When you say from 6 to 8, is that because no shifts start at eight o'clock?

**Mr Jackson:** A shift has already started at six o'clock; for example, one shift will finish at six and another one will start at six. There are two shifts—day and night; one goes six to six and the other goes six to six.

**The CHAIRMAN:** All right. So from six to eight means that the shift that has finished can purchase drinks between six and eight and they are not starting work again until six o'clock the next morning.

**Mr Jackson:** Yes, the next day; that is contractors—and what they will serve.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So the shift that has finished would not be able to buy unlimited full-strength alcohol from six to eight.

**Mr Jackson:** No. The other thing is, we want people to eat. It is mealtime as well; instead of people drinking beer we want them to come in and have something to eat as well. At most of our camps the people have to go and have a shower and clean up because they are not allowed to go into the mess in dirty clothes. So that eats into the time. The only time that it probably gets a little bit—where people drink a bit more alcohol or wine or whatever, is when they change from the day shift to the night shift and vice versa. They change over while at the camp. They are basically off work for about a day and a half or thereabouts—a day and a bit. People have a barbecue—something nice to do for a few hours. But the wet mess times are pretty well controlled on site. That is based on past experience. We have had some problems in the past, although not of late. Two or three years ago we were having a number of problems and general managers on site cut that right down. They are allowed some alcohol, but it is not excessive and it is monitored. The people who sell it, monitor it; that is part of their role. You cannot just go up and buy a dozen cans and then sit in the corner.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you aware of the situation for Rio Tinto operations in other parts of the world, dealing with such issues—you know, alcohol and drugs. I mean, how has WA compared with other places?

**Mr Jackson:** Tougher.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is WA tougher than other places?

**Mr Jackson:** Tougher than other parts of the world. Part of my role was global; my previous role was chief executive safety adviser for Leigh Clifford when he was chief executive of Rio Tinto. I went to most operations around the globe and my judgement is that the Australian systems were much tougher than what we were seeing in the US or in Africa or Europe. Much tougher; in fact, much tougher than Europe.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Are the tougher here because they have to be?

**Mr Jackson:** I think, yes. I think the regulations drive that as well. We picked up that at some operations, especially in Europe, there has been a long tradition in the way of doing things. I will not go into which sites, but we had some underground mines in Italy and people would have a bottle of red wine for lunch; everybody does that sort of thing in Italy. And then back down the mine they would go. It would just not be heard of in our part of the business.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Do they still have that tradition—or not?

**Mr Jackson:** No.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** That has gone.

**Mr Jackson:** That is well and truly gone. But it was an evolutionary thing. There has been in some parts of the business a union view about this—in other parts of the world; especially in the US—that is not that well supported.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** As in —

**Mr Jackson:** Alcohol and other drugs.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** —the unions inclined to say that you should be more lenient —

**Mr Jackson:** Invasion —

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** —or more strict?

**Mr Jackson:** Should be more lenient.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are the unions more lenient in other countries?

**Mr Jackson:** More lenient. In some of the US operations, we have found it a little bit difficult to implement these particular processes on alcohol and other drugs, but not in Australia. Australia has been pretty good; even in the coal industry in the eastern states. There are some arguments about urine versus saliva testing but the fundamental principles are the same.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are the unions here quite supportive of the measures?

**Mr Jackson:** Generally. I think that overall they have been more positive than I would have expected, compared with other parts of the world.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** My youngest son works for Rio Tinto at Tom Price, so I was quite familiar with all of that. I think you do a great job. Certainly the safety issues are given a very high priority and I am very impressed with the alcohol policy and all that—yes.

**Mr Jackson:** The safety standards came in earlier, and health standards then had to catch up a bit. But we are getting there; it is a long way to go yet, but we are getting there. Thanks, Peter.

**Mr P. ABETZ:** Yes.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I was just going to bring to your attention the fact that the member for North West presented a petition yesterday about medical services in Wickham; you might be interested in following that up.

**Mr Jackson:** Yes; I had not heard about that.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** It might not be on line yet. I have it here, but I think that it is not the corrected proof so you would not be able to access it yet. However, the doctor's surgery has closed at Wickham and that is a concern.

**Mr Jackson:** I think that when any of those things happen they are a concern for the community. I have lived in Weipa and Paraburdoo and other places, and it is always a concern.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Yes.

**Mr Jackson:** So Ian, will I be able to access that information at some point?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Yes; I think it is up later today.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It will be up on the internet tomorrow. Members have until 4 o'clock today to get their *Hansard* corrections in. As of tomorrow, the document will be up on the internet.

**Mr Jackson:** Okay.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is there any thing, Allan, that you would like to add before I —

**Mr Jackson:** Your focus is around communities. I think what the companies and other organisations who have people in those communities do is really important—the systems and policies that they have. But it all gets down to behaviour at the end of the day and how you actually try to do something about that. I think the education of people and other programs are really important to move that along. It is not a perfect world, but those things all help.

**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 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 by 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 of evidence. And again, thank you very much for appearing before the committee today.

**Mr Jackson:** A pleasure. Any of the documents that I have brought along that may be useful —

**The CHAIRMAN:** If you would like to provide them to David now, we thank you.

**Hearing concluded at 10.45 am**