

**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 KUNUNURRA  
MONDAY, 2 AUGUST 2010**

**SESSION THREE**

**Members**

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

---

**Hearing commenced at 10.27 am**

**O'MALLEY, MS EDNA JANET**

**Deputy Chair/Member Miriuwung Gajerrong Corporation, Miriuwung Gajerrong Ord Enhancement Scheme, examined:**

**MOULTON, MS ANNA CECELIA**

**Program Manager, Miriuwung Gajerrong Ord Enhancement Scheme, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee I would like to thank you for your interest and appearance before us today. 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. 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 service for alcohol and illicit drug problems.

This committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly and this hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament. As a public hearing, Hansard is making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any document or documents during your evidence it would help if you could provide Hansard with the full title. Have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

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

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Please state the capacity in which you appear before the committee today?

**Ms O'Malley:** I am one of the directors of the MG Corp. OES is one of our corporations out of seven. I am one of the directors sitting on that. We deal with the 40 recommendations we have out of the Ord final agreement and the social impact of Ord stage 1 and what the Indigenous people are left with. On drug and alcohol, one of the 40 recommendations was that we have a bucket of money that we leveraged from government to put in programs to bridge the gap, and we got dollar for dollar. I sit on that board and we are here now on drug and alcohol.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you.

**Ms Moulton:** My name is Anna Moulton. I am the program manager of the Miriuwung Gajerrong Ord enhancement scheme. The Ord enhancement scheme is a partnership between the state government through the Kimberley Development Commission and the MG Corporation. I am one of two staff who work to support the Ord enhancement scheme committee. It is made up of seven MG corporate representatives and the director of the KDC.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I would like to thank you for the submission you have made to the committee. In addition to the submission we are looking at alcohol, cannabis and other drug problems throughout Western Australia. This week we are focusing on the Kimberley. We are trying to get a

good picture of the problems in the Kimberley, whether it is alcohol, cannabis or other drugs; depending on whichever drug is the major problem—alcohol or drugs. We then want to know—from prenatal to early childhood years, school children and adults—who you are working with regarding which drugs. What is proving effective and what needs to be better resourced?

I saw in your submission that you support the bans. What do you feel about the effectiveness of the bans? Has their introduction in other parts of the Kimberley caused problems here? How far would you like those bans to go here? Can you start first, Edna, and then we will ask Anna to add to your comments.

This is your opportunity Edna to tell us what is wrong; why it is wrong; and how you think things can be fixed and where it needs to be fixed.

**Ms O'Malley:** The MG Corporation supports restrictions on alcohol sales combined with increased support programs, better housing and better employment programs. We do support alcohol bans, as MG people, and that is a restriction to be put right across the board for everyone to abide by.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can you tell us about your area?

**Ms O'Malley:** Miriuwung country, where Kununurra is situated. I believe that each town has to work with the government on the bans they have in their area to address their problem, because you will find each town, with their Indigenous people, deals with drug and alcohol in different ways. They have to deal with the individual township with their problem. Kununurra will not be the same as Fitzroy. It has the same effects of violence and people ending up in hospital; children not going to school and everything like that. But how you deal with it with the Indigenous people is totally different.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you saying that the approach has to be sensitive to, I guess, the local Aboriginal community?

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes, because we are all different, culturally. If they deal with the very towns and the individual trips there; they will be able to bridge the gap a bit because you are dealing with the problem in that town.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How many Aboriginal communities are there? I believe that the number of Aboriginal people living in Kununurra is between 4 000 and 5 000. Are those 4 000 to 5 000 family groups or community groups? When you say “work with the Aboriginal people” can you describe what is that makeup of the numbers and therefore who you are saying it should work with?

**Ms O'Malley:** For the Kununurra area you will be dealing with Miriuwung Gajerrong people, the tribe of people who belong to this area. We do have other tribes who come into our land. That restriction must be there for them as well. If they have restrictions on all the different tribes in the area and you work with their restriction, Halls Creek mob will not run here because there is a ban here and they must abide by it. They cannot run away from theirs and think they will have a better deal down the road, because they will not. We will be dealing with our alcohol issue here and there will be a ban here that affects them, so it will be no good running from over there to come here. They will be stuck in a rut because the ban will be here for our people as well. There will be no need to leave their area; they need to be able to stand their ground, stay in their own area and put up with the ban affecting them there because it is their people who put that ban there in the first place to overcome their problem. We have five, maybe six different other tribes here and this causes more social impact on the community than drug and alcohol. They came here for the alcohol, but then they become homeless; they get sick of living in the sticks; and their children do not go to school because nobody knows where they come from. There are five or six more burdens when they come here.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you say there is one main tribe?

