

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO BUILDING RESILIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT
FOR AT-RISK YOUTH THROUGH SPORT AND CULTURE**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 22 JUNE 2016**

SESSION TWO

Members

**Ms M.M. Quirk (Chair)
Dr A.D. Buti (Deputy Chair)
Mr C.D. Hatton
Ms L. Mettam
Mr M.P. Murray**

Hearing commenced at 10.41 am**Mr COLIN WALKER****Director, Policy, Planning and Research, Department of Culture and the Arts, examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into building resilience and engagement for at-risk youth through sport and culture. I begin by introducing myself and the other members of the committee. I am Margaret Quirk, the member for Girrawheen. On my right is deputy chair, Dr Tony Buti. On my left is Ms Libby Mettam, the member for Vasse; and on her left is Chris Hatton, the member for Balcatta. This is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you would provide the full title for the record; and, equally, if there are any acronyms, if you could say what they are.

Before we proceed, would you please respond verbally to the following. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

Mr Walker: I have.

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

Mr Walker: I do.

The CHAIR: Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet?

Mr Walker: I did.

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

Mr Walker: No.

The CHAIR: We have some questions to ask you today; and, firstly, I apologise for running a bit late. Before we ask questions do you wish to make an opening statement to the hearing?

Mr Walker: Yes; maybe just a brief one just to cover off on some of the things that have not been raised in other submissions at this stage. One of them is quite a sobering thought, really, which is from the good piece of research by McCrindle about the way that Gen Zs or the people who are born from 1995 onwards view the world. There has been quite a bit of background research to develop a strategic directions document, a framework for the arts and culture sector for the next 15 years. The sobering thought is that these kids will have had their formative years only in this century, which means their relationship with digital technology is the norm; it is not some form of add-on, even for at-risk youths. That is both an accelerator and a potential decelerator of behaviours and activity, depending on which way it is viewed. I suppose the issue or the policy challenge that that presents is that, on the one hand, there is still a demand for young people for live cultural activities. So 92 per cent of young people do go to—at least accordingly to Australian ABS stats—at least one cultural event per year; 37 per cent, which is the third highest in Australia, participate in these cultural activities outside of the school context. So we have already got live engagements in art; to then be supplemented by the online world. This is one of the real proper policy challenges. I suppose one of the good things is that if that challenge is met and it is dealt with correctly in the

cultural sector, for any young person at risk, role models and consistency and good wraparound services, and some form of sense of what happens in the future and where they can go, is quite important. In the arts, culture and creative industry sector our employment has increased at the fastest rate over the past five years of any of the states in Australia, jointly with Victoria; so there is some hope there. In the Aboriginal art employment space, the third highest employer is in arts and recreation services, according to the Productivity Commission's "Indigenous Expenditure Report". And, so, in the context of what happens day to day, the potential future, if we get this right, at least offers some real proper opportunities for kids at risk. One of the main core issues we need to try to address—and although statistics are quite poor on access of economically disadvantaged or socioeconomic status children—is the submission by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, which noted 50 per cent of disadvantaged children do not get any access to either culture or sport and that is clearly the issue that is supposed to be addressed as part of any inquiry. So, I will just leave it at that.

The CHAIR: Now, that is a good segue. Your annual report notes the Kid's Culture in Albany and Stirling and that those programs were about engaging kids from low socioeconomic status families, but it was not cost effective. Are they still going or what has occurred?

