

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE TAKEN
AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 26 MAY 2010**

SESSION ONE

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 9.32 am

O'CALLAGHAN, DR KARL
Commissioner of Police, WA Police,
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 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. At this stage I would like to introduce myself, Janet Woollard, and next to me, Mr Peter Abetz, Mr Ian Blayney, Mr Peter Watson and Ms Lisa Baker. We also have our principal research officer, Mr David Worth, and Hansard with us today.

This committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to the proceedings in the house itself. 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. Hansard will be 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 a series of questions. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

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

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

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

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

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

Dr O'Callaghan: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr O' Callaghan, for coming before us again today. You might like to open up first, because you have looked at the terms of reference for this committee; so would you like to discuss your view of those terms of reference and how those terms of reference affect your role, and, after you have done that, we will come to some questions from the committee.

Dr O'Callaghan: The term of reference that I am talking to particularly—this is based on the letter that you sent—is that the committee will be inquiring into the impact on communities and the social costs of alcohol and illicit drug problems in Western Australia. I am on record as saying publicly that about 75 per cent of all police responses at least in Western Australia are connected to some issue which is alcohol related. For a lot of the problems that we see, for argument's sake in the

entertainment precincts, while the Hotels Association might point to drugs being the particular problem, we know that probably eight to 10 per cent of the problems in places like Northbridge are drug related, but something like 80 per cent of the problems—that is both antisocial behaviour and criminal conduct, and the resulting health issues to do with that—are alcohol related. We are seeing this problem reflected all around the state.

It is not a problem that is endemic to Western Australia, of course. I have not long been back from the United Kingdom, talking to the police over there about problems of excessive alcohol consumption in the UK. The police over there will give you very much the same sorts of figures. I will either provide or point you to a lot of research that has been done by the Home Office in the UK, particularly in terms of how police and government agencies might respond to the problem of alcohol abuse for the community. There has been quite a lot of research done there which the committee might find useful. I will be happy to provide the references or copies of the documentation if you are interested. I actually do not have the names of all of those documents because they are quite extensive.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. For the record, we would very much appreciate the references to those documents by way of submissions.

Dr O'Callaghan: One of the chief ways that WA Police is starting to respond to the problems we are seeing with excessive alcohol consumption and health damage in communities is by moving towards alcohol restrictions. That is a fairly reactive strategy. It is not really a proactive strategy. It does not necessarily prevent the problem, but it creates a circuit breaker. I can talk to some of the things that have been done in Western Australia, which I am sure you are aware of, even over the last couple of years. But I have been in some conversation with the head of Premier and Cabinet, Peter Conran, about putting together a group of senior CEOs of government to provide a more holistic approach to the problem of alcohol in the community at the moment. We did actually put together quite an effective committee, I thought, last year, to look across the board at problems in Northbridge and other entertainment precincts, and a number of strategies were developed from that. Since I have been Commissioner of Police, that was probably the first time that we have had a formal mechanism for getting the right heads of government together to discuss those sorts of issues and to come up with a cohesive outcome. One of the discussions I have been having with Premier and Cabinet is that we need a committee or a group like that to look at alcohol problems generally across the state and how we might respond to that. To give you an idea of who may be included in that, that includes WA Police, and, of course, the Director of Liquor Licensing, but it also includes people like DCP and Sport and Recreation, and we have even had the PTA involved in that—the transport association—because unless you are able to get everyone working together on common strategies, we are in danger of all doing something on our own and not really coming up with a cohesive outcome. I think one of the problems for government is how you actually come up with a cohesive response to the problem we are talking about.

We have used section 64 of the liquor act, through the Director of Liquor Licensing, to create restrictions in Western Australia as circuit-breakers to problems that we are seeing. You are aware of what is happening in places like Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek. But just by way of example, the bans at Fitzroy Crossing really started with an approach from the community itself. It was not something that was police initiated, but police certainly provided support for that process. What we have done in places like Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing to create circuit-breakers for those communities is ban the sale of packaged liquor that exceeds 2.7 per cent alcohol totally across the board. If you like, at question time I can elaborate about what the earlier research tells us about that, if you do not know already. One of the things that we are getting from the communities there is that there are two problems with that sort of restriction. One is that there is some evidence of displacement, so some people are travelling quite long distances to circumvent the restrictions and so that they can bring alcohol back into the community. Second, the people in the community who do not have problems with alcohol of course are disadvantaged by the fact that it cannot be

purchased. I was in Wiluna on Monday, because the community up there were interested in talking about extending the section 64 restrictions that they had at Wiluna that prevent the sale of alcohol on certain days at certain times. One of the problems they are having in Wiluna is that the community are moving to Meekatharra and down to Leinster and down to Leonora and bringing back alcohol from there. So they want an expansion of the alcohol restrictions across the whole of the northern Goldfields. Now we are starting to talk about expansion of restrictions across the north of the Kimberley, so I have on my desk at the moment a report about alcohol problems in Wyndham and Kununurra. As you move to larger communities and seek to do similar things to the ones you might have done in Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek, it becomes a lot more complicated because the population is more cosmopolitan, and also, if I can say it, Kununurra has got a much higher tourist content, so I would expect that at some stage we are going to have to come up with a cohesive solution to that. The people in Wiluna, for argument's sake, want the introduction of a right-to-drink card, or a withdrawal of a right-to-drink card, or a right-to-purchase-alcohol card. But the infrastructure around doing something like that is quite complicated and would take quite a long time to achieve. I am very happy to go into the specifics of what has happened at Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and other places, but I think in terms of the committee being in control of the amount of time we have got, it might be better to hand over to you to ask me questions about those things.