**Ms O'Malley:** The Miriuwung Gajerrong people, yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** They are very supportive of liquor restrictions. Do you think if liquor restrictions are introduced, it would encourage those other five or six tribes that have come here to go back to where their tribes come from? I guess some come from Halls Creek or Broome.

**Ms O'Malley:** It should because since Fitzroy was the town that led the way in trying to resolve its problem, maybe other towns should have got on board at that time. We all understand now that Fitzroy stood alone and was criticised by both sides—by the Indigenous people and the government. But in the end it is a good result for the people who live there and they can still tell you that. All they needed were programs and things to help them bridge the gap from what this alcohol has done to good families. We have to come on board. If they want to fix up the whole Kimberley area with this restriction, every town must find a restriction that will suit their people and the problems they face in their town. People should not be running from their own restrictions because it is up to the public to put in the restriction. We, as MG people, can talk for our land here because we are the land owners here.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How many MG people are in Kununurra?

**Ms Moulton:** It is estimated that about 50 per cent of the Aboriginal population are MG. Some of the other figures we have heard indicate that there might be a population of more like 3 000 Aboriginal people in town and 3 000 non-Aboriginal people. We know that the census figures are out.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Of the 3 000 Aboriginal people, do you think 1 500 belong to the MG tribe.

**Ms Moulton:** That is right—directly; and then those people married into families from elsewhere. In a sense the community is much larger than just the 1 500.

[10.40 am]

**Ms O'Malley:** Major towns have the impact of the small communities like Oombulgurri, Kalumburu and Turkey Creek coming to Kununurra and Halls Creek, because once they have a restriction on their community, they run to the nearest town. A lot of the communities had restrictions a long time ago, but they did not have town support. Aboriginal people put down by-laws. But we did not have the support of government back then to support our by-laws and we did not have the town support of the by-laws. So it is coming back now. We need to put the restrictions and the by-laws to run together so that we are able to work with our people, because if we put a restriction into the town area for grog from the outlet, we need to put by-laws on our living areas that are going to accommodate that. You have got more drinkers in the community than non-drinkers; so how do you support the people who want to have a good environment, when they are outnumbered by the younger generation drinking more than the old people? We have got only a handful of old people left, and usually they are the ones who have got to look after all the children and put up with all the stress from the alcohol, and they have not got any way of resolving their problem because there is nothing put in concrete for them.

**The CHAIRMAN:** From what you have said, it appears that when bans have been imposed in other areas, it has made it more difficult for the MG tribe here in Kununurra because of people coming to Kununurra. Is that what you are saying?

**Ms O'Malley:** We have only had trials of restrictions here, and they were when the government gave out the big bonus money, and when we had a death in the family or a family feud and everything was too much for the community and the police to monitor. So if there was going to be heavy drinking and violence at the end because of certain family members there, they would put a restriction on in the town. When they had those restrictions, a helluva lot of people said they had a good funeral, a good wake, no problems. So I believe that a restriction on the alcohol from the outlet is going to be good for our people. But they just cannot bring it in every time we have our problem season.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It has got to be all the time?

**Ms O'Malley:** All the time, yes, because people learn that this is the outlet for grog, so that there is not too much out there that people can take home. Obviously a lot of us Indigenous people do not know how to drink on a social basis. This is why we are asking for programs and things to come in to assist families and people to be able to drink—you can drink, but you can control drink; or get off the drink altogether.

**The CHAIRMAN:** How many MG people do you think would be heavy drinkers?

**Ms O'Malley:** A helluva lot. I would not be able to put a number on it, because there are a helluva lot of Indigenous people who live in this town who have never touched alcohol in their whole lives.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Ten per cent, 20 per cent, 30 per cent?

**Ms Moulton:** I do not think either of us would like to make comment on that. One of the interesting things through the work of the Ord enhancement scheme is that we have started asking service providers to start identifying who they are providing the services to. Previously, no-one has ever really identified what language groups they are delivering services to. We found, for example, working with Kununurra District High School, that of the children who are most at risk or severely at risk of not attending school, the majority of those are Miriwung–Gajerrong children. So what we are finding through our projects with other agencies is that it is confirming what MG people always suspected; that is, that the majority of really disadvantaged people in town are Miriwung–Gajerrong people, and they are really the people who service providers have considered to be in the too-hard basket to some extent, or simply have not been able to engage with. In a sense the work that we have been doing is really the first sort of grassroots advocacy project where Aboriginal people are saying these are the needs of grassroots Aboriginal people; this is what we need to do to change service delivery so that it really makes an impact on people's lives. What MG people are also saying is that what we do through our projects and what we achieve will benefit other disadvantaged Aboriginal people who are coming from other regions because we are really trying to focus on what the real needs are.