Mr Walker: No, I am sorry. There was a pilot. We had \$140 000 to expend, and the issue was not so much the demand, because the number of vouchers we set aside for each area—about 200 for each—were snapped up relatively quickly. The issue was scaling that across the state. We had an independent evaluation and looked at the pilot, and the cost of scaling that or even running it within the areas themselves was just, from memory, I think it was \$2 000 to administer a \$250 voucher because the infrastructure of the art is just different from the infrastructure of sport; we do not have a statewide sport club network. We knew that we had to do something else, so we ran a second pilot with the awesome festival and we focused on ticketing activity. That pilot, which we also had independently evaluated—I can make that evaluation available to the committee—the results of that were they had 100 per cent increase from children from socially disadvantaged areas. They brought their families along, and the cost of subsidy/administration for that came down to \$11 per person who attended. Now, there is a difference between attending and participating and those sorts of things, but at least as an introductory activity, which is the precursor for running anything else, we feel as though there is a model for this to explore a little bit further, which over the course of the next 12 months we will be looking to see if that holds for other types of organisations—not all the research suggested that it should.

The CHAIR: Is there any truth, or do you agree with the suggestion that the culture and arts current youth programs really cater for those who are already engaged in the arts and there is not enough being done to address and get youth at risk involved?

Mr Walker: It is a more complex picture than that. I think if we split the activities up into what we do—and different areas to me sort of illustrate the complexity—in early childhood we had programs like Better Beginnings at the State Library, which is run through every local authority and it has engaged 60 000 families. They have been evaluated by Edith Cowan University. Those number of families, they are starting to do see parents reading longer, but it is not directly targeted at youth at risk, although aspects of the program clearly are. Then, moving into the education space, we have had for a number of years a partnership with the Australia Council for the Arts, which unfortunately has now been pulled, but we did run the largest artist in residence program through that in Australia, and 57 schools, 8 000 students, including 12 per cent of Aboriginal kids through that program accessed high quality artist in residence within the school context.

[10.50 am]

The CHAIR: I take it that it has been pulled for lack of funding?

Mr Walker: The Australia Council made the decision when there was a transfer of funds from the Australia Council to the Ministry for the Arts that that was a program that they were not going to

continue with, so that program finished its final year. We actually have the only formal MOU with the Department of Education that exists in Australia, so we are keen. What we found with that—we did run an internal independent look at what is happening in the schools—and the issue generally, to get to your point as to whether they engage at-risk kids, is really about the targeting of these things. We know from international research and our own research that if you can get kids engaged in the arts, particularly those from lower socioeconomic areas, then the performance, whether it is segregated into attendance or cross-curricular subjects or anything else, it tends to improve in a lot of those indicators, and significantly so, on the few longitudinal studies that exist in this space. So we think the issue that we now need to deal with is probably one of targeting rather than one of anything else; and then once targeted, the issue is then scaling, but we get to targeting first and then we can deal with the scaling issue later. When it comes to post-school activity the department does not get involved directly in targeting programs. We have got a range of funds that organisations can apply for. Most of our organisations we provide core funding to to run the artistic programs they are running, and they make their own choices to what extent they then work with particular areas. For those organisations, many of those do target and target particularly well. I think for them the argument would be that we only provide on average 20 per cent of the funding for any of those organisations, so whatever else they bring to focus on particular areas, that partnership approach that they, as you would expect, would need to adopt, and clearly they do. But, yes, in terms of direct targeting of specific geographical areas by the department to meet a particular need, then, no, that is not done, but it is certainly done by the activities that we fund.

The CHAIR: I have two questions. One is how much collaborative effort is done with local governments for various arts activities or programs? Secondly, cultural identity is an issue for a lot of young kids; are there any programs directed towards arts and expressing cultural identity through the arts?

Mr Walker: Again, yes, not directly by the department but through the activities that we fund, and there are many of these. I think I will just give a series of case studies, because we have not given our written submission yet, that will address that point in particular. I will make an observation, because we have written a paper with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, which has been looked at by the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee. Through that process we looked at the current policy environment for Aboriginal engagement and cultural identity. A KALACC submission looked at similar areas, I suppose, in this space. We looked at the amount of expenditure by state and federal government in this space both on additional expenditure generally and then arts and culture within that. We then produced a series of research studies from universities that look at the impact of different types of projects on various outcomes. The consistency within each of those things is that those projects that are culturally based for Aboriginal communities are the ones that give the strongest outcomes regardless of whether they are designed to have that purpose or not. That gives us a base from which we can then begin to start looking at how those activities are more mainstreamed into the funding activity that generally happens both at the state and federal levels.

