

**SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE 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 FITZROY CROSSING
FRIDAY, 30 JULY 2010**

SESSION TWO

Members

**Mr P. Abetz (Chairman)
Mr P.B. Watson**

Hearing commenced at 11.17 am**JEFFERIES, MR PAUL GRAHAM****Principal, Fitzroy Valley District High School, examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to welcome you and thank you very much for giving up your time to be here with us. I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners, past, present and future, of the land on which we are meeting today. As you would know, the purpose of the hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for our inquiry into the adequacy and appropriateness of prevention and treatment services for alcohol and illicit drug problems in Western Australia. We are not just focused on the Kimberley, but all of Western Australia, but obviously we are here to get a picture of what the unique issues are here, and some of the ways forward. To formally introduce myself, I am Peter Abetz, the vice chairman of the committee, and with me is Peter Watson, the member for Albany. The other members of the committee have gone to Noonkanbah for hearings there. Judith is from Hansard and will be recording everything, and Alice is the jack-of-all-trades; she fixes whatever needs fixing! She is our parliamentary officer. I will just read a couple of formal statements as part of what we need to do. The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. This is a public hearing, and 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. Also, if there is anything you want to share with us that you feel is not appropriate to be on public record—obviously, as principal, you might want to tell us something that has happened at school that could create issues for you—simply say that you want to go into closed session, and that part will not then be recorded and will not go on the public record, but we will make a mental note and jot some things down that will help to inform what we might recommend to government eventually.

There are a couple of formal questions I need to ask you. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

Mr Jefferies: Yes.

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

Mr Jefferies: Yes.

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

Mr Jefferies: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any questions about appearing before us as a witness today?

Mr Jefferies: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We have roughly an hour. We thought it would be best if you perhaps painted a bit of a picture for us in terms of what you see as the issues; some of the things that you think could be done and so on. Basically, what we are looking for is what people on the ground living in the community can tell us in terms of what things are working, what things we are doing that are not working, where funding could perhaps be redirected into more productive areas, and the big gaps in the system in terms of dealing with drug and alcohol treatment and prevention

programs. Being in a school setting, we are particularly interested to hear from you what you think works in terms of the prevention side of helping kids to understand that this is not the way to go in terms of drinking and taking drugs. Over to you.

Mr Jefferies: To give the committee a bit of a picture, Fitzroy Valley District High School services 14 communities across the Fitzroy River valley. The students bus in from as far away as Jimbalakudunj, an hour and a half away, towards Broome. High school students also come in from places like Ngalingkadji and Bayulu; there are a few small communities on Tunnel Creek Road that come in. We have approximately five language groups attending the school: Wangkatjungka, which is out Halls Creek way; Gooniyandi; Bunuba; Walmajarri; and Nyikana–Mangala, which is out towards Derby. The school is actually a good representation of what is happening in the whole valley. It is not just a representation of what is happening in Fitzroy Crossing.

The CHAIRMAN: How many students, in total, if they all turn up on the same day?

Mr Jefferies: It varies between the wet season and the dry season. In the wet season our numbers would be between 300 to 320, something like that. That is primarily because people in the smaller communities do not want to be trapped when roads are impassable. Small communities tend to run out of food, diesel and so on. During the dry our numbers drop down to 270 to 280, roughly.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Do you have a truancy officer?

Mr Jefferies: We have a school-based attendance officer, who has more of a proactive, positive role than the impression one gets with a truancy officer. Part of what we have had to do as well is to actually employ a youth support worker, because we are finding that we are so swamped with the pastoral care needs of students that we get distracted quite easily dealing with the moment. Forward planning or having someone focus on their particular job is really difficult because there are days where things happen in the community and we have to deal with that.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have a chaplain of the school?

Mr Jefferies: No, we attempted to have a chaplain, but as with most things that are involved with Fitzroy Crossing, staffing is a nightmare; we cannot get the people. We had the funds to employ a chaplain full-time through Youthcare, the school and the Australian Children's Trust guaranteed two days a week in some form, whether direct or by finding benefactors to donate that. We advertised the position and had no applicants. Generally a lot of it is linked to housing; there is no housing, so people are reluctant to come to town if they do not have housing. Also, I think people are reluctant in general to work in a school or educational setting because of the stress and workload in terms of the emotional stress that it brings upon people.

