

House: Legislative Assembly- Premier's Statement
Date: Thursday, 30 August 2007
Member: Carpenter, Mr Alan; **SPEAKER;** Hames, Dr Kim; Redman, Mr Terry
Subject: INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Page: 10c - 24a / 0

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Statement by Premier

MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee - Premier) [10.06 am]: I strongly believe the key to resolving Aboriginal disadvantage is engagement in the real economy: sustainable jobs in a dynamic, thriving economy; respecting, valuing and promoting Indigenous culture and heritage and, at the same time, achieving engagement in the real economy. That is our ambition for Indigenous Western Australia. We are about to see announcements of massive new employment opportunities in the resources sector for Aboriginal people in this state. I wholeheartedly welcome this development. This has been an ambition of mine since before we took government in 2001 and a policy direction we, as a government, have pursued since that time. It is an agenda that we have driven hard in our dealings with the resource sector in particular, although not exclusively, inspired by what some are already achieving and encouraged by the willingness of others to pursue similar outcomes. As a government we are grateful for the support we are getting and now look forward with excitement to the developments to come.

When we came to government in 2001 the Indigenous unemployment rate was 20 per cent compared to the general Western Australian rate of 7.3 per cent. The Indigenous unemployment rate is now around 14 per cent compared with the general rate of 3.3 per cent. Clearly, significant progress has been made but much, much more needs to be done. I want a renewed effort and focus on Aboriginal employment.

We are at a point in time in our state's development when we must seize the opportunities that are emerging to create the underpinnings for long-term economic viability for Indigenous Western Australians and we all have a role to play. Government's role should be primarily to establish the preconditions, policy settings, leadership and direction by which Indigenous people will be enabled to participate fully in the state and nation's economy. For the effort to have any chance of success it needs the willing participation and partnership of private enterprise and of Indigenous people. Both must step forward.

With our economy now thumping along at a record growth and critical labour shortages looming as the biggest restraint on that growth, the time, surely, has arrived when we can fundamentally change the long-term economic and, therefore, social outlook of Indigenous Western Australians. This government desperately wants that outcome. It is in the interest of every single person in the state.

The excellent work done at Argyle by Rio Tinto over many years has shown what can be done when economic imperative, good corporate citizenship and enthusiastic Indigenous response come together. Rio has employed an additional 80 Aboriginal people in the past 12 months with a total now in excess of 340 and more developments to come. BHP Billiton currently employs 600 Indigenous people through its different operations and contractors in WA with more developments to come. Under Don Voelte's leadership, Woodside has gone from virtually no Indigenous employees just a short time ago to nearly 100 with more developments to come. There are others I could, and probably should nominate in the resources sector, such as Fortescue Metals Group Ltd, Newmont Mining Corporation and AngloGold Ashanti. The seeds have been sown.

Indigenous owned and operated enterprise is emerging as a key player in the same sector in a way that we have never seen before and, again, I anticipate massive developments very soon. We must and will as a state government play our pivotal part.

Mr Speaker, before outlining some particular initiatives, I want to reflect upon the pathway the government has already taken.

When we came to government in 2001, we set about introducing a new policy agenda for Western Australia. It was an agenda for the times, reflecting a more complex, modern and sophisticated community. It was a new century, a new millennium, and Western Australians wanted change, and Labor was up to the challenge. Nowhere was this more evident than in Indigenous affairs. For eight years we had witnessed the divisive and destructive approach of our predecessors, playing to prejudice and fear. I believed it brought shame on us all. We resolved to chart a new direction: practical solutions, shared goals, mutual respect. That was to be and remains our way. This approach has, among other things, delivered progress on native title, better services in Indigenous communities and, for the first time in our state's history, a determination to tackle the evils of physical and sexual abuse of Indigenous women and children.