**The CHAIRMAN:** With the MG people, is the main problem alcohol, or is it alcohol and cannabis? Is it 50–50, or is it all together?

**Ms O'Malley:** I believe both drugs are deadly, but alcohol was always the one from the very beginning. Alcohol was always there. The marijuana use today is more or less what has been introduced into Kununurra in the past 20 to 30 years. Alcohol was always the major problem, but you have got both of them there now, and we are getting doubly hit by that, because alcohol does certain things to your body and your brain, and then you have got the drug, which does certain things to your body and your brain, so you get affected both ways. That comes with a helluva lot of other things, too—overcrowding, abuse, sexual abuse and everything like that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Of the 1 500 people in the MG tribe, for how many would it now be normal to smoke cannabis? How many people do you think would smoke cannabis on a regular basis?

**Ms O'Malley:** I think they are both the same—alcohol and drugs are probably the same in the community. Then there are some people who smoke marijuana and do not even drink alcohol. But there is that mental problem.

**The CHAIRMAN:** People do become psychotic from smoking cannabis.

**Ms O'Malley:** Exactly.

**Ms Moulton:** I think in September there is going to be the Notre Dame review of the Halls Creek alcohol restrictions, and there will be a section in that report about Kununurra. We have already heard that there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about drug and alcohol abuse and also how it affects young people. Very young children are also consuming drugs and alcohol, and there is a lot of concern that there is a lot of drug-induced psychosis in the community but it goes unassisted and unidentified.

**Ms O'Malley:** And the age is getting younger.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When you say the age is getting younger, at what age is it starting?

**Ms O'Malley:** Kids as young as seven and eight are drinking and smoking in their homes and walking the streets of Kununurra.

**The CHAIRMAN:** As young as seven and eight?

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Obviously we need more treatment programs for people who are causing violence because of the alcohol that they are drinking. With both the alcohol and the cannabis, we know that you need treatment programs. But on top of the treatment programs, it is an offence to have more than a certain amount of cannabis on your person. There is currently a bill in Parliament. At the moment, a person may be in possession of 15 joints before they are pulled up and get a criminal record. But that is going to be cut back. It is going to go from 30 grams to 10 grams, and then to be in possession of more than 10 grams will be a criminal offence, so the person could go to prison. What other options are there? What do Aboriginal people think about prison, and what alternatives are there to prison for Aboriginal people?

**Ms O'Malley:** Well, if we are going to address our drug and alcohol problem, we also have other hard drugs in the area as well, not only marijuana. Drugs and alcohol have the same effect on Indigenous people as they do on any other people. We need to have more programs put in place in our schools. We need programs that are going to hit the grassroots people and educate them about drugs and alcohol, because they were never educated about drugs and alcohol. We only got our right to drink grog in 1963, 1964. That is not so long ago. There was no program for anybody. When it was sold from the shop, well, you just drank yourself silly on the reserve. You could not get assistance on the reserve in the early days because the police were not allowed to go in there and intervene in family feuds and everything like that, so we were left behind. So we need to pick up now, get away from what has happened in the past, and pick up programs that are going to hit the next generation and help the people who have got a problem now to overcome some of those issues. You have got a lot of families out there that want to work with their own family in overcoming these problems. But family groups do not have a system to help them to even deal with their own mob that are affected by it, let alone have a program on the outside that you can walk in there because you have got a problem and you can fix yourself up. There is nothing even to help families at home deal with it. I think we could overcome a lot of those problems if we had a system at home as well. The overcrowding, that all fits into it, because if individual families only had their family to worry about, a lot of those things would disappear; everybody would have their own home. But we do not have a magic wand, and nor does the government. But we need to begin to close the gap and we need to work with grassroots people and bring it from here up to here. So far, programs have come from Canberra into a big building, and then out. It does not work like that. It should come from Canberra into a big building, but the outcome drops down on the ground and does not just stay in the office. It is supposed to hit down on the ground. A lot of these programs have never, ever reached the ground with some of the funding programs. They have been designed for us. But they have got to change them now. Do not be accountable to your money in Canberra. Be accountable to the grassroots people that you are supposed to be delivering the programs to.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do you think some of the money that comes from royalties should go straight into housing? There seems to be a big problem with housing. Do you think that money should be reviewed so that it can go towards new homes?