Mr P.B. WATSON: How many staff have you got, Paul?

Mr Jefferies: Approximately maybe 32 teaching staff, including administration, and about 18 support staff, which includes things like our special needs education assistants, our Aboriginal education officers and things like gardeners and education assistants for the junior school.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What percentage would be Aboriginal?

Mr Jefferies: In terms of the support staff, it would be probably two-thirds. In terms of teachers, it would be about 10 per cent.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Is that an issue? Do you think the kids would come to school more often if there were Aboriginal people teaching, or does it not really matter?

Mr Jefferies: I do not believe that that matters. What matters are quality teachers and quality programs. One can walk through my school and look at the attendance figures; kids attend when they have a quality teacher—a teacher who cares about them and a teacher who is always looking to see how they can do things better and provide education in a local context, always linking back to the culture of the students.

The CHAIRMAN: From what you see at the school, to what extent is alcohol and drug taking an issue amongst the high school-aged kids, and to what extent is it an issue in their homes, that actually prevents them from coming to school? Like, because mum and dad are drunk, they do not want to sleep at home—that sort of stuff?

Mr Jefferies: Alcohol affects every aspect of the school. There is not a single part of the school that is not impacted by alcohol. In terms of the part of my workforce that have alcohol dependency issues, they will, during the good times, be dry and coping, but during the bad times will get into the binge drinking habit, and on pay week we will not see them on Thursday or Friday.

The CHAIRMAN: That is actually the employees at the school?

Mr Jefferies: That is actual workers at the school.

The CHAIRMAN: Support staff?

Mr Jefferies: Yes. That impacts on the delivery of what you come to do at school as well, especially when you look at things like high needs and special needs children. It is quite huge in terms of when someone does not turn up to work, the impact that that has is significant. We have recently documented and provided some data that showed the difference between, say, a senior high school with 1 100 students, and our school. In terms of a single pay period, particularly with support staff, they may have two leave applications that they would have to electronically submit, but also keep the paper copy. During the trial period that we were given the monitoring that we had, there were between 40 and 50. The workload issue on the registrar and staff is huge, because there is also an expectation that all of my Aboriginal workers are functionally literate and are able to complete these forms. As soon as the auditor comes in and does a quick snapshot and finds that I had an AIO that was away on a particular day, but the paper request form was not filled in, that is a cross against me in terms of audit requirements.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What about when there are funerals?

Mr Jefferies: Funerals are really significant. We deal with funerals on an ongoing basis. One thing one notices about working in Fitzroy Crossing is that death is just a part of everyday life. The mother of two of our students passed away from a heart condition just before the holidays. That had a significant impact in terms of sorry camps that were set up and in terms of the cultural expectations on families and students.

[11.30 am]

Mr P.B. WATSON: Can I ask how old the mother was?

Mr Jefferies: She was in her 40s. In terms of suicide, it is still happening; in terms of the violence, it is now starting to escalate. It is my own personal opinion that I am witnessing the decline, in terms of the restrictions were brought in, everyone in town was saying that we needed the backup and we needed the support of mental health, we needed the support of drug and alcohol counsellors. It has been a mantra. This is the third parliamentary standing committee I have actually addressed on a range of issues, so you can understand why I can get a bit cynical.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr Jefferies: We had a window of opportunity in terms of the support required, and that window was particularly in the early stages of the restrictions. My own personal opinion is that once the supermarket burnt down, people got into the habit of driving to do their shopping; those habits have stuck. I am hearing rumours of people doing a shopping trip to Derby, but they will also bring a massive quantity of alcohol back. Now there is, I believe—it is my own personal opinion—a culture of doing the grog run, and we are looking at the level of trauma, the level of sleep deprivation, and the level of neglect starting to increase in our students again.