The CHAIRMAN: You talked about the restrictions. I believe that Victoria now has basically said there will be no more liquor licences past one o'clock in the morning; no more extensions. Have you been in discussions in relation to a similar ban in some of our areas where there is a large amount of antisocial behaviour?

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes. It was raised as part of the Northbridge committee last year. Northbridge's geographic area is something like 0.6 of a square kilometre, and there are something like 71 licensed premises in that area. Of course, many of them are restaurants, so they sell liquor as an adjunct to a meal; they are not all hotels and nightclubs. But certainly there has been some in Victoria. From talking to the Victorian commissioner, Victoria has moved specifically to limit the expansion of the number of liquor licences that can be given, and it is one of the strategies that Victoria Police have thought about and are moving towards. We have not got that far in Western Australia yet, and I think one of the things that we would have to do if we wanted to do that is get some sort of agreement across government and of government itself to move in that direction so that you can cap the number.

The CHAIRMAN: I will support you.

Dr O'Callaghan: I think a valid question to ask in relation to a place like Northbridge is whether Northbridge actually needs more licensed premises. The discussion came up recently with the idea of a microbrewery in Northbridge, and we were I think understandably nervous about another licensed premises that could potentially hold something like 600 to 800 people. It has a different drinking culture from a nightclub, but it still potentially can draw 600 or 800 people into Northbridge and has to be controlled. I think there has to be better cohesion between the people who plan areas like Northbridge and the people who are actually granting licences to trade.

The CHAIRMAN: The research done both here and in the eastern states shows that there is a very close relationship between liquor outlet concentrations and alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes, definitely.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Commissioner, we talk about alcohol in Northbridge, but alcohol is a problem right throughout the state.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes, it is.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Are there are strategies? I am from Albany and we have a lot of drug problems, but when I talk to police in places like Palmerston, they say that the kids start on the

grog, then get onto drugs and then get into violence. Are there strategies for that statewide, apart from just the troubled areas like, say, Northbridge or up north?

Dr O'Callaghan: Well, there are strategies. We have obviously been talking to the Drug and Alcohol Office about education strategies, both for alcohol and for drugs. There are also a number of things like diversion and education programs, particularly for young people. I am not sure that I subscribe to the idea that people become big drinkers and then move on to drugs automatically. I think only a small proportion of kids move on to drugs automatically—usually at the softer end—and then the so-called recreation drugs. I think “recreation” is a bad word to use in connection with the description of any drug, but that is the type of word that is going around. So there are a number of strategies, of course. What tends to happen with government in my view is that it puts the resources where the squeaky wheels are; so that in places like Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek where there are substantial problems, and Northbridge, they get attention first. But there is no doubt that it is a statewide problem. In fact I think we did a recent survey of problems at hotels in Western Australia, and, per capita, the place with the most problems per hotel is Kalgoorlie; it is not Northbridge or anywhere else. So it is quite an interesting statistic.

Mr P.B. WATSON: There are lots of pubs there.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes; true.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we move on, are we able to get those statistics from you?

Dr O'Callaghan: We actually publish them. We can provide you with them but the statistics I am referring to are statistics that refer to the top 10 or 15 hotels in terms of trouble in Western Australia, and Kalgoorlie consistently comes up very high on that. We can dig those out for you.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Dr O'Callaghan, you were talking a bit earlier about having applications on your desk, or was it —

Dr O'Callaghan: In Kununurra; it is a report about the harm.

Ms L.L. BAKER: One of the things I would like your opinion on is whether we as a state continue to expand airports and the bans. Where does that end? I have some concern about attempting a blanket ban in the Kimberley.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

Ms L.L. BAKER: It gets to the point of ridiculous. We are a democracy; people need individual responsibility.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes. My view is that in a place like Fitzroy Crossing, which is predominantly an Indigenous community which has significant health problems, a lot of them driven by alcohol abuse, significant problems with FAS—foetal alcohol syndrome—that you can get away with what some people might call draconian restrictions on the supply of alcohol as a circuit breaker to protect the health of that community. I think one of the problems with that, of course, is that it is only a short-term solution. And what government has to do is provide some proactive support for those communities. So you need more DCP workers—counsellors, drug and alcohol workers—in there to work with the community long term. It becomes much more complicated to apply a ban like that in a place like Kununurra where the relationship between the number of Indigenous people who have problems and the number of non-Indigenous people who have problems is quite different, because you cannot then penalise the whole community for health problems experienced by a few. So I do not think that we can continue to expand these statewide bans ad infinitum everywhere so that we can just not worry about it. We are going to have to come up with a better up-front strategy to deal with this problem. Clearly one of those strategies is better education, counselling and support for those communities. By the way, the police love it, and I will give you a good example of why the police love this as a strategy. Halls Creek has the same population as York. There are five police officers in York and 23 police officers in Halls Creek to deal with the same number of people. Since

the application of the bans, we could probably halve the number of police at Halls Creek because the work is not there. So in terms of economy, it is a very good outcome.