In 2001, this government negotiated and signed a "Statement of Commitment to a New and Just Relationship with Aboriginal Western Australians" through their elected representatives in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Its purpose was to agree to a set of principles and a process for the negotiation of a statewide framework that could facilitate agreements at local and regional levels. It reflected a commitment to improve the economic independence of Aboriginal people. The statement also reflected a commitment by our government to work in partnership with Aboriginal people, recognising their rights and responsibilities as the first peoples of Western Australia, including their traditional ownership of and connection to our land and our waters. The Howard government's decision to abolish ATSIC has left a void in representative structure for Indigenous people that land councils and other bodies struggle to fill, and has made more difficult coherent interaction at state level. Having no positive alternative to offer when abolishing ATSIC was typical of the entirely reactionary approach the Howard government has taken in Indigenous affairs.

Our determination to do things differently could not have been more intense than in the area of native title. Our policy was in direct contrast to the shameful approach - I say shameful approach - of the previous government, an approach based on denial and on fear. Indeed, I believe that the Liberal Party in this state remains stained by its bigoted response to the Mabo decision - a response characterised by meanness of spirit and racist overtones. The then Premier sought to whip up fear and hysteria by claiming that native title put at risk Western Australia's economic prosperity and undermined our way of life. Our homes and backyards were under threat, we were told. The resources sector would be brought to its knees, we were told. The High Court exposed the lie that was the Liberal and National Party government's approach when it struck down its challenge to native title seven-nil.

We took an entirely different approach based on ensuring that native title delivered real benefits to Indigenous people while allowing mining and resources developments to continue. Since 2001, there have been 16 native title determinations in Western Australia, 11 of them resolved by consent and only five through litigation. We have also negotiated two major land use agreements: the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement and the Ord Final Agreement. A \$40 million land and equity fund was established in December 2004 to support the successful negotiation of agreements involving native title matters. The fund provides financial assistance for economic development opportunities and supports the negotiation of comprehensive agreements incorporating native title, heritage and compensation issues. This different approach has clearly been more successful in achieving positive outcomes for Indigenous communities, while also ensuring that taxpayers are not left with unnecessary litigation costs. Determinations under our government now cover 435 702 square kilometres of Western Australian land, and, Mr Speaker, look at our economic performance.

We have used a similarly constructive approach to the joint management of parks and reserves. This initiative was developed in recognition of the importance of protecting and respecting Indigenous culture and the commitment to the meaningful involvement of Aboriginal people in the management of parks and reserves. Integral to the joint management initiative has been the creation of demonstration park councils. These address matters such as Aboriginal training, employment and enterprises, day-to-day operational management and promotion of cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. Eight of the 12 park councils have now been established, with the intention to create the remaining four by the end of 2008.

I have mentioned my view that the state government's role should be primarily to establish the preconditions, policy settings, leadership and direction by which Indigenous people will be enabled to participate fully in the state's economy. To engage in the real economy, our Aboriginal children need a real education. I firmly believe that we must recognise the aspirations of young Indigenous people and provide them with the best opportunity to help realise their goals. We have set about engaging Aboriginal children more successfully, and for far longer, in the education system. The indicators show that we are on the right track, although, again, much needs to be done.

The retention of Indigenous year 11 students over the four-year period to year 11, 2006 was 75 per cent. That compares with the previous rate of 54 per cent. The state government has also delivered a massive growth in the number of Indigenous people commencing apprenticeships, from 560 in 2000 to 1 800 in 2006, which is a 300 per cent improvement. It comes through a range of programs designed to help Aboriginal students reach their career potential. The Follow the Dream program is one such program being delivered in 10 metropolitan and 14 regional centres, providing ongoing academic extension in a supportive environment. In 2006, three Aboriginal students achieved awards of distinction in their tertiary entrance examination, with one of them also winning an award of distinction. The Aboriginal school-based traineeship program assists students to achieve a successful transition from school to work. Under the previous government, the scheme floundered, with just 22 participants in 2000. Essentially, the program existed, but the political will to see it succeed did not. I am pleased to report that this is not the case under our government. To May this year, 2 713 students had participated in the program.