**Ms Moulton:** What kind of royalties?

**The CHAIRMAN:** The royalty payments. I guess the MG people here would receive some —

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Someone else was saying this morning that there are some cases where a number of times a year some people have got a fair bit of money because their group or whatever

has got a sum of money specifically given to them from royalties from an agreement with a mining company.

**Ms Moulton:** From the my understanding, the Ord final agreement did not —

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** No. It is earlier agreements.

**Ms Moulton:** I have heard concerns among the community about those royalty agreements and wishing that deals had been done previously that allowed for money to be put towards social services in the same manner as the Ord final agreement. But people seem to be at a loss as to how to ensure that change occurs, because there is no legal mechanism to try and direct that change.

**Ms O'Malley:** We have got only one royalty that Miriuwung–Gajerrong people get back. That is for the hydro. That is the only one. That is once a year.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Okay.

**Ms Moulton:** And not everybody gets that.

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes; not everybody gets that. You have got the Argyle diamond mine, the Rio Tinto agreement, but theirs is packaged up, the same like us, as social problems, employment and everything else. Their royalty goes into different sections. They have got directors. The Argyle mining company and the water directors, they work together, same as MG. We work to overcome some of our problems.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I think it refers to earlier agreements—they must be quite old agreements now—and those people might be —

[10.55 am]

**Ms O'Malley:** No, no.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Would it perhaps be in the Northern Territory?

**Ms O'Malley:** Yeah, you might be looking in the Northern Territory, but somewhere else, not here.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I did not think it was policy —

**Ms O'Malley:** You can only get royalties either from a mining company that comes on to your country, made you wealthy and made themselves wealthy, but, as you know, we have only got Argyle there and the Ord final agreement here for us Miriuwung Gajerrong people. Like I said, being honest with you, there is only one royalty that came out of the hydro and this is for the powerline. That is wrapped up, nobody can get their hands on it or even resolve it because of the way was set up. That is the only royalty and it is a lost cause. People are trying to open that case now, but they find it very, very hard. It is sensitive around town amongst families that are involved with it. So that is only royalty that is finger money out there. The Ord final agreement and other —

**The CHAIRMAN:** It must be in other areas —

**Ms O'Malley:** Other areas, yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Because we were told that when Centrelink payments come in and when royalty payments come in, there are a lot more problems in some of the towns with drinking and gambling.

**Ms Moulton:** Even in that little report that we put in, there is reference to that. Even the education programs here in town say that when people hear royalty payments are in town it affects school attendance. I imagine some of them might be coming from areas not actually relating to Miriuwung Gajerrong people.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I am trying to work out—Ellendale diamond mine, perhaps.

**Ms O'Malley:** No, that is Bunaba people, that is the Fitzroy area. So you can see the impact on Fitzroy of all the mining companies around there, when the mining companies gave the individual

Indigenous people their own agreements. A lot of them were all sugar agreements, to sugar them up so they could go and do whatever they wanted to. Those towns were affected by these kinds of royalties. Kununurra is affected when Kalumburu—Kalumburu is a little place that mining companies love because there is a hell of a lot to find there—people get their royalties and come to Kununurra, because they are lost sheep here. They cause a big problem. They are homeless; there is nothing to accommodate them. Their big bucks only last for a week and then you have sad miserable people walking around homeless for the next three or four months before they go back home again. And it is the same we have got mining companies going on bigger country now, this is all the Halls Creek area. When the mining companies first came onto country a lot of Indigenous people would get finger money before the agreement was actually signed off. When the agreement is put in place a better deal comes out of it, because the Kimberley Land Council should make sure that that is what happens. The same as us, we did not get finger money on our agreement, it all went into programs and sections to help us live in this 21st century and get by; it is not finger money.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We have heard in other towns with young people that they are just not going to school. Suggestions have been made about school pickups to take them to school and what could be done to encourage them to stay at school. First, can I ask about the schooling problem? Also, how interested are the MG young people in their culture and stories from the older people?