The CHAIRMAN: That actually leads in to a question I was going to ask you. Can you describe how police resources are structured to deal with alcohol? You have given us one example, but I was also going to ask you a little about that. So we would like to know about both the structure and the costs in terms of sending resources to areas where you need them. Could you describe the different aspects to the additional costs that you have to meet because of alcohol-related problems?

Dr O'Callaghan: As I said before, I think about 75 per cent of police effort is directed towards dealing with some alcohol-related issue. So de facto, 75 per cent of the police operational budget—that is, the discretionary operational budget—is focused on providing some support for that area. That might be RBTs and protection from drink drivers, so it might be that sort of area as well. But it can largely be in responding to things like family violence, because we know that something like 80 per cent of the victims in a family violence situation are victims because of alcohol, and the same can be said about the offender. So the actual cost, although I cannot quantify it in dollars, is quite a significant part of police effort and budget in this state. In Halls Creek, for example, there are something like five times the number of police officers than there are in York to deal with the same number of people, but the problems driven by alcohol are so significant that we need the number of police there to deal with that. It is not just about assaults and disorderly conduct. One of the significant problems in places like Halls Creek is the number of young unparented children who are out on the street all night because they cannot go home, and they have to be taken care of. There is very little support service in the Kimberley for very young children who cannot be at home. Children out on the street at night or in the evening unparented, apart from being at risk, are committing offences. One of the main drivers in places like Halls Creek for children to break into people's property is to get food because they are not getting fed. They have to find food somewhere. It is a cycle that draws police into quite a significant social problem. I would guess that if we could stop that problem in Halls Creek tomorrow, you could reduce the number of police to five, because it is not inherently a busy town apart from the fact that it has alcohol-related problems.

[9.50 am]

Mr P.B. WATSON: So what is the answer?

Dr O'Callaghan: I think the answer for us is the circuit-breaker we have put in place, but what I would like to see is more proactive support for those communities. But one of the things that we can do in Halls Creek now as a police force is divert our police into proactive support. We have spoken to the police up there about—because they have got capacity—spending time at the high school, making sure the kids get to school, coaching more sport, getting involved more as community role models and leaders, which they were doing before but had less time to do. So if you are able to create circuit-breakers, you can reinvest your time in something which is a little bit more upstream. I think that will work in Halls Creek in the long term, but you still need more than just police there doing that sort of work.

The CHAIRMAN: I notice with the heads of government that you said police, liquor licensing, DCP, Sport and Recreation and the Public Transport Authority.

Dr O'Callaghan: DAO is another one; that is, the Drug and Alcohol Office.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes. In looking at governments across Australia, I notice that in the ACT, liquor licensing comes under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General. In WA at the moment, and in some other states, it comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Racing and Gaming, and some would say that this could present a conflict of interest because of the pressure being applied, in particular, by the hotel industry in that area, and, through them, also the money that is being supplied at sporting venues. Are you able to tell us, from both your interstate trips and your trips

overseas, whether you would see any advantages in possibly an area like liquor licensing coming under someone in WA like the Attorney General, rather than being in a —

Dr O'Callaghan: I have not experienced any personal concerns about the way it is structured at the moment. It has never been a barrier to us doing our job. In fact, the way things are working at the moment, I think there is a raft of considerations under the liquor act in terms of increasing police power, so that is all okay. When it comes down to the licensing area, I think the Director of Liquor Licensing is supposed to have a degree of independence, and does have a degree of independence, about the issuing of liquor licences. I would not be really advocating for one model or the other. I think they can both work. I think one of the problems in this state is that the AHA, if you take the Australian Hotels Association, is quite a powerful lobby group, and they can put enormous pressure on ministers in government. If you have that conflict, it makes it even more difficult to resolve those issues. But, I mean, that is an external observation without knowing anything about the internal workings of what goes on in the minister's office.

The CHAIRMAN: In 2008 I posed a question to the police minister: it was through joint initiatives with the Office of Crime Prevention, the police liquor enforcement division, including new data analyst positions, to target a much-improved intelligence-led response to alcohol-related crime. Can you describe some of these intelligence-led responses?

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes. I would make the observation that about 10 years ago the WA Police did away with what was called the old liquor and gaming squad, because I think the view then was that the local districts could handle the management of licensed premises and licence applications and things like that. In fact, what happened was that the local districts became so busy with day-to-day police responses that they did not do much about licensed premises, and I think things crept away from us. So about two years ago, we formed not a liquor and gaming squad, but the licensing enforcement division, which not only enforces liquor licences, but enforces second-hand dealers licences and security agents licences and a whole range of those things. We actually put 28 people into the liquor enforcement side of this because of the problems we were seeing in the industry. The analysts are basically looking across the board at problems with licensed premises. So where licensed premises have a high incidence of assault, disorderly conduct and those sorts of problems, we respond by going and dealing with the licensee, policing those premises a little bit harder, and going to the Director of Liquor Licensing to impose restrictions if they do not lift their game. I think you probably have observed some increase in tension between police and liquor licence holders because of this response, because they are getting better intelligence and they are responding straightaway. The benefit for us, of course, is if we can get on top of the licensed premises that is not doing its job, we have got only half the amount of work coming out of it onto the streets. So that is our motivation.