Mr C.D. HATTON: The Department of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Culture and the Arts are quite different in their target audience, are they not? I am not saying that one is any better than the other; I am just saying that they have quite different targets.

Mr Walker: The extent to which that difference as opposed to individual children having access to both and trying both, I am not quite sure there is any real evidence that states that they preference one or the other. Our own participation stats—if you have got that higher percentage of children actively participating.

Mr C.D. HATTON: The reason I asked that is because the Department of Sport and Recreation, I think I would be right in saying, are more holistic in inclusivity in different socio-demographic backgrounds of clients. That is point I am making. You can reflect on that if you like. I am not

asking for an answer. But the stats that you gave earlier about the sector engaged in at least one cultural experience per year, what is that cultural experience; what are you talking about?

Mr Walker: It ranges from cinema; cinema is classified within that.

Mr C.D. HATTON: When I saw that, I thought I hope it is not cinema.

Mr Walker: There is a percentage that is within cinema.

The CHAIR: It might be *Citizen Kane* or something.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I am not too sure that is really capturing it.

Mr Walker: As a state we do have ScreenWest, and we have just invested \$16 million into screen development in regional areas as well. But this goes back to the earlier point about the way in which children engage. McCrindle calls them “screenagers”.

Ms L. METTAM: I have not heard that one.

Mr Walker: I was dying to get that into the transcript! The reality is that their relationship through culture is not necessarily what we would perceive, given our ages maybe, of what that relationship to culture is, and it is as relevant to them and as important to them as any other aspect of culture. That is one of the real policy challenges, to try to understand. To go back to your earlier point of are there certain demographics that attend or participate in the arts more so than others, then clearly those things that cost a lot to attend are going to be a factor. But what we found is that given the opportunity for kids to access these things, they tend to access them. The corollary of that is that there are clearly barriers, so it is trying to identify what those barriers are. If those barriers are price, transport, family circumstances, general interest, they are all factors in some way or another, but I do not think that the interest in engaging in culture is one of those that would be necessarily strong. Again, if I go back to the longitudinal research that looks at high arts engagements of low-socioeconomic groups, then if the opportunity is there, then it gets taken.

[11.00 am]

The CHAIR: If you were minister for the arts today and suddenly a great amount of money lands on your lap, given overseas research, is there something that you would really like to maybe try here in terms of engaging youth or getting more youth who had not contemplated arts activities involved?

Mr Walker: There is not a panacea for a start—I think that is the important thing—and nor is there one particular program. I would be looking for features of things, one of which would be activities that have some longevity to them because—I heard towards the end of the last submission by the PCYC—to give engagement as a one-off but to extend that engagement into a longer period, I think, is a fairly essential feature. I think targeting, to go back to your earlier point, is absolutely essential. Now, the funding that is given to the artist for the purpose of those arts organisations to produce the art to then look at other activities, I think, I would be looking at how that access cannot just begin in the first instance, as it has with the Awesome activity, but how that stays in place. I think that is really important.

I think systemisation is incredibly important as well. If we look within arts and education, certain countries, the Dutch for instance, might just systemise arts right the way through the curriculum—which is not done anywhere in Australia—and it gives people the best chance for engagement in the first instance. If that can be linked to wraparound services outside, I think that would work. The encouragement then could be to not view it as just an arts issue or just a sports issue or just a corrective services issue; it is all these things and how the system operates together collaboratively—that is what we would need. Whatever program or initiative or anything else that is established, I think the involvement of each of those agencies, and probably Sport and Recreation, would be at the essence of what we did.

The CHAIR: Are there any lingering, if you like, ideas or notions that the quality of whatever the performance or the arts has to be, it has to be high, as opposed to increasing participation levels, where standards might not necessarily be at elite level?