More recently, as part of an additional \$28 million Indigenous education and training package released in June, a further \$5 million has been provided to fund an additional 2 175 Aboriginal traineeships. Other initiatives as part of this package include an additional \$4.7 million to provide support for Indigenous apprentices and trainees. We also established the Indigenous youth leadership program. This is now at the third stage of recruiting and is providing training to 40 Indigenous young people aged 18 to 25 who are recognised as leaders, or potential leaders, within their communities.

Another program is achieving staggering results. When I was appointed Minister for Education; Sport and Recreation, and Indigenous Affairs in February 2001, I was approached within days by former Fremantle Dockers coach Gerard Neesham, who told me that he had a program that could dramatically change the lives of young Indigenous men. At that stage his Clontarf Football Academy was small and struggling for survival. It had no engagement with government or with the government school system, and desperately needed financial support, public and private. We threw our support behind the program, which seeks to engage Indigenous boys in schooling through the medium of Australian Rules football, teaching leadership and life skills as well as football. The results vindicated our decision, and in 2004 we committed \$4.7 million over four years to the Clontarf Foundation to establish and operate football academies in eight government schools.

The Clontarf Foundation is currently operating football academies at seven government school sites in Western Australia. There are six in the regional country centres of Albany, Broome, Geraldton, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and Kununurra, and the seventh is at Yule Brook College in Maddington. A further football academy site will be established at a second metropolitan school next year. I cannot praise Gerard Neesham and his team highly enough. His innovative football academy programs have been extremely effective in getting Indigenous young males to attend and participate more effectively in education or training. For example, the attendance of boys participating in football academy programs has averaged over 80 per cent. This compares with an average for Indigenous

boys in years 8 to 12 of 68 per cent. Of 300 Indigenous male students enrolled in year 12 in Western Australia, 64 were enrolled in academy schools. Of the Indigenous male students achieving graduation from year 12, 54 per cent were enrolled in the academy programs. As a bonus, 20 participants in the program have been drafted into the Australian Football League, including an amazing seven in the 2006 draft. This is an astounding achievement.

We have also seen success with the mid-west netball academy, established in July 2005 at John Willcock College, Geraldton, at the insistence of the local member of Parliament, the member for Geraldton. He believed that we could replicate for girls the outstanding success of the football academy, which had already been established in the mid-west city.

The netball academy aims to build self-esteem and confidence to attend and participate in school through involvement in netball. Funded by the state government, the Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation and John Willcock College jointly look after the day-to-day running of the academy, with a steering committee to govern operations. I am advised that the total attendance rates for female Indigenous students has significantly improved at John Willcock College and Geraldton Senior College; for example, year 8 attendance increased from 39 per cent in 2004 to 84 per cent in 2006; and year 11 attendance increased from 62 per cent in 2004 to 85 per cent in 2006. The number of Aboriginal teachers has also nearly doubled since 2001 from 88 to 150 this year. A further 28 are expected to be employed from the National Aboriginal and Islander Education office Bachelor of Education conversion course by the end of this year.

A number of initiatives have been implemented to effectively engage Aboriginal parents and caregivers in their children's education. We have invested heavily in public school infrastructure, with close to \$100 million spent on infrastructure in remote communities and schools with significant Aboriginal populations. This includes new schools at Pia Wadjari, Yulga Jinna, Tjuntjuntjara and Djidi Djidi in Bunbury and Onslow, and schools under construction at Wiluna and Fitzroy Crossing. Significant works have also been undertaken at locations including Kununurra, Hedland, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Broome and greater Bunbury.

We are delivering boarding accommodation for students in the Kimberly through the new \$13 million Broome Residential College. This boarding hostel caters for both government and non-government students in the region and is a joint venture between the state government and the Catholic Education Office. Two weeks ago the facility was operational with 30 beds. By the end of this school term 40 beds will be in operation, and the college will have 72 beds by the middle of next year. More recently we announced that an additional \$6 million will go towards major upgrades of physical infrastructure for training and education facilities in the Kimberly region, including funding towards redevelopment of Kimberley TAFE.