The other thing that we have recently done is significantly increase our response to prohibition orders. I said this publicly a few weeks ago. We intend to take prohibition orders out against any person who is convicted of an assault on licensed premises. We have never done that before. People go to court if they assault someone on licensed premises, the magistrate deals with them and then they move on. But what we will do in every one of these instances now is seek to have them banned from licensed premises for a period of time. But that requires a group of analysts to actually get that information and create the paperwork to make an application to the Director of Liquor Licensing to get those things happening; or, in the case of seeing a hotel that is not doing its job properly, create the paperwork, put the case together to go to the Director of Liquor Licensing to say that we want to restrict trading or we want to change the way they do their business. That requires people to do that sort of work, so it is costing money, of course, and it is costing more effort, but I think the outcome is worth it.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Commissioner, if you have a country race meeting and you want to invite however many security staff you need to have, are the ones in this group the ones that enforce that?

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

Mr P.B. WATSON: When we talk to liquor licensing, they say that there is no set standard for how many security guys there should be, but a lot of the regional racing and football people are finding it very hard when they have been told that they have got to have so many security people there. There is nothing there. Maybe commonsense will rule. The opinion I have from travelling throughout Western Australia is that it is a little bit heavy-handed. What is your opinion of it?

Dr O'Callaghan: This issue was raised by, I think, the turf association, or whatever they call themselves, because a number of country race meets had what they consider very difficult restrictions put on their trade of alcohol. I think what we saw was the licensing enforcement division going out and trying to recover something that has probably got out of control in the past few years. One of our most significant events for drunkenness, disorderly conduct and assaults is the Perth Cup every year, for argument's sake. It is a huge problem for us, but it had been going under the radar for so long. I have spoken to the assistant commissioner for regional Western Australia about this, and he thinks probably we do not need to go in so hard on that; we can warn them a couple of times, and if they then do not comply, we can move to issue infringements. I understand that the infringements that were issued to some of the race meets last year were quite substantial and actually eroded most of the profits they wanted to make. So I have asked him to have a look at that to see whether there is a more consultative approach we could take in that regard. Certainly, with the next round of race meets, as they come up this year, we will trial that and see what sort of response we get from those groups.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is at football, too—grand final day, which is a one-off event. I know of areas where they have gone along and spoken to the local police and said, “Is everything okay?” but they will ping them for something for a couple of grand or something.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes. I have had that, too. Of course, you get a different view from the police about those things.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I realise that.

Dr O'Callaghan: I think what we need to do, though, is communicate a bit better on those things. Of course, the football is an interesting thing, particularly the AFL, because there is some discussion now in government, and it has actually been included in our budget, that we will actually charge for services to those meetings because of the fact that they are charging an entry fee—they are charging quite a high-ticketed fee—they are serving alcohol, they are making profits from the alcohol, and they then expect the police to go in and sort out the mess. So I think the general principle about that is that they will have to pay for that in the future.

[10.00 am]

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: If I can follow up on one about the race meetings. I know the Geraldton race meeting is—it seems to me—a very sedate, tame affair. They have a one in 20 rule; that is for every 20 patrons, they have to have a security person.

Mr P.B. WATSON: There is no rule.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: That is what I was told. They have to bring them in from Perth. It is a huge cost.

Dr O'Callaghan: I think that no rule is issued by the Director of Liquor Licensing, but that there is some sort of “best-practice model”. As I said to Mr Watson, I think we will have to go in and consult those people a little better. If it is not a race meet that has problems, or it is one that does not have a history of problems, there may be a case for not having so many security people there. I know that it is expensive to truck them up there and to truck them back.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: It actually threatens the viability of a number of regional meetings.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes; sure.

The CHAIRMAN: Some of the data we have from 2005–06 shows that alcohol was involved in 25 per cent of threatening behaviour, 38 per cent of assaults and 53 per cent of aggravated assaults. We have recently added the social cost from alcohol on the community to the terms of reference for this inquiry. Do you think that the cost and the effect of this antisocial behaviour has got worse or better over the past few years?

Dr O’Callaghan: I think in places like the metropolitan area that it has got worse. We did a fair bit of work around the report—“Is your house in order?”—the Northbridge report which looked at some of the increases in harm caused; and by harm, we are measuring admissions to RPH or attendances at RPH casualty, which, over a period, increased for people who had attended because they had been assaulted or they had been involved in something in which alcohol was the primary factor. I think the health department actually highlighted it as well. I do not necessarily think that it has got worse in places like Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek; I think that it has been there for a long time. It is just an ongoing problem for those communities and one that has been around for years and years. We are just trying to address it now in a much stronger way. My other observation is that we have seen more harm amongst young people. Although I do not have the statistics here, the anecdotal information coming from police officers working in the entertainment precincts is that there is an increased propensity for young girls to drink excessively. These days, young people are drinking high-sugar, high-alcohol drinks very quickly in entertainment precincts. One of the most significant problems, and a complaint from all of the licensees in Northbridge, is that they do, what is called in the UK, preloading.

Mr P.B. WATSON: That was my next question!

Dr O’Callaghan: Because drinks are so expensive in nightclubs, they drink at home. They arrive at Northbridge already quite affected by alcohol—not necessarily rolling drunk, but quite affected by alcohol—and then they top up with high-sugar, high-alcohol concentration drinks; what we might term alcopops. That then results in young people spilling out onto the street being disorderly and maybe getting involved in an assault, but also creating some personal risk to themselves. What I thought was rather amusing, but is quite a serious thing, was when I was in the UK looking at some of their entertainment precincts, they have a significant problem with young girls coming out of licensed premises late at night and breaking their ankles because they are invariably wearing high-heeled shoes. They come out and they fall over and cannot stand up. They actually go round and hand out thongs—they call them flip-flops; we call them thongs—to young girls to enable them to walk home, because they have significant problems getting home, or they take their shoes off and they cut their feet on broken glass. There are all these attendant health problems emerging in these entertainment precincts that, I think, we have to get on top of. There is a definite change in drinking culture, and I think that that has happened in the last 10 years.