**Ms O'Malley:** I can only talk for MG people, I cannot talk for any other tribe, but the Indigenous people have worked with the school, out there, with our workers, to bridge the gap. We put in the Clontarf program, we were the first ones to pay for Clontarf to actually leave Perth and come to our school. It was not a sporting thing to make the boys better sportsman; it was the carrot to bring them back to school. It would have been a successful story if the government had followed it, but we are stuck now because we have got all the kids in school now. But where are all the new programs to be introduced to get these children back into mainstream? You just cannot stay —

**The CHAIRMAN:** By mainstream do you mean employment with them when they leave school?

**Ms O'Malley:** Mainstream education —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Oh right, so they are actually going to Clontarf. But once they reach a standard, is there a problem then getting them back into mainstream?

**Ms O'Malley:** Yeah. Some of these children have hardly been to school. Clontarf is for high school students.

**Ms Moulton:** There are insufficient one-to-one catch-up programs to help kids who have been disengaged from education for a long time to come up to standard.

**Ms O'Malley:** The school has got to be equipped to take on the next step now. You bring in a program that brings kids to school. That was to bring to get the kids to school; we need to go up to the next level now.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The committee last year had a report on English as a second language. We looked for additional funding for some of those children, and we were told during those hearings that for a child entering school who had English as second language, it could take them seven years before they adapted socially and behaviourally. If you are getting the children back at school, has any research been done, if you have got someone at 13 or 14, about what additional support is needed to bring them up to the grade? Has there been research done?

**Ms Moulton:** I am not aware of any research that would give us some definitive answer to that, but what the Ord Enhancement Scheme committee has sought to do is to look at striking at different levels in the education system. So they started by supporting Clontarf, that was the pre-existing program. The OES committee is also concerned that there are a lot of children not even enrolled who are still not being captured. The Ord Enhancement Scheme committee has funded, and is a major partner in, a new program called the Joodoogeb-be-gerring Werlelemen program, which is



for disengaged girls, and we are seeking ongoing government support for the program. There are some girls in there who have not been to school for seven years.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So they are aged —

**Ms Moulton:** Those girls are aged from 13 to 18, but we also want to look at primary next.

**Ms O'Malley:** Some of them are mothers.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Some of them are mothers who have never been to school?

**Ms O'Malley:** Some of them have been mothers not one time but two or three times.

**Ms Moulton:** That is what Connections is though, when Graham was referring to Connections it is now —

**The CHAIRMAN:** So they have had no education at all?

**Ms Moulton:** Very little. So that provides them with more of a one-to-one and a higher ratio of teaching staff to students, plus also life skills, plus also some of that cultural input, that we have also supported to happen through the language centre here in Kununurra with the Clontarf boys.

**The CHAIRMAN:** For those children that you come across who are 14 or 15, is there a funding formula so if you get them back at school, there is additional assistance that is given for them? How does Connections work?

**Ms Moulton:** It is very difficult, the education system has been the hardest system for us to really understand the underlying issues of, and we have been working very hard to do so. One of the dilemmas of the funding model would appear to be that, number one, the funding that the school gets is based on the number of kids who attend in two weeks in February. If the children are not attending in that period then that affects the staffing levels for the school for the rest of the year, regardless of whether or not it might take even an additional month, particularly with the wet season, for all the kids to come in from other outlying communities, and also after that school-holiday break to get kids back into an attendance pattern. The other problem is that NAPLAN model. It is my understanding that the specialist funding for catching up kids in education comes through the NAPLAN tests, and the trouble with NAPLAN —

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** They are not there on the day that the test is done.

**Ms Moulton:** That is right, and a lot of them will actively avoid it because they are so embarrassed about their lack of ability to understand the tests, which are worded in a very high-standard Australian English, and the context of text is so far removed culturally from the kids' day-to-day experience in terms of the social environment of living in the bush. It is a very city-oriented document; that is what we have had reported to us. A lot of the kids are incapable of even sitting it and actively seek not to sit it, so the school is not actually capturing those results; there is no realistic picture of the level of need in Kununurra. That is why with both Connections and Clontarf, we have been a strong advocate to ensure that they introduce some level of benchmarking so that we know the kids who are part of the girls program in Clontarf are actually getting some improvement in the numeracy and literacy as a core, so that that will at least form the basis for them going on to further education, training and employment.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Do you think the bureaucrats who look after the NAPLAN testing are aware of that issue?

**Ms Moulton:** People talk about it as if it is common knowledge in the education field. Whether or not the bureaucrats do understand that, I cannot answer that question.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Because I have followed the NAPLAN issue quite closely, I am quite interested in it, and that has never occurred to me. But of course, once you think of it, it is the most obvious thing in the world, isn't it?