Mr Walker: I do not think the two are mutually exclusive, but I will just refer to a piece of technology that we have produced to try to precisely answer that issue. Gathering metrics on the impact of art in any scenario has been a challenge for any organisation within government, or arm's length from government, to try to understand the impact of the quality of the arts on the experience of people who have done it. We developed a piece of technology in a public-private partnership that allows real-time gathering of data on the experience of arts activities—it is called Culture Counts. It has been adopted internationally. Arts Council England has just finished a trial of 150 organisations using it. There are organisations right across Australia. Arts Queensland has provided funding for it; Creative Victoria has also provided funding for it and so on. In short, there are 315 different organisations that are using this system; everything from the Royal Opera House to individual artists who want to find out how their work is being received. This has allowed us for the first time to benchmark how people perceive the quality of the activity and then also the demographic breakdown of the people who have been experiencing it. The research is really new. The data is really new. We have also developed some participatory metrics with Arts Council England, which we are also testing with organisations. Eventually we will be able to answer that question, because the reality of that question is that there is no research that is compelling to suggest either way that quality is by definition exclusive. It would be hard to see how it would be, but we may as well test the assumption and other things that you get from participating in the arts, whether it is increases in self-esteem or confidence or those sorts of things which, clearly, children need if they are going to move from one state of being into another one, and they are all part of the process that we are trying to support.

Just as an aside, one of the projects that we looked at with the Royal Opera House was *Swan Lake*, which was a cinema rendition of *Swan Lake* and the audiences' response to that versus the stage version of *Swan Lake*. It was a simulcast. The reception of both audiences, there was no statistical difference between the two of them. Now, there are all kinds of implications for that that they will need to dig in to in some detail to see what that was. Oddly, the younger audience was the audience that saw it live, as opposed to those that saw it in the cinema in that example. To go back, cinema is still an important cultural pursuit. Even if it does not sound it to us, it clearly is for those kids, because they will then go and talk about it, they will then put it on Facebook, they will socially engage and their aspiration is to, even if they do not necessarily have the technology to do so themselves. That aspirational element is really important, I think.

The CHAIR: We are aware that the grants application process is being streamlined and also the reporting, because that is demanding and has acted, has it not, as a disincentive for maybe small or emerging groups to apply?

Mr Walker: No; there are a couple of elements to the reforms. One is for organisations generally—the organisations investment program. The other reform is to the rest of our grants categories. We have streamlined them, which actually will make it easier for the youth projects to access, because we have two streams; you either apply for under \$15 000 or over \$15 000, and it is either for creative activity or social engagement activity or commercial development activity. Introducing those streams means that there is a specific pool that projects that want to engage youth at risk can now apply to, whereas previously they would have been in a competitive environment against some of the quality issues that maybe you alluded to earlier. In that context, to access, they have a decision within 25 business days and they can reapply and so on. Within that context, it should be easier because there is a specific stream in order to do this.

Where I think the question may be coming from is the organisation investment process itself, and would organisations that do work and target organisations have some form of inbuilt disadvantage

or would newcomers have some inbuilt disadvantage within that? Two points to make on that. One of which is that we have not changed the profile of our organisations, really, for over 20 years, so there were no newcomers coming in for a 20-year period, and the process we went through did introduce new organisations. I will check the final number, but I think it was seven organisations that came through. Those organisations that focus on youth specifically—so Community Arts Network—did make it through this process, and also, importantly, that made them more competitive in the Australia Council process as well, because they managed to get through there. What we did in that process, which is really important, is that we specifically asked for organisations to meet criteria, which included community engagement and reach—where they extended their activities to. Again, it is the first time that we have made it explicit that we want to look at both the creative side and where it goes to and then whatever the economic implications are of that. The process itself did not prevent organisations from applying in that way and I think eventually we will get a better sense of where the expenditure has gone because we have segmented in that way in the first instance.