The CHAIRMAN: I bring you back. I agree with you; there has been a change. A recent study conducted for the police said that during 2004–05 duties directly attributed to alcohol cost the police \$70.8 million and represented almost 11 per cent of the police operating costs.

Dr O’Callaghan: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: That is 11 per cent; that is not what you have said to us this morning.

Dr O’Callaghan: No; that is 11 per cent, but I am talking about the discretionary budget. In terms of the discretionary budget, which is only a part of the total budget of policing, those figures would probably be right. The discretionary budget is only a small part of the total police budget. Other stuff goes on leasing costs, vehicles and all those sorts of things; so that is an aside. Out of that, if you take that discretionary budget, it is a much bigger percentage, but in the total it will something closer to what you are saying—\$70 million to \$80 million.

Mr P. ABETZ: In essence, if there was no alcohol problem anywhere at all, we would have ample police. The police would be quite well resourced to do all the other things if there was no alcohol.

Dr O’Callaghan: If you take police off the table, the benefits to health would be phenomenal. They would multiply 10 or 15 times what the cost saving to police would be. In many respects, the applications that we make to the Director of Liquor Licensing are not focused on reducing crime; they are focused on reducing the attendant health outcomes because I think that that is where your most powerful argument lies.

The CHAIRMAN: I was quite surprised that the accident and emergency departments at the moment do not keep statistics that actually show those true costs in relation to alcohol. I think with the departments that you have identified, probably a large part of their budget is used up because of alcohol-related problems. It would be nice if maybe with these other departments—you might need to include health as well because of the flow-on—we could have a true picture of the costs for the community to see. I mean, people in the community see in the newspapers the nasty accidents, but most of them are not aware how much it is costing WA.

Dr O’Callaghan: And I think the problem for health and police and others is that the systems that we have to capture information do not accurately capture all of that information. So, you end up making guesstimates about what the total cost is, because, one, the systems are not sophisticated enough to capture it; and, two, the more information that you want to capture, the more police or people you have to have capturing the information and recording it. That in itself is a problem.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Commissioner, can I just ask, out of the 23 police in Halls Creek, how many are Indigenous?

Dr O’Callaghan: Police?

Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes.

Dr O’Callaghan: In fact, I think, there is only one Indigenous police officer up there now. Another issue that I was talking to Laverton about only last week was that it is very difficult to recruit Indigenous police officers who have the respect of the local community. For argument’s sake, I can recruit an Indigenous police officer from Narrogin, but there is no point in sending him or her to Halls Creek, because they have no more respect among the local Indigenous people than any other non-Indigenous person would have. With the introduction of the cadet scheme, we are trying to target young Aboriginal people coming out of year 12. We are trying to capture them as part of our cadet scheme and return them to their place of origin when they graduate. We find that if you do not capture young Aboriginal kids when they are finishing school, you lose them to wherever they go, and you cannot get them back. We are hoping that that will pay dividends in some year’s time. But it is a significant problem for us: you know, getting Halls Creek Indigenous people working in Halls Creek for the Halls Creek community. Because of the way we have recruited and trained people in the past, it has become an enormous challenge. One way forward with that, is the auxiliary police model. They do not have to undergo the full spread of tactical police training, but they can get enough training to deal with some of the liaison functions. You can then get someone locally, train them locally and keep them locally. That would be a good outcome.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that a follow-on question? If not, Peter has a question.

Ms L.L. BAKER: It is, and no—it is not a follow-on question. Obviously, there are plenty of models around for dealing with that problem, and you are probably aware of what some of them are. The UN has been dealing with that problem in its development programs forever; that is, do you train someone locally and leaving them there when they are not respected. I was actually going to ask you a question in relation to bringing the silos together to talk a bit more about alcohol management, commissioner. My experience has been that one of the problems that you have if you do not include, perhaps, a couple of the major NGO providers who deal with this, is that the government works out how it wants to run things, and then turns around and tries to get the service providers who are actually doing the work on the ground to do it, and you fail dismally. I think, if

you can and have the capacity to include a couple of those big agencies—maybe the SALYs or a couple of the big ones who provide services around this area—it would really be of great benefit.

[10.10 am]

Dr O'Callaghan: I think that that is going to happen. Government has been casting around for ways to do its business better, and I think that that is a good thing. Part of that is, I think, for some of the NGOs to assume greater responsibility for some services that the government has tried to provide in the past. But I think that they will be a lot more involved in the discussion about these social issues in the future and how we might provide a service. I am very confident that this committee—which needs to be run by Premier and Cabinet; I do not want the police commissioner running it or health running it—needs to be taken centrally as a government strategy, with all of us contributing to that, including the NGOs.

Mr P. ABETZ: In terms of the whole alcohol culture that is affecting our society, to what extent is that an issue within the police force itself? Every now and then we hear again of an off-duty police officer getting into a drunken brawl and that kind of thing. What sort of impact would you say that is having on policing?