The CHAIRMAN: Some of the Indigenous people who have presented to us have spoken very positively about the liquor ban and would like to see it extended right across the Kimberley as a

consistent thing, so you cannot go to Derby and do something down there that you cannot do here kind of thing. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr Jefferies: My own personal opinion—I am not a heavy drinker by any stretch of the imagination—is that I would welcome it. There is a reason that I am almost burnt out after two and a half years; you are continually dealing with things that are completely out of your control in the school. We have taken the school a long way in the past three years, in terms of our pastoral care and strategies that we have put in place are starting to be recognised by other schools as models of best practice. We are at a point where we can deal with a lot of stuff that comes through the door and minimise the disruption to learning, but we also need those children to start coming through the door. When I am out in the community talking to parents about why students are not coming to school, they will often talk about the students being tired, and sleep deprivation would be probably one of the main causes of students with, say, poor behaviour, because they are literally beside themselves.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What about health issues such as not being able to hear properly?

Mr Jefferies: We were probably the first school in the Kimberley to install sound field systems in all the classrooms.

The CHAIRMAN: What systems?

Mr Jefferies: A sound field system. There are four speakers attached to each corner of the wall, the teacher actually wears an infrared mic, and there is an infrared receiver and an amplifier. That actually enables the students to hear. In terms of the otitis media, it is a way of ensuring that the even if the kids—the kids fluctuate with ear infections; they will go up and down, and so sometimes you do not even know if they have an ear infection. That is really difficult, because it could be something as simple as background noise and the child cannot hear a single word that you are saying unless you are actually looking at them, and they are trying to read lips as well. But if you have a class of, say, 20 to 25 kids, it is almost impossible to look at every child in the face. The sound field system actually amplifies the teacher's voice, and it actually enables students to hear even when if they have an ear infection.

It is not within your scope, but I am fairly scathing of community health at this particular moment. We have reported children with massive boils and tropical infections that we are cleaning; you do not want to be squeamish if you are a teacher in the valley. We do a lot of treating boils; we do a lot of treating tropical sores; we help students tissue spear glue ears. We do not seem to be able to get a school nurse to come to our school.

The CHAIRMAN: You do not have a school nurse at your school?

Mr Jefferies: The letter of the agreement says that our school nurse is there primarily for preventative issues, so she does screening for glaucoma, she does immunisations, she does a hearing check on certain year groups, and that is the sole amount of service we get.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that a full-time position at the school?

Mr Jefferies: No, she services other remote schools; however, our school has the highest number of students.

The CHAIRMAN: But I would think, from what you have said, that a school your size with the issues you have would probably need at least one full-time school nurse to look after those medical issues, would you not?

Mr Jefferies: I do not disagree whatsoever. Some of the replies that we have had when we have referred students are that the community health nurse does not do first aid.

The CHAIRMAN: So where else can they go?

Mr Jefferies: Good question. That is why we have had to appoint a youth support worker. When the hospital was fully manned—right now I think they are still a doctor short—we were running a medical clinic out of our sickbay, and it lasted for an hour. Our student services coordinator would take the referrals from teachers, the youth support worker would go and get consent forms signed, and then we would actually, out of the sheer generosity of the hospital, have a doctor for an hour to run that sort of clinic. It was so that we knew what was required for the students. Often it would require the youth support worker to find family and support the family in terms of getting the child to hospital for treatment, and sometimes it was just letting us know whether we had to just keep replacing bandages or what a good treatment would be if it did not require hospital or doctor sort of treatment.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Paul, is there access to drugs and alcohol at the school?

Mr Jefferies: No, not at school, but drugs and alcohol are, from my understanding, relatively freely available in the community.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What age groups from your school would be accessing them?

Mr Jefferies: Probably extreme cases would be 12 year olds, but mostly you tend to see the significant impact of things like drugs and alcohol when the students are about 14 or 15 years old. That is also reflected in things like attendance statistics. A lot of the students are culturally seen to be a man or a woman, and sometimes school is seen as for little kids, which is part of the reason we have restructured our whole school. We now run a middle school, so we have a year 7 to year 9, and we have a senior school of year 10 to year 12 to try to capture those students before they start to fade away. We run a strong focus on VET programs—vocational education and training. We currently run a business certificate I, a building and construction certificate I, and we are trying to source somewhere to start a rural operations certificate I course.

[11.40 am]

Mr P.B. WATSON: What about sport at the school?