[11.10 am]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Apologies for being late. This question may have been asked in another format, but at the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre there was an arts–drama-type class that was funded by the Bunbury council. Has there been any joint funding? There was no other funding for that class, so that has now been withdrawn because of the budget and 40-odd kids are going to drop out of the arts as such. What considerations are given to those sorts of programs, especially in country areas? To get that many kids at a program is huge. What consideration is given by your body towards those types of programs and what funding would be available?

Mr Walker: There are two things, one of which was answered earlier in relation to —

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I just got half of that—if you could jog my memory.

Mr Walker: There was no specific strand for those types of activities to apply to—they did not exist before in the department—which we introduced this year. That is one strand now that they are able to apply to. Secondly, through the royalties for regions package, the entertainment part of one of the strands of that will allow for community engagement activities that are performing arts–based to operate outside of the centre in the context of either touring performances or of residencies by artist themselves. Whereas previously there was no funding available to departments for that type of activity, there are now specific strands.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I understand that, but what activities do you take to make sure those people are engaged?

Mr Walker: Sorry; we mentioned this earlier. Our approach is that we, as a department, do not run specific programs to engage local authorities. When we reach a certain point, we have direct programs for early childhood engagement and then within a schools context, and then it is the not-for-profit sector that we work with and incentivise to deliver those types of programs in those areas.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Further to that, as a local issue, how many people would you have in the south west that engage with those people to find out what they need?

Mr Walker: Departmental people—we have no regional offices at all.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I think that answers the question. There lies some of your problem; your catchment area is not there.

Ms L. METTAM: Is it better having people from the department running these programs or is it better using state government funding to support initiatives run by community groups and organisations?

Mr Walker: Both can work. The reality is both. Is one better? They are different methods to try to get to the same point. We can point to examples where an officer on the ground has worked

exceptionally well. We had an officer based in the Gascoyne for some period and those activities did lead to some quite strong legacy projects with the Aboriginal arts centres up in that space. Equally, we have now funded Country Arts WA to go and work in the goldfields–Kalgoorlie region as a priority area defined by them for the creative regions through the royalties for regions package to work in that environment. In an ideal world everybody would want a combination of them all, but the reality is that, as a department, we have never had statewide regional arts development officers in the same way that there are sports development officer, and we have taken a different approach because of that.

The CHAIR: Is there some register or somewhere where we can get a handle on all the programs that are available? Does the department keep something like that?

Mr Walker: They are available for the community to apply to.

The CHAIR: No, not necessarily applications, but, for example, Musica Viva does programs where they go and visit schools. Is there somewhere that we can go to get a full list all sorts of arts programs that are run in the state by whoever?

Mr Walker: Not down to the granularity of the individual programs that they run. We can give you the organisations that we fund in order to do it. We can give you all the grants recipients that they get, but we do not have it at that granular level as to individual projects into the individual schools.

The CHAIR: I am concerned that we want to conclude where the gaps are, and if we do not have a full idea of what is being delivered, that is going to be difficult for us; that is all. Do you think there is some issue there about fragmentation or that we need to at least consolidate?

Mr Walker: Yes. As I mentioned in the introduction, unlike sports, there is no sports club-type network, so it is fragmented. That is just a given of what it is. The response needs to be, in a sense, a localised response to what is available in those particular areas. We did undertake consultation to develop a regional action plan, where we were working through the development commissions and local authorities to look to see where gaps are, but not necessarily gaps related to youth at risk; it is gaps in cultural provision across the board.

Mr C.D. HATTON: You would have an annual report.

Mr Walker: We have an annual report of all the grants —

Mr C.D. HATTON: Would there be a spreadsheet-type thing in the annual report? How detailed is it?