Dr O'Callaghan: The first thing that I would say about that is that police are simply drawn from society, like anyone else, so you are going to have a representative sample. The noble people coming to the police will bring all the issues that any other person in the community has. We have seen, in recent times, a number of police, off duty, go to a place like Northbridge, get affected by alcohol and get themselves into trouble. In terms of the way it is affecting the police, I think that our response has been fairly tough. You might have watched the discussion on Glen Bickley last week, who has been removed from the Police. The fact is, police may be drawn from society and they may have all the attendant problems, but they just cannot behave like everybody else. That is the end of that. If they do, they cannot be in the Police. That is how we are managing it. We do have extensive health and welfare and counselling, obviously for police officers who have problems with alcohol consumption and other types of health problems. Generally, in my view it has been, these are the guidelines and if you want to step over them, you can move out.

The CHAIRMAN: We heard recently that there were about three per cent of police currently under investigation and probably being given assistance.

Dr O'Callaghan: For all sorts of things; yes. I have probably dealt with, in the last 12 months, three or four police officers who have gone to an entertainment precinct at night off duty and got themselves untidy and someone has had to—the police—intervene to deal with them in some way. It is an issue. These are all gen Ys, too; it is a reflection of the gen Y culture towards drinking.

Mr P. ABETZ: Like you said, with 5 500 police officers, it is not a huge issue.

Dr O'Callaghan: It is a time issue.

Mr P. ABETZ: It makes the headlines, but in terms of proportion, it is actually not as big as what it might appear to be.

Dr O'Callaghan: No; three is very small.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is a little bit different with drugs. If you come home and you have drugs, parents go crook. But when you see the parents smoking and drinking, and saying, “No, you shouldn't smoke or you shouldn't drink”, what is a kid going to do these days? Especially with so much advertising and things like that. I think people have to take more responsibility. Some of these young kids and some of these adults go out drinking and blame everyone else when something happens. People have got to start taking more responsibility for themselves.

Dr O'Callaghan: We are getting into a philosophical domain. I will just relate quickly a talk that I gave to education people in Fremantle last week at the education, wellbeing and mental health conference. One of the things that I said was that part of the problem is not just what you are saying

but is that we have a whole generation of parents who have become quite acquisitive in the way they look at the world. They want bigger houses. They want new cars. That forces parents to work. They both have to go out to work. They both have to earn money. There are also many single-parent families and we have a whole generation of young people now who have less leadership and role modelling than the previous generations have had. And that is just a social change that I do not know that this committee or I can resolve. But it is having an impact on the decisions the young people make. I would imagine that the guidance that kids used to get on consumption of alcohol and going out and those sorts of things a generation ago is different to what they might be getting now. They have a lot more free rein. They are making lots of choices about these things a lot earlier than the previous generation might have done and we, as police, see those problems emerge on the streets.

Mr P.B. WATSON: And the way alcohol consumption is going at the moment, it is going to get worse, is it not?

Dr O'Callaghan: There is no strategy in place to improve it. I think that one of the things that is lacking is a very cohesive public education campaign about alcohol. We are not seeing much of that. We are not seeing much advice. Although I think it is inherent in the school curriculum—apart from what they might get as part of their health—on the level that the anti-smoking campaign came forward, we are not seeing the same effort in the area of alcohol.

The CHAIRMAN: I guess that I would agree with you. From what you have been saying, it appears that we should be addressing the problem more so than the consequences. What you have to deal with at the moment is the consequences. I certainly hope that as a result of this inquiry's report, that we might see some measures—if they have not already been introduced by then—adopted by the government to look at legislation and strategies, including public education, to try to turn the curve, because the curve seems to be going up. There has been, particularly in the last six months, a focus on legislation dealing with the problems.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Even at these committee hearings, people are saying that the police are not doing road tests now. We were told that the number of drink-driver testing on the roads has dropped by more than 6 000 and that drug-driving testing has decreased by 10 per cent.

Dr O'Callaghan: Do you mean the number of RBTs?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Dr O'Callaghan: I can talk to that, if you would like.

The CHAIRMAN: That would be—thank you.

Dr O'Callaghan: When RBT was introduced in the 1990s, the police strategy in those days was to set up an RBT any time, any place, and to test thousands and thousands of people. Ultimately, I think one of the original targets was about one million people a year in Western Australia, which means a lot of people went through two and three times, obviously. But it actually resulted in very low charging and conviction rates. People would put the booze bus in the middle of Scarborough Beach Road at 11 o'clock in the morning simply to generate numbers and knowing that they would not get anybody. Since police have been targeting particular times and places, what has happened is that the number of people tested for RBT has gone down but that the number of people per hundred being charged with drink-driving offences has gone up because you are focusing on the places where people are drinking and driving. There is a whole intelligence model behind that. That is why you are seeing that outcome. You are seeing less people tested, but a greater concentration of people per capita convicted or charged with an offence.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you think that we need to be doing more or are you quite happy with the results that you are getting? Do you think that is making a difference?

Dr O'Callaghan: We are very happy with the results. I think the rate has gone up. We had a target rate that we were aiming for and we have achieved that target rate; so we are pleased from that perspective. You could always do more but, you know, the physical number of resources that you have to put into it also has to increase. One of the things that I think about drink-driving is that the dialogue around drink-driving is still not harsh enough. I think that there is some level of acceptance that drink-driving is, in some respects, a minor type of offence and that it is one that it is okay if it happens a couple of times. I think that our dialogue on drink-driving has to be a lot tougher than it is.