Mr Jefferies: Right now, we are trying to get the Sporting Chance, which is the DEEWR-funded girls sporting academy, up and running. We have hit barrier after barrier and it boils down to staffing and housing. We have got to the stage now where we are looking at negotiating a teacher to pick up the coordinator role, because that is the only way I can have someone come in, who can do the job and also who we can provide housing for. We are in the very infancy of talking to Clontarf and we are hoping, if all the planets line up, that we will actually be running a series of sporting academies out of the school next year. There will be a dance and a basketball academy for girls, that will run under the banner of Sporting Chance and that is funded through DWWR, but run through Madalah, a non-profit NGO. We will also be running a football academy and we are looking at a structure where there would hopefully be a community reference group, like a steering committee, above those academies and each of the academies would run underneath.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Do you have any kids go into the Derby one? Is there an academy in Derby?

Mr Jefferies: Yes there is, but it is too far; there is no hostel. If students are looking to move for education reasons, they generally go to Broome where there is a residential hostel based there. We do have some students go to the Christian Aboriginal parents schools, the CAPS. There is one in Coolgardie and one in the Esperance, but you will probably only have one in 200 who will actually stay; they do not tend to cope.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I had someone in here yesterday saying that there was no junior sport. They have senior footy, but there is no under-15 football, or under 15s down there —

Mr Jefferies: If you not play footy, you are in a bit of trouble. I have a five-year-old and a seven-year-old at home, and they are just desperate to play soccer, but there are no programs of that sort. We are in a bit of a strange time because the supermarket being down, the only reasonable place

they could set up a temporary supermarket was the recreation hall. So there has been no basketball on offer for over a year now. There was a delay in setting the basketball courts up, so we still do not have an undercover playing area for the school and that is just due to the usual sort of shenanigans with shires and government agencies, arguing who is paying what where and how, and with everyone trying to position themselves, we sort of lucked out a bit there.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any drug and alcohol prevention programs run in the school in terms of trying to get the kids to not head down the path, and what is your assessment of their effectiveness?

Mr Jefferies: We get a lot of people wanting to come through and do their little whiz-bang show and then run. We are pretty opposed to any of that. In the dry season particularly, the number of people who want to come up and do a one-off education program to save the world is amazing.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Do they come when they want to or when you want them?

Mr Jefferies: They come when they want to. What we have found more effective is that we have built a good working relationship with Nindilingarri Cultural Health; our health program teachers work with Nindilingarri so we get local input into ongoing health programs. It means that Nindilingarri are able to reach down into the high school and into the primary school, with some of the healthy lifestyle stuff that they like to do, but also Nindilingarri then carry that on into the community and to adults. It makes sense in terms of sustainability because it is local and there are local people running it. It ranges from healthy lifestyles, through to drug and alcohol, through to sexual health and things like that. We have found that that is probably a more effective way of reaching the students and a more culturally appropriate way in terms of our context.

Mr P.B. WATSON: With the local football team, are there any role models there who could be used through the school?

Mr Jefferies: We have some, like staff who do play footy, not in an explicit “you are a football mentor” sort of fashion —

Mr P.B. WATSON: No, I mean local footballers, not the teachers, but sporting people who could come to the school.

Mr Jefferies: No, there does not seem to be that sort of link, but I guess the issue is that in the valley competition, the players come from Wangkatjungka or they come from Djugerari, so a lot of them are not necessarily in town. The strongest link that we do have is a couple of the Bunuba Crocs players who work at our school, and there is that sort of link. We have been really fortunate in picking up some really talented teachers this year. The high school in particular has turned around in terms of the quality of teachers that we have got. One of those young guys has had a bit of Clontarf involvement, he is playing local footy, but he is also using footy as a way of engaging the senior schoolboys, and they are almost running an unofficial sort of Clontarf if you want to put it that way, but the focus is on footy with the boys. One of our special needs EAs has a strong football background as well, and we often joke, we actually call him the super coach because we have a fairly good record against some a lot of the teams in the Kimberley.

Mr P.B. WATSON: With your special needs, what percentage of children would be there? Would they be from the foetal syndrome?

Mr Jefferies: No, foetal alcohol is one of those frustrating things that are not recognised by anyone, and nobody really wants to know about it. Because it is not recognised as a disability —

The CHAIRMAN: By the education department you mean?