**Ms Moulton:** One of the most interesting things through the OES, the Ord Enhancement Scheme, has been the discovery that not only are our students who are attending school a little bit of the time failing NAPLAN, but our grade three students, who are attending 80 or 90 per cent of the time are also failing NAPLAN.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** They are quite hard tests. I have read through them. Especially when they get into the upper primary and lower secondary, they are quite hard. Even someone with quite a reasonable level of education has to sit and think about it. For a kid that did not have a particularly high level of attendance at school it would be terrifying.

**Ms Moulton:** The other issue that the Ord Enhancement Scheme has sought to address is the issue of early childhood education. And we have seed funded, using Miriuwung Gajerrong moneys, a program called Stepping Stones, which is a structured early childhood learning program, where we have employed a highly experienced former kindergarten teacher to run a program where we are targeting the really grassroots Aboriginal families. That is done in partnership with another Aboriginal corporation called Gawooleng Yawoodeng, which is a women's refuge organisation, but they also have some family outreach and mobile playgroup activities. One of the things that we have found while we have seed funded that is that there is actually no recurrent funding out there for a community-based learning program, which is very interesting. So that is another area for which the Ord Enhancement Scheme is seeking government support. We have got the program up and running, we are getting the runs on the board and we are getting between 12 and 20 children attending two days a week, the same days kindy runs—these are three-year-olds, four-year-olds and some five-year-olds—and we are starting to engage their parents as well. The fascinating thing about that is seeing the progress that the kids are making at that age.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** At that age, it can be done in such a way that it is fun. They would love it.

**Ms Moulton:** But the kindy teacher is also picking up issues. She wonders whether some of the children might be—without any formal qualifications in this area or expertise—alcohol-affected children. Other children have hearing issues, and so she is trying to link in with the health services.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is there a community nurse? Because there are standards for when children are meant to be assessed—within a few days, so many weeks, so many months—and different checks that children are meant to have for hearing, vision, and speech. What happens with those checks, in terms of general health, that are meant to occur?

**Ms Moulton:** I think there are so many families falling through the net. That is why we have been having working so closely with OVAHS, because at least with OVAHS they would have an outreach service where they are going out into the community to build those relationships with families. This is what we are finding with all of our cross-program delivery; most families are almost falling through every net.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** One other I was interested in: in this document you mention the assessments of the Ord project stage one, the “Aboriginal Social and Economic Impact Assessment” report.

**Ms O'Malley:** The ASEIA report.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Are we able to get a copy of that?

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you, we will accept that by way of supplementary information. You have mentioned some of the staff that you have. How many staff does MG employ?

**Ms O'Malley:** OES?

**Ms Moulton:** MG Corp.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does it count as MG Corp or OES?

[11.10 am]

**Ms Moulton:** OES is separate. It is run as a government program.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Oh.

**Ms O'Malley:** MG Corp is the engine room that has to deal with the Ord Final Agreement. OES is just one of the arms that is incorporated by authority. We have our own chairperson and directors who sit there —

**The CHAIRMAN:** So does OES provide services to MG Corp? Does anyone else provide services and resources to MG Corp?

**Ms O'Malley:** We deliver the service back to the people from the Ord Enhancement Scheme. We have 11 point something —

**Ms Moulton:** It is \$11.195 million.

**The CHAIRMAN:** MG Corp is the umbrella for the community and then OES, which is state-government funded, works with MG Corp to provide services.

**Ms Moulton:** Or to facilitate improved service delivery.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** We have it here. Janet, can read this later so that she can understand it.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does that say how many staff there are?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** In MG Corp?

**The CHAIRMAN:** No, it would then be in OES, would it not?

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** No; OES is like a scheme or a plan.

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes, we have only two staff there and one independent director with seven directors on the board.

**Ms Moulton:** At the OES. Based at the KDC.

**Ms O'Malley:** And we handle all the social problems there. We try to get it from other government buckets out there. If it is health, we go to OVAHS; we hit the health bucket.

**Ms Moulton:** Really, the OES is an innovative state government program that is trying to develop a new way of working between Aboriginal people and the state government to improve service delivery. Longer term, I think the idea is that MG Corp, as the representative body, will probably take over the social advocacy role in the future. Certainly MG Corp is the appropriate body to talk about anything to do with positions on political issues such as the alcohol restrictions. The reason I came today to support Edna in talking about the work of the OES is that we have a number of projects for which we are seeking ongoing support, which we believe would help make inroads into a whole range of social impacts and the underlying social causes of drug and alcohol abuse, non-attendance at school, failure in the employment sector and so forth.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Edna, can you tell us how you think the Ord Valley development will help the younger people to possibly get off alcohol and drugs?