Mr Walker: We report against every grant that we give on the website, which includes where those grants are and a brief description of the grants. To go to the initial question, which also comes back to your point, the capacity by which we are able to analyse that information has only just become available to us really, because we now have an online grants management system with which we are able to do these things, which only came live this year. The types of information we have been able to gather from that are part of a process of trying to account better for where these moneys go. But what we do not have—this is really important—is identifiers of projects that work with at-risk youths. With the lack of those identifiers eventually if you are trying to look across the system, how do these things work? At that level, that will not be able to be done without a specific piece of research. But a broad look at who has been funded and the type of activities they run and where those activities are is doable.

Dr A.D. BUTI: How does the department's youth program for the arts actually work? What does it actually do? What does your department's youth arts program actually do? How does it work?

Mr Walker: We do not have a specific youth arts program.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You do not actually have one at all?

Mr Walker: No.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Do you not see that as a problem and something that maybe you should be working on? I believe it is on your website.

Mr Walker: On the website we had a young people and the arts action plan for a few years, which led to specific initiatives. We found that working through our organisations that we do work with—those key organisations that fund and provide the services directly to youth, whether it is in theatre, Barking Gecko or Spare Parts—we work through our organisations as opposed to individual programs. We have also introduced an individual program that those organisations or individuals that want to work in that space can now directly access.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Your website has a page titled “Young People and the Arts: Investing in Creative Futures” that talks about a program information page. Therefore, the only thing that you have is a list of places they can go to. Is that what it is, basically?

Mr Walker: Yes, so far as that side of things is concerned, yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You do not actually have any programs to assist young people?

Mr Walker: None other than the ones that were mentioned previously, which is the relationship with the Department of Education and the Better Beginnings programs, but we do facilitate organisations that work in the youth space. We facilitate a round table of those organisations. We fund projects through Propel Arts. We had the Hive that we ran last year. We funded the Friendship Games. We fund those individual activities. As a department we do not run these programs specifically ourselves; we allow the community to determine where it is and then apply to us for money through that process. To go back again, they are applying in a competitive environment to all those other programs. We reject 80 per cent of applications that come through to us; that is the reality of our funding programs.

[11.20 am]

Dr A.D. BUTI: In regards to that and the competitive nature of the application, are most of the successful applicants in regards to high-end art—quality artists—or —

Mr Walker: No. Each application that comes to us requires professional artists to be working in it because for the project itself, we have got to have a degree of confidence that it can be delivered. Working with anybody and probably more so when it is at-risk youth, as a department, it is important for us that the quality threshold is absolutely there and I do not mean quality of performance—the quality of the interaction and the quality of the artist needs to be demonstrated as part of the application process. That means by definition that only the best ones—the ones that have got the best chance of some longevity in what they do—are necessarily going to get through that particular process.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am looking at your assessment criteria and weighting and that seems to coincide with what you are saying but the Department of Sport and Recreation, for instance, they have many, many programs where the actual ability of the participants is not a factor, it is just that they want to engage and get more and more people to participate in sport.

Mr Walker: No, the —

Dr A.D. BUTI: Can I just finish, please?

Mr Walker: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I really have a bit of a concern that the Department of Culture and the Arts, which is the government-run, taxpayer-paid department, does not also seem to be increasing the participation of people just to do arts for intrinsic value rather having to reach these quality standards.

Mr Walker: The quality standards are intrinsic. The quality of the experience is its intrinsic value.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, sorry, sorry. I meant the intrinsic value of doing art as an expression of creativity.

Mr Walker: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That does not have to be at a certain level. We were in New Zealand at a non-government organisation where the art was just used as an instrument to allow the students to express their creativity, to learn forms of discipline, and be a support system. The actual standard of the art was not an issue. The issue was the art being used to allow these kids in trouble to try and move away from that environment. That does not seem to be —

Mr Walker: Well, I —

Dr A.D. BUTI: Please, can you let me finish? In your department which, as I said, is a taxpayer-funded department, it seems to be completed devoid of that, which I find surprising.