Mr Jefferies: Anyone. Nobody recognises foetal alcohol spectrum disorder as a disability.

The CHAIRMAN: Is that right? That is a massive disability.

Mr Jefferies: Welcome to my world; there is a certain amount of frustration when you are dealing with a lot of this.

Mr P.B. WATSON: So do they not go to the special-needs section?

Mr Jefferies: No. The only way I can get them on special needs—I will come back to do what I am talking about, but I will digress—if I can get the child diagnosed with post-traumatic stress, I can get support; I will access some mental-health money for that. For me to do that, it is a living nightmare. We are probably best practice in terms of how we manage and support students with special needs. We require a paediatric and psychiatric diagnosis of post-traumatic stress. For us to have that, we have to try to squeeze into the schedule of the only child and adolescent mental health worker in town. The only reason she is here is because she is the partner of a teacher. She is 0.8 for the whole valley. The staffing model is a joke, and there is a clear lack of understanding about the context that we are in. If she was sitting in a nice leafy, green Perth office, she could probably run a counselling session, catch up with paperwork and move onto the next person, probably within the hour or 45 minutes or something like that. If she has to meet a family out of Wangkatjungka, she has an-hour-and-a-half drive to get there. She then may not find the families there; she may have to wait a bit. Whenever you are dealing within our context, you cannot get straight to the point, there is a certain amount of trust and confidence that you build up through roundabout conversations—they could be about family or they could be about football. You eventually get to a point where you can move on to the point that you really want to talk about. Once that has happened, she drives back for an hour and a half.

[11.50 am]

The CHAIRMAN: The day is gone.

Mr Jefferies: On one session. She is probably smart and she will try to cram in a couple of visits, if she is out at Wangkajungka or wherever, but the model is grossly, grossly inappropriate for the length of travel and also for the actual number of people who are absolutely desperately crying out for support. That is falling on deaf ears, and it has for three years.

The CHAIRMAN: In schools in my electorate, which is in suburban Perth, the principals are very frustrated with—I cannot tell you what it is called now—the funding system for —

Mr Jefferies: Schools Plus?

The CHAIRMAN: Schools Plus, yes, where you have if have a child with particular disability, if you can tick that box you can get perhaps 0.2 of an educational assistant, or you might get 0.8 or even get a full-time one. But the delay in that process in metropolitan Perth is such that they say it is a nightmare, and from what you are saying for you up here, it is almost impossible.

Mr Jefferies: The Schools Plus side of it, I am going to buck the trend a bit: if you are organised, and we are relatively organised because we have probably done a few—I think proportional to our size, we actually have a significant number that we do—and once all the paperwork is done, the turnaround is very quick; very quick, but getting the supporting evidence that you require from the other agencies often takes time. That is particularly the case for accessing mental health support and needing to access a paediatric psychiatrist.

The CHAIRMAN: But there are also a lot of conditions that do not come under that category. You can have a person with major disabilities—like you say FAS does not come under it—so even if a kid really desperately needs the assistant, or the teacher needs that assistant there in the classroom, there is no box to tick for that; therefore, you do not get any help with that. Would you agree that, particularly for this area, FAS really needs to be included as one of the conditions that you need extra help with?

Mr Jefferies: That would be fantastic; without a doubt, that would be fantastic. Conservatively, they talk about 25 per cent of my school population having FAS. Paediatricians are conservatively

saying 25 per cent. It will be really interesting to see the results of the prevalence study that has just been given funding for the second stage—have you been brought up to speed with that?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, Maureen Carter spoke to us about that.