**Ms O'Malley:** OVAHS?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Will the Ord Valley development help with the problems that you have here with alcohol and cannabis?

**Ms O'Malley:** The Ord stage 2 program? What affect will stage 2 have coming into Kununurra?

**Ms Moulton:** Yes, and all the jobs and other things. Will that help young people get off the grog and so forth?

**Ms O'Malley:** Indigenous people fought to be recognised and to be put on Ord stage 2 as workers and so forth. With Ord stage 2, we are hoping to get training and employment. It might be only for that short time but at least our people will get that opportunity to know what is out there. So Ord

stage 2 would be of benefit to Indigenous people. We have the right program to assist it. We have a bucket of money in the ADP that gets our people into training and then employment. We have a joint venture with Leighton, the contractor mob that the government put on Ord stage 2. They have to abide by some of the rules that were put in there—they have to work with the Indigenous people from here to get them into employment. We are partners now, but we are both working together to achieve the same thing—to get our people into that employment.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Do you know whether your high school is going to get any kind of trade training place? The federal government is putting trade schools within some high schools. Do you know whether that is happening here?

**Ms Moulton:** Not to my knowledge.

**Ms O'Malley:** That would be a good question for the Department of Education.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Yes. I just thought you might know. The other one is real offbeat. Ord stage 3 extends across the Northern Territory border, does it not? Have any of the Aboriginal people from the territory spoken about that? Are they interested about or aware of that?

**Ms O'Malley:** It is not a different tribe now. Do not get me wrong, we are the same people—the Miriuwung–Gajerrong people. It is the government who put in that imaginary borderline. Our people still negotiate for that land on the other side. When they negotiate for the land on that other side, the affect of what comes back to that land for development will not reach the WA Miriuwung–Gajerrong people. It will not benefit us. It will only benefit the people in that area for that land because of that borderline that has been put there.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** That is interesting.

**Ms O'Malley:** So we cannot talk for Ord stage 3. As Indigenous people, it is our cultural way that we cannot talk about that land, because we are well-disciplined people. We have rules and regulations that you do not talk for another man's land. You can only talk about the area that you are boss of.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** That is interesting. But you are aware of it. That is good.

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes, because MG people are one. You have got to remember that. The Northern Territory – Western Australia borderline was only put there by the government. Us Indigenous people had our own boundary of our Miriuwung–Gajerrong tribe. Now, when it comes to benefit, as you guys know, our Ord final agreement here does not bring in our Northern Territory Miriuwung–Gajerrong people. They are left in the dark. They are not on any of these good programs that we have got. They are eliminated because of that borderline. When the government negotiates for Ord stage 3, you can see that we will be eliminated from it and they will go ahead. That knowledge and understanding of bringing people and government together is not there. They need to build on some good partnerships so that the outcome can reach the Indigenous people.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** How many of your people are on the other side of the border?

**Ms O'Malley:** Just as many as live on this side.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Is it about half-half?

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You said that there are about 1 500 on this side, so there are about 1 500 on the other side as well.

**Ms O'Malley:** People mostly live on the other side. A lot of people only use this place as a common ground to come and do their shopping, do their business, visit hospital, pick up their supplies and go back to their little darwong that they have got on the other side—their little community living area. A lot of people who live on the other side in their little community area use

Timber Creek and Katherine on the Northern Territory side as their main shopping areas. Kununurra is just for some of the mob back this way. There is a split there.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I am going to finish in a few minutes. Is there anything major that you wanted to sum up for us for a minute or two? We will be sending you a copy of the transcript so you can put in a supplementary submission if there are issues you want to cover, but if there is anything major that we have not discussed, please take one to two minutes each to summarise.

**Ms Moulton:** Perhaps I can just summarise the approach that the OES committee has taken. Housing is a major impediment. The underinvestment in housing and the resulting overcrowding is a huge barrier to people who do want to make positive change in their life—they get dragged back into the troubled way of living. There is a massive underinvestment in appropriate counselling, healing and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. The OES is working with the Kununurra Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation to try to develop a business case for a rehabilitation and education alcohol centre based here in Kununurra that would be able to support whole-of-family counselling —