Mr Walker: I would entirely disagree with the contention, one of which is that in the participation itself, there are no barriers to participate in the activities; the organisations determine where each of those activities are and that is where they go. There is absolutely that side of things. No barriers to access, so far as the participants in actual activities. The method by which those activities are provided to those participants then, there is a quality threshold that we apply. Whether that quality threshold is the quality of the work itself or whether it is the quality of the process by which those participants are engaged because it is a specialised space. I do not disagree at all that any engagements is better than no engagements but engagements run by professionals and experts in their space is better, in our opinion, than those activities which are run purely as those activities, which local authorities do as well. It is part of the general ecosystem. In that sense, the intrinsic value of the art is the experience of the art itself. Our contention would be how professional it is, the process by which they are engaged and the professionalism of the artists and the quality of the art that they provide will make that experience stronger. That is what we believe and if we are only funding 20 per cent of applications then, that makes it more so that we apply those criteria.

Mr C.D. HATTON: I just want to expand, maybe, what Mr Buti was saying. In the Strategic Directions Framework 2015–2030, you have got benchmarks in that or thresholds around the principle of the population building resilience, and then it is armed with the capacity for critical inquiry, lateral thinking, innovative solutions and powerful communication. That is pretty high-level stuff.

Mr Walker: We have not released the final version of that; that was the draft report for comment.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Yes, but it is still a document that is produced by yourselves.

Mr Walker: For public comment and consultation. The final document has not yet been released.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Sure, sure but still the premise is that, in a draft, you are aiming at a threshold or a base level that is pretty high. What I am saying is that certain socioeconomic populations of young children probably cannot reach critical thinking to that level, they cannot possibly reach a lateral thinking to the level, they cannot possibly reach innovative solutions and powerful communication—that is the one that gets me. Why powerful communication?

Mr Walker: I am not quite sure which version you are looking at, but that is beside the point. The contention that there is something inherent in at-risk young people that they do not have the ability to be creative thinkers or be able to communicate or have any aspirations, I do not accept that necessarily, but that —

Mr C.D. HATTON: The reason I am asking that—I need to just steer you in the right direction. The reason I am asking is because if you are using taxpayers' money, are you getting out to the right people with those benchmarks up there of powerful communication? I come from a teaching background of 30 years where we enable children not to have powerful communication but to be able to communicate to be functional in society.

Mr Walker: That is directed to the organisations who will be running the activities and then for the children that take part in those activities, the aspiration is that they will meet their developmental needs through the art. That is not directed. We would expect only those young people who already have those abilities and personal skills —

Mr C.D. HATTON: I am not being critical, I am just trying to understand better where —

Mr Walker: Yes. It is the level of which the discussion is and the difference between an organisation that is running a program for participants and the expectation of the participants. The expectation of the participants for us is not part of the process in any way. We believe that if you have a good, high quality engagement in the art, it is run professionally, it involves professional artists, then the outcomes of that will be stronger. The research tells us that if you have a high engagement in the arts then that will confer on you lots of different advantages, which include stronger communication—which includes those things.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Have you ever thought of having two levels of catchment? Like you could have a higher level, like a tertiary study, and a lower level like a baseline population where instead of powerful communication, you enable communication through the arts and expression. Have you ever thought about —

Mr Walker: Yes, sorry, the metrics in this space, for reasons I explained earlier, are few and far between. There is very little consistency across the board in any of the human services about the types of indicators that suggest differences in behaviour and how people will be able to act on that behaviour regardless of the circumstance they are necessarily in. We have managed to standardise some quality metrics and we are working hard to try to standardise the space and metrics because if we are able to provide those forms of data, then that answers directly the question that you are basically asking. To have academic research is far too expensive for the vast majority of everybody else. We have deliberately established the program Culture Counts to take the cost of research out of that to see whether these programs actually work or not. The essence of all this is: are these programs working? Do we have an issue with at-risk youth: yes, or no? What program is going to help us make these stronger? We believe that we do have an issue with data and we do have an issue with targeting, each of which we are trying to deal with. There is an issue of which of those indicators are most important, which the academic community can look at and we can also look at ourselves. But the central contention of the quality of the experience of that child at the end, that has got to be part of the overall system in our view.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Can I just make a comment?