Mr Jefferies: That is fairly significant, and I would imagine there would be a few bean counters in the government who are a little bit worried. Because if we can start putting some numbers to this, then I am sure *The West Australian* would love to run with that story for at least a month, and that is how it works. It will be interesting to see, because we also lump early life trauma with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder because the neurological impact on a young child is pretty much the same. There are some significant things you notice with FASD and ELT—early life trauma. Things like being able to distinguish between, sort of like, past and present in terms of time line sort of scenarios is really difficult. That is the kid who has had the massive explosion in the classroom and the teacher is sort of scratching his head and going, “What happened there?” I can give you an actual real-life example that took place a month or so ago, where quite a sad sort of heavily traumatised 14-year-old girl intervened with two little boys. She was sort of yelling because they were not hopping in lone, and she was just being a mother and doing what mothers do in the Kimberley. The canteen manager sort of yelled and said, “Oi, you can’t be doing that”, or something along those lines, which seems pretty innocent really, and you would think that is okay and fair enough. But that child actually had a major meltdown and found a rock and hurled it straight at the canteen manager. By the time we had de-escalated the young girl, by the time we had got her back to the office and she was being supported by female staff, essentially what she said was, “Whenever older men yell at me, I get hurt.” It gives you an indication that it is not so much what is taking place, but it is actually referring back to what happened in the past, and often the reactions that you see are the equivalent to the reaction that would have taken place in the past. That is quite significant, and as a school we manage a lot of that through very, very good routine, very good structure. The more analytically retentive teachers I get, the better, because that routine and structure is critical for these kids to survive. It is absolutely critical. There are days when I feel like I am running one of the biggest behaviour centres in the state, and it is purely because a significant proportion of our school is FASD or early life trauma. It is 25 per cent of my population, so you are looking at 75, 80 students my school, and I actually have one CAMHS worker who is shared across the entire valley, and she is here four days a week.

The CHAIRMAN: What is a CAMHS worker?

Mr Jefferies: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. It does not take much to do the maths to work out that there is a bit of a problem there.

Mr P.B. WATSON: If there was one thing that the government could bring in to make your life easier at the school, or for your students, what would it be?

Mr Jefferies: Support for the parents, the communities and the students through flooding the place with mental health support—that is, drug and alcohol counsellors. The mantra has been, since the restrictions came in, that this is a window of opportunity and we need to make the most of it, but it has not happened. That is still true today; it has not happened. It is actually now starting on a decline. I actually think the habitual routine now is that when it is a big pay week, you drive to Derby. The amount of alcohol that is coming back into town, I think, is actually increasing. We are actually seeing that in the escalation of—we are getting more, sort of, traumatised kids at school, who are exhibiting behaviours that are difficult to manage.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Is it too late? Have we missed the boat?

Mr Jefferies: I do not know; I hope not. I honestly hope not, because the thought of having FASD grandparents with FASD children, with FASD children, is horrific.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you see that in the community?

Mr Jefferies: We have FASD parents with FASD children at this stage.

The CHAIRMAN: The spectre of that is just horrific, in the sense that those kids need special help that those parents are just not able to give their kids, even if they had the best of intentions.

[12.00 noon]

Mr Jefferies: We have got some really good examples of how we have really impacted the lives of FASD children who have been able to get support through being diagnosed as post traumatic stress, so if we can pinpoint an incident, particularly if there is some sort of charge sheet floating around with an incident, that helps us a lot. Fitzroy Valley school has a strong whole child approach so we automatically, once a term, will block out two weeks where we are just running our case management meetings for our special needs students, and in those meetings we have carers, we have the agencies that are involved—it could vary from CAMHS, mental health, through to DCP, through to whatever—so we actually have a fairly good structure in place that enables us to really support these students. I can rattle off cases. When I first got here there was a six-year-old child that was highly traumatised. He would have a major meltdown that would often involve furniture being thrown around or things of that nature—really violent, escalating rapidly. We knew the kid was not actually in control; it was literally not a conscious effort to do something. We were able to get support in terms of a special needs education assistant, and we were able to bring in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. It did not just work with the child, it worked with the family, and that is the critical part. Dealing with the child is almost irrelevant at times; what needs to happen is that it is the family that needs support, that needs that sort of structure. To this day he is a beautiful little boy who, when he is starting to have a moment, he is actually able to self-regulate; he knows what he needs to do. He may just ask to come up to the admin block and he will just sit and read a book for a bit and calm down. We will say, “Okay, are you ready?” and he will go, “Yep, I’m ready,” and he will go back to class.

Mr P.B. WATSON: We had Joe Ross in here yesterday, and he said that with the restrictions there were more people taking responsibility for themselves. He said that he was finding that there were more male parents going to school. Have you noticed that?