**The CHAIRMAN:** Similar to the one in Wyndham?

**Ms Moulton:** Similar, but I think one of the differences would be in possibly not just having the three-month-type stint but also some shorter term stints. Not everyone will go to Wyndham because it is such a major deal. If there is something more localised for people to visit on a regular basis, it would maybe be a softer entry point. When people do go to Wyndham, there is no transition for them here when they come out—they go back into the same family environment and frequently find themselves in the same position. With all the focus at the minute in the Ord development on Aboriginal employment, a major barrier for a lot of Miriuwung–Gajerrong people is drug and alcohol issues. We believe that if we had a facility or place from which people could transition in and out while they are still going to work, that would have a major impact on people's lives. The underlying trauma—the intergenerational trauma—has to be addressed. We really do need people who are skilled up locally to be able to address some of those issues. The other major aim in terms of education is in looking at early childhood education and also at what is necessary for those kids to catch up. We are working on improving attendance. We have reports that indicate that 50 per cent of the issue is the home life and 50 per cent is in the school. We really want to ensure that there are more realistic measures of looking at the resources that the school is required have to ensure that those children are brought up to standard. Through the work that we are doing also with MG Corp—through employment—we need to ensure that there is appropriate work readiness in case management support. There is a lot of progress happening in that area.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. Edna, would you like to give us a quick summary or add any major point that you think we have missed?

**Ms O'Malley:** With services to bridge the gap, there is one part that we did not talk about; we have no men's service here. We have a female service. You have got to remember that men are regarded as the perpetrator because they inflict the violence on the female and their family and they have to run. Now, we have got a place for the victims but we do not have a place for the perpetrators. They are the men of our community; their problem of not having a men's service has not been addressed. We have had the women's service here for about 30 years and we have never had a men's service here to accommodate them. You are fixing up the women's place by sheltering them—they are the victims—but our men, the perpetrators who are doing this, are not getting any help, so we are flogging a dead horse. We put the cart before the horse again, but we need to fix it up.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is there a model men's service somewhere else that you think should be introduced?

**Ms O'Malley:** No. We can put our own in because we know our own men from this area.

**Ms Moulton:** There used to be one here, which worked very well.

**Ms O'Malley:** Yes, but the funding was taken away.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** How long ago was that?

**Ms Moulton:** Five years ago.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** And was it federal or state funded? Sorry, that is a technical question.

**Ms Moulton:** I am not sure.

**Ms O'Malley:** It was through OVAHS.

**Ms Moulton:** If it was based in OVAHS, it might have been federal funding.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You might like to tell us by way of supplementary information what you think needs to go in that men's service—who should run it, what they need to do, how it would work.

**Ms O'Malley:** Because of our cultural boundaries, the men's group has to be made up of the men themselves. They have to be eliminated like with our women's program—no man is allowed to go there. It is the same as our cultural issue out there where we share the land. You have men for the land and you have got women who control certain parts of the land and have got to practice their culture. We have to divide those in our cultural boundaries. White man's law and Aboriginal law need to combine and keep going. We hit a brick wall. But we should have a solution and continue on, because there is no barrier. Alcohol is not in our culture. Drugs and alcohol are not in our culture. We never had punishment or anything to deal with it because it was introduced to us. We have to get used to the white man system that is out there that has got to assist us, but they do not even have a solution to their own problem, so how do they expect us to? We need to divide our men and women to deal with their issues. When it comes to the men, the men need to have a strong working committee with only men—no women. They will fix up their problems just like us women fix up our problems because we were the victims. The men have to fix up their problems because the programs that have got to filter into the men's program have got to help the men overcome their issues so that they can have a good life with their wives. A lot of them do not want to be separated from their husband because of domestic violence but none of them have a solution of how to get their man to behave normal and come back as a good man to them. We have a program for women but we do not have one for men, so we need that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. I thank you both 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 28 days from the date of the letter attached to it. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added by these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. However, 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 once again both of you for coming today.

**Ms Moulton:** Could I just ask one procedural question?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes.

**Ms Moulton:** In terms of this report, the top document —

**The CHAIRMAN:** The things you have given to us or the report we are working on?

**Ms Moulton:** The things that we have given you. I am wondering whether it would be appropriate that, rather than that be taken as the formal submission, MG Corp send back the report, because they might want to add things to it. That is all.

**The Advisory Officer:** With submissions, the committee has to really accept them. They will not have a meeting like that for another two weeks. If you want to send us a final version —

**Ms Moulton:** That would probably be more appropriate, because Edna can now go back to MG Corp and talk to people a bit more about what this was all about with greater understanding. That would probably be appropriate as there might be things that they want to add.

**The CHAIRMAN:** That would be lovely.

**Hearing concluded at 11.26 am**