The CHAIRMAN: What relationship do the police have with—I mean, you have said in some country towns you are trying to encourage teenagers and younger people to work with police—younger people in the metropolitan area?

Dr O'Callaghan: Last year we started some work with the education department, working with a couple of schools that were considered higher risk schools. These were senior high schools in the metropolitan area. We used officers who were from local PCYCs to outreach into those schools to work with those kids. It is early days yet. We used to have a school-based program that does not exist any more. But my view is that we have a police community youth centre infrastructure around the state, both in the metropolitan area and in the regions, and that we can use that a lot more strategically to interface with the kids at schools, rather than run a PCYC facility where kids, if they want to, can come to engage in activities. You can certainly continue to do that, but I think that you also need to go out and run programs specifically for young men and women in the schools. One that I can refer to that has worked really well is a program that is being run down at Rockingham for young men mostly from the Kwinana–Rockingham area who have got into trouble with the justice system—many of them through alcohol and drug-related issues—and who consequently do not fit into the school system very well. The police down there have, with the support of BHP, put them through a metal fabrication program and got them a trade certificate and got them into some employment. Our review of that program has shown that 80 per cent of the young men who go into that program do not reoffend, whereas I think that the recidivism rate before that program was in place was quite high. But it is limited to the nine or 10 kids who are in that program. You could do more, if there were more resources available to do that. But I think the PCYC infrastructure is a good place to launch that sort of strategy that we are talking about.

[10.20 am]

Ms L.L. BAKER: How helpful is Constable Care and the programs that they run out of that? Given that it is in my electorate, I thought that I should ask about that!

Dr O'Callaghan: I think that Constable Care has taken over most of the work that the police ever did in primary schools. If you go back 20 years, we had a community section that had police going out to talk to primary school kids. And that is useful, but as you know policing has shrunk at the margins a fair bit over the last few years as pressure has risen to do a lot of other things; so Constable Care has stepped into that area. They are actually very good at providing a more interactive approach, particularly for young kids. They talk about protective behaviours and about the respect agenda a lot, and the sort of things that you want to be teaching young kids. And they do it in a way that is fun and that enables the kids to interact. When the police went in the kids liked it a little bit, but the police were never a lot of fun. I do not remember it being a lot of fun when I was at school. I think that the Constable Care infrastructure is really important. I did see that in the last budget that they got a chunk of money from government—which is really important too—so they can actually plan to go and do what they do.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you able to tell us which high schools you have given the additional assistance to?

Dr O'Callaghan: One of them was Gilmore College in Kwinana, and the other one we were looking at was Clarkson. Having said that, the Clarkson one might have been delayed. We have

been working with the City of Wanneroo and the City of Joondalup on them loaning us some facilities to work out of up there. We have been pointed to a facility in Girrawheen and one, I think, in Mindarie, where we can run a PCYC without actually investing in capital infrastructure. So they are the two schools that we were targeting. They came up as schools that the education department would like us to most closely look at as priority schools.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, we might talk about that later.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Moving from alcohol more towards the drug or illicit drug scene: do you want to make any comments on issues around that? How big a problem is it? What amount of police resources go into it? Occasionally, the big amphetamine lab will make front page news, but in terms of the overall picture, how big is the issue? Are the issues getting bigger for police? I would like to hear your comments on that.

Dr O'Callaghan: The issues are becoming more significant for policing in certain types of drug areas. As I have said, I think, in terms of assault and antisocial behaviour and what we see on the streets of an entertainment precinct, about eight per cent of those problems are related to the consumption of illicit drugs. We have had something like a 400 per cent increase in the number of clan labs detected in Western Australia over the past couple of years; that has gone from something like 29 in 2008 to 120 last year and we are well on track to achieve the same number this year. There has been quite a significant upwards trend in the manufacture of amphetamines locally and two things are driving that: one, there are simply more people entering the arena; and two, the police organised crime squad has actually upped its focus on those sorts of things, assisted by some money from the proceeds of crime fund. We never previously had access to the proceeds of crime fund. We have come to an agreement with the Attorney General to have access to some money from that and that has enabled us to give more attention to the seizure of these sorts of things and to work on clan labs.

If you look at today's *The West*, you will see that there is another significant seizure worth, I think, something like \$1 million of, what we call for want of a better term, recreational drugs. So it is on the upsurge. To just give you an idea about the scene across Australia, of course the way to attack this sort of problem is to have a national focus on drug distribution across Australia. So the Australian Crime Commission, in conjunction with all of the states and the AFP, has a number of significant operations going Australia wide. Without closing the session, I cannot really talk about that publicly. And it probably would not be relevant to this committee anyway. But there are a number of those things going on currently. Also, in this stage there is an upward focus on proceeds of crime. One of the instructions that we have given to the crime command at the moment is to go out and increase the number of proceeds of crime seizures, because it is one thing—and I think that if you have been reading *The West* this week you can work out how difficult it is to convict individual people of offences of drug distribution. It is much easier—well it is not much easier but one option is—to seize their assets under the unexplained wealth legislation, which allows you to seize houses, cars and goods. And that has the effect of hobbling, if you like, people who distribute drugs. So we are working a lot in that area too.

The CHAIRMAN: Lisa, do you have one last question?