Mr Jefferies: Yes, we are finding that things like the uniform shop have really taken off. There seems to be more money for things like uniforms. We are certainly seeing an increase in the number of lunches being purchased through the canteen. Some of that is people actually voluntarily going on Centrepay, so they actually voluntarily quarantine some of their money to go towards their school lunches. We ran an expo where we had 100 parents come into the school and we ran concurrent workshops where we actually looked at what the school priorities were and actually ran through the priorities with the parents. That is showing an increase in parent involvement. It is still difficult; it is still something that we are continually working on and trying to improve continually. By any stretch of the imagination, we are not there, but we are seeing some really good signs that the start has happened.

The CHAIRMAN: Where can we invest? If the government was to say to you—this is dream world—that you can have up to \$100 million, and you are in charge, you have total authority in the Kimberley, what would you do?

Mr Jefferies: It would not last long. That is the brutal, harsh reality, and I am sure people have mentioned it, but housing is probably the one thing that is stopping a lot of stuff happening in the town. A lack of housing.

Mr P.B. WATSON: Everyone says that.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a recurring theme.

Mr Jefferies: It is pretty expensive to build up here, so that is a real concern, because we cannot get support services here. The model of being provided services from Derby just does not work. By the time they drive out and drive back, they do not know the local people really well, and they are not living in the town. I would be suspicious of someone flying in; I always get suspicious of people

flying in to my school and telling me how to do my job. Come and live here; come and enrol your children in the school, spend a month here and then tell me what you think. If I have that sort of view about people who fly in and fly out, I would imagine that the local people would have an even harsher view about it. Allied health is another area. Once again, it is very much staffing related. We had an absolutely brilliant speech pathologist, a lady by the name of Ana Mairata. She was an absolute gun; we had never seen so many services and support in our school, ever. Primarily they had an additional speech pathologist position in Derby, which enabled her to come out and work with our student services to the point where they actually did a massive screening of all our grade 1 and preprimary kids. They were then able to synthesise key strategies and key things for the teachers to run and work with. We are actually a bit different; we employ a special needs teacher in the school because the need is so great. She is also able to run small groups during parts of the day that focus on some of the recommendations that the speech pathologist might make. Otherwise, it just dies a death and the actual work done is almost in vain, unless that work is being carried on. But they still drive in from Derby; there is no speech pathologist based in the Valley; same with physio and OT.

The CHAIRMAN: Is housing what stops it from happening, or is it simply lack of funding and they think that someone coming up here once in a while is good enough?

Mr Jefferies: I think it is a combination of both. There is no housing, so that makes it difficult, end of story. But I also think that it does not matter what party is in power; it is about fiscal conservatism. Everyone is looking to reduce government, and in that sort of climate, that is how it is.

The CHAIRMAN: What I have picked up on the last few days is that, in comparison to the general picture of services and all that, there really needs to be a massive overinvestment for the next 10 to 15 years here, if we are going to turn this thing around. Otherwise it is going to keep going downhill.

Mr Jefferies: Yes, and the longer we take, the harder it is going to get. I have grave fears about the inertia of what we are looking at and the generations to come.

The CHAIRMAN: What sort of help is available for parents in terms of parenting skills? Deep down in their own hearts, I am sure that all parents want to be good parents and look after their kids, but because of their own trauma or problems, they do not know how to go about it. Are there parenting help programs in place, or not really?

Mr Jefferies: When we have families in crisis—can this be off the record?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Hearing suspended from 12.08 to 12.11 pm

Mr P.B. WATSON: Just keep up the great work—against the odds!

Mr Jefferies: I guess the challenge for you is: I do not know if you have ever heard the question, “What is the difference between a politician and a statesman”, but the answer is that a politician works for the next election, whereas a statesman is working for the next generation. I think that is the biggest challenge you guys have in the climate that you are working in.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there anything that you want to say in summing up?

Mr Jefferies: It is just that I think we are at crisis point. I do not know how many more standing committees people have to talk to before we actually start to see action. It is going to hurt someone’s budget. That is just how it is. But the costs in the long run are going to be huge in terms of the incarceration levels, and particularly the FASD. FASD is the elephant in the room that no-one wants to talk about. They are talking a quarter of the population. It is a spectrum disorder. We all think of FASD as being kids with their little pixie sort of faces and so on. But that is specific for a binge-drinking episode, like day 18 to 22 or something like that. You do not necessarily have to

have those physical features to be on the FASD spectrum. It is actually quite huge in terms of the cause and effect of things, in that if I punch someone in the head, they are probably going to punch me back. Those connections do not exist with FASD kids and early life trauma kids.