Government departments are also providing training opportunities; for example, the mentored Aboriginal training and employment scheme was initiated by the Department of Environment and Conservation with an aim to increase Aboriginal employment. Since

its inception in 2002, 21 trainees have moved into full-time positions in the department. The program currently has 29 trainees. The Department of Housing and Works has established an initiative to leverage Indigenous employment and training outcomes from the Halls Creek housing construction project. As part of its new role in these communities, Horizon Power has established an essential service officers training program in Broome. This program will support employees who reside in remote communities to progress through a program of training to ultimately become fully qualified linespersons.

As I have stated, I believe economic development is and should be a key priority for government in addressing social disadvantage. However, we cannot expect people who are the subject of violence and abuse to be able to participate in the economy even when opportunities exist. There must be a heavy focus on addressing these issues.

I want to take members back to 1999 and the story of Susan Taylor's tragic death at the Swan Valley Nyungah Community Aboriginal Corporation in Lockridge; I want to take members back to the coroner's report; and I want to take members back to the action taken by this government in 2001 in response to this tragic death. In November 2001, we established an inquiry into child abuse and family violence in Aboriginal communities, otherwise known as the Gordon inquiry. It found that there was widespread domestic violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities across the state. The then Premier, Geoff Gallop, described the reports findings as a human tragedy that was nothing short of a national disaster. He wrote to Prime Minister John Howard calling for a national response. The Prime Minister ignored these calls. We did not. We went about responding to the key findings and implementing the key recommendations. We closed down the Swan Valley Nyungah Community camp; and every member knows the story of that. We closed down the camp, despite protest from elements of the Liberal Party. The former member for Ningaloo gave an insight into how seriously the opposition took the issue of child abuse and domestic violence in a speech to Parliament -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! As members are aware about statements of this type, it is normal that they are heard in silence, and the Leader of the Opposition will no doubt be heard in silence with his response. Members who break this speech by interjecting will not be tolerated.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The former member for Ningaloo gave an insight into how seriously the opposition took the issue of child abuse and domestic violence in a speech to Parliament in 2003. Mr Rod Sweetman stated -

I remember my embarrassment when I sat with a group of Aboriginal women at the Aboriginal medical centre on the day minister Hames came in to address the serious issue of child abuse and molestation and the bashing of women in the Aboriginal community in Carnarvon, and in the Mungullah community and the

broader area of the Gascoyne, and he announced what I think was a \$2.4 million advertising campaign that would be the answer to all their problems.

Unlike the Opposition, we took this issue seriously. In response to the Gordon inquiry, the Western Australian Government initially invested more than \$71 million to implement this action plan for addressing family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal communities. Since then we have reinforced our initial commitment by allocating an additional \$45 million in funding. Eight new multifunctional remote police facilities are now fully operational at Warburton, Balgo, Kalumburu, Warakurna, Bidyadanga, Dampier Peninsula, Warmun and Kintore on the Northern Territory-Western Australian border - this includes a total of 19 police officers - and Jigalong will be opened soon. We are building three more multifunctional remote police facilities at Wingellina, Looma and Burringurrah. We have employed 28 additional child protection workers across the state specifically in response to the Gordon inquiry, and these measures are achieving results. Fifteen members of the Kalumburu community have been charged with a total of 103 offences. In Halls Creek, 21 people have been charged with a total of 49 offences. Recently, I announced the appointment of an extra 21 police officers to form three new regional response teams. These will be created within the specialist crime portfolio child protection squad for deployment to regional and remote communities. When we came to power there were a 102 full-time equivalent police in the Kimberley. There are 145; that is, a 40 per cent increase.

More broadly in response to the Gordon inquiry, a range of other initiatives have been put in place. These include the employment of 15 skilled Aboriginal support workers to provide practical counselling and assistance to vulnerable Aboriginal children and youth; the expansion of the Strong Families program and the strengthening of the Indigenous Family program; and the placement of eight specialist domestic violence police officers, now called family protection coordinators, in country police districts. The Child Death Review Committee was also established in December 2002, and new protocols have been