Ms L.L. BAKER: Yes, in relation to the kind of policing that you use when you have crowd control issues, and that kind of thing. A lot of it involves alcohol and drugs, particularly the big raves and parties —

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I have a whole range of names and I cannot quite remember the whole list to describe the different types of parties that you can get. The mounted section is also something which is of concern to me. Do you think that that is an area which should be strengthened given that

they seem to have very good results in making a very calming presence very quickly in crowd control where there is alcohol and drugs?

Dr O'Callaghan: I think the mounted section in that regard does a fantastic job. In fact, in recent years we have actually stopped them from doing anything related to displays and shows. They do not do show work anymore. They do not go to country meets. They do more tactical operational stuff. One of the issues for us is, of course, how you distribute your resources. We also have upward pressure to buy and acquire, for arguments sake, more drug dogs or more, what you might call, general purpose dogs for crowd control and running people down. They are all pressures in terms of resources. Certainly, if you have more horses, you could do more work in that area with crowd control. They actually do quite a good job of what we call suburb patrolling because they are quite high and people can actually see over fences and see what is going on. So they do a bit of that. But we also want to increase our response from the canine section as well as a number of other areas. And also, there is a proliferation of technology, which we would also like to get our hands on. And it is expensive. Like the health department, they want new technology and so do we.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: My local road safety committee: before Christmas we were talking about drink-driving and they surprised me. Everybody who was sitting around that table wanted to adopt the Scandinavian model of zero tolerance. I do not know if they also wanted to adopt the 48 hours in the slammer if you get caught. I was just curious to know if that is somewhere you think that we might head to one day.

Dr O'Callaghan: I do not think so. Sometimes when you compare a place like Australia with Sweden or Scandinavia, it is like comparing Australia with Singapore. I mean people have said to me, "Why don't we introduce canings for offenders?"

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Floggings.

Dr O'Callaghan: The issue is that in Singapore the crime rate is low not because people get caned but because they have a different culture—altogether. They have a much closer family relationship. Kids are parented a lot more than they are in this culture. There is a lot more responsibility on kids. Schools are stricter. There is a whole range of things. You just cannot compare apples and pears. I think the same could be said for that idea in Scandinavia of zero tolerance. I think that the success that we have had with, say, the smoking campaign could be achieved with the same sort of education around drink-driving and a changing dialogue about how serious this actually is. But we have to put that effort in. I think that that is a much more effective way than saying that we are going to have zero tolerance, because the effect of that is that we will cause enormous pressure in the justice system that it will probably not be able to deal with. We are struggling now. And that is one of the things about continually upping the number of police officers. If you continue to increase the number of police officers, what they will do is arrest more people and feed more people into a system that is struggling down this end to cope. We are very good at sweeping the streets and we will continue to do that because that is what we do. But if they cannot process them at this end, it becomes a problem for everybody.

The CHAIRMAN: I have two last questions. The first one is: the committee is hoping to undertake a trip to the Kimberley to go to various places to hold some hearings in August this year. We would like to go Broome, Balgo, Derby, Fitzroy and Kununurra, and we would very much like your support for us to speak with police officers in each of those places, while we are up there, to hear the local side. You have given us the global picture, but they can give us the local side to that.

Dr O'Callaghan: Sure, that is fine.

The CHAIRMAN: In that case, one last question, because I know that we are running a few minutes late. If there were a pot of gold and the government were to ask you what new initiative it could introduce now to limit the impact, in your area, of alcohol consumption, where would it be and what new initiative would you suggest could be introduced—if the money was there—that

could have a major impact? It might be in relation to schoolies or it might be in relation to Northbridge.

Dr O'Callaghan: My view is that the money here should be spent on education and support. If the police were to get the money, the best use of that money would be for us to increase our interaction with young people, particularly at that upper high school level—senior high school level—to provide alternative role models and leadership to what they might get from their parents. Because if the parents are absent they are not parenting, and someone else needs to step into that space; it could be a sporting coach, it could be anybody. But if the police were to have increased capacity, particularly around PCYCs, we could do more with schools and at least get to some of those kids. But if you had money to spend anywhere in government on this problem, you have got to spend it at the education campaign end, not at the enforcement end, because enforcement is not a high cost for us. We can do enforcement. We can ban people. That is easy, with the stroke of a pen, it is done. It is much more complicated and much more costly to get at the proactive end and do it, and that is where you should be putting your efforts.

The CHAIRMAN: Prevention is better than cure.

Dr O'Callaghan: Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN: It seems to be a common theme.

Dr O'Callaghan: If the police are involved it has gone wrong already.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: That was like they used to have. They used to attach a police officer to a school, did they not?

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: And that is, sort of, what you are talking about.

Dr O'Callaghan: Yes. I do not know if that model is possible because there are so many schools in Western Australia. But a PCYC typically has a number of feeder schools. And if they had more capacity, in other words if the police officers could be released from their responsibilities to manage the club—if you could get extra police officers in there—and you get club managers in who are non-police officers to deal with the infrastructure and the receipting of monies and audits and things like that, you could get the police officers out working with the kids bringing them back to the club. That is, they work with them in school and out of school, providing programs for them that help them get employment, help them achieve and help them become responsible citizens. I think that that is where we can make the biggest impact.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It is about self-esteem.

Dr O'Callaghan: Self-esteem is a significant part of the issue.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: In that case, I would like to thank you very much 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 for coming today.

Dr O'Callaghan: Thank you very much.

Hearing concluded at 10.34 am