The CHAIRMAN: So consequential thinking is missing?

Mr Jefferies: Yes, missing—absolutely missing. Probably one of the other things that cost my school about \$10 000 a year to run is protective behaviours. We have a strong focus on protective behaviours because of the climate that we work in—because of the alcohol and drug-fuelled sort of climate that we work in, the amount of abuse that occurs is huge. We made a connection with a lady called Holly-Ann Martin from—I think the company is called Protecting Kids is Our Game. She came out here with the sexual assault detectives in 2007. We have looked into her services in terms of we have a Protective Behaviours Week where she runs a range of workshops. She helps teachers write a 10-week program. She will actually model the really tricky lessons. Often it could be lessons relating to sexual assault. During that week I always end up with a disclosure. I have actually never written so many referrals to DCP ever in my career as I have in the three years that I have been here. Protective behaviours is actually skilling up children with the language and the understanding of what it is if you do not think it is safe, what is public and what is private. I think it is probably one of the most important things that we do at school to support the children and the young people in the community when there are things happening due to alcohol-fuelled environments. Protective behaviours is a really critical aspect of what we need to be doing within the community. We run parent workshops and community workshops. Some of the parents are quite surprised, particularly those of Aboriginal students, in terms of simple things like actually using the correct terminology for sexual parts; so getting kids to use the word “penis” when they are talking about their penis. That is because some of the research has pointed to the fact that paedophiles will actually avoid a child that has got a very good vocabulary and is able to articulate what is going on. They have got a greater chance of getting away with things if the child is using a pet term or a language term for a body part, because it makes it more difficult for prosecutors to get a success. So it is simple things like that that we can actually get out to parents when we run the parent workshops during that week; and we also get agencies in and run that. So it is an important part of everything else that we do in our school.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you get special funding to help you with that?

Mr Jefferies: What is happening now is that the department is more and more giving principals freedom. It used to be that our money was compartmentalised. So I would have behaviour management and discipline money and I would get X amount, and I would have literacy and numeracy money and I would get X amount, and then I would have to acquit that against the programs that we run. As you can imagine, it was a bit of a paper nightmare. So what they are doing now is I have a schools special programs resource allocation—SSPRA—so I get a flat rate that will cover my literacy and numeracy, my behaviour management and what traditionally was the CLMP—it was the federal money that country schools get to try and combat isolation and remoteness. We now get a flat rate. So that is providing greater freedom for principals to prioritise and use money in a way that is meeting the needs of their school in a much greater way. So we do not get specific funding to run protective behaviours, and it probably is not really recognised by a lot of schools because it is not really at the fore of the mind of a lot of principals, whereas in a place like Fitzroy it is a necessity for our school and our community. So I guess it is a long-winded way of saying sort of yes, sort of no. It depends on the principal.

The CHAIRMAN: I want to thank you very much, Paul, for sharing all that with us. It has certainly been eye opening for us to come up here and talk to you and to actually see what is happening in the school. That has been extremely helpful, and I thank you very much for that. What will happen now is Hansard will do the transcript. That will be posted to you, and you will need to return that within 28 days. You may have some corrections, especially of some of the place names

and so on, so if you can just double check that we have got that right, and send it back in. Hansard does a fantastic job, and they have got a long list of special words that they know how to spell, but you may have some corrections. If you do not send it back in, we will just assume that it is correct. If after leaving here you think you wish you had said this or that, you obviously cannot put that into the transcript, but just add an extra sheet or two of paper and provide that information to us and we will accept that at our next committee meeting as a supplementary submission from you. People like you are critical to us being well informed and being able to come up with recommendations to government that hopefully will make a difference if the government implements them. I think it certainly has been impressed upon us the desperate need for some pretty major changes in terms of funding and provision of services if we are going to turn this thing around. So thank you very much again, Paul.

Hearing concluded at 12.20 pm