Mr Walker: Yes.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: In our inquiries, we came across a young bloke who has been into jail two or three times and it was the arts, in one form or another, that corrected his behaviour where he is able to express himself. If you had asked him to go through that, he would have never got there. He would probably still be in jail. There was another one, a young girl, that again was picked up by the arts and she went back to school, is studying, and I forget what—she was chasing some degree or something like that. But under this system, under the arts, I do not see any pathway for those people that are lost and unable to personally express themselves until they get into the arts to be able to get a grip and move on, which then helps society as well. I just do not see that in what you are telling us, you know?

[11.30 am]

Mr Walker: I suppose the difference is direct access to the programs which they do versus organisations that run the programs for them to be able to access directly in the community. As I said before, our process is to fund those organisations to then go and work in the community, which then, if targeting is better—to go back to the earlier point—will enable those sorts of things to happen through that process. They have a choice in the sense that if the infrastructure is on the ground, if in Bunbury they all work in those programs and if those programs are funded, that is one particular entry point. If those things do not exist, then you are out; there is no entry point. That entry point becomes really quite difficult, whether the interest is there or not, which is why, to go back to the earlier contention, we need to find a way to be able to scale the activities in school and to then link those outside to the community. The way in which we are trying to do that is through the programs we fund through the community, through organisations that can apply to the grants, or individuals can apply themselves. But to take it back to Tony's earlier point, any

individual that is trying to access a social program as an individual to do that particular strand of funding, if we are only funding 20 per cent of applications, which we are, then that is how much money we have available to do it. Twenty per cent is a fairly tough benchmark.

The CHAIR: So for something like the Community Arts Network, you would see that that is its role.

Mr Walker: Yes. The Community Arts Network—that is its role. Its role is to help build the capacity of organisations out into the state, but they are a very small organisation and it is a very big state to try to cover. We have given them recurrent funding for a few years. The Australia Council has backed up our recurrent funding for a few years, and I know that the programs that they run—the one that they run in Narrogin achieved, according to the researcher who ran the project, some of the best scores they had ever seen on the social return on investments in the cases that have been produced in the field. That is what their job is to do. They are one organisation, and they are just one, there is a limit to how much they can do in that space.

The CHAIR: There is a lot of kudos having philanthropists sponsor various arts events or arts activity. That tends to be at the high end where there is some status involved. Do you think there is a role for philanthropy in terms of some of this Youth at Risk program and engagement in the arts at that level?

Mr Walker: There is always room for not just philanthropists, but for the private sector as well, and they are engaged in this space. The issue is not whether these organisations have engaged; it is to what extent can we encourage the community generally to engage in these things more. As an organisation, we introduced the philanthropy incentive scheme. It is the only philanthropy incentive scheme that exists in Australia to try to incentivise precisely what you have just described. The paper that we will submit with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs does want to look at social impact and social investment bonds as alternative ways in which it is trying to deal with some proper recalcitrance issues. This is never just an issue of one project, one scheme, one organisation; it is a whole-of-system approach to how to deal with a particular issue. I think we have incentives in place. They are never enough. If I am going back to being the minister, then clearly I would be increasing the amount of money across the board to any of these projects. Our strategy is to deal with how we deal with these things. We have an incentives scheme. We have posited a new model to try to trial some social impact bonds. We have reformed our programs, because it offers a route, where a route previously did not exist before, and through Creative Regions we have another route which previously did not exist before. As an agency, they are the things that we are working on to try to do in this space. Of course, philanthropists are part of it, but they are already doing things. The corporate sector is already doing things—it is an extent and a scale issue.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I understand you will be providing a written submission.

Mr Walker: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I have just come concluding remarks. Thanks 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 of evidence. Thank you very much for your time today.

Hearing concluded at 11.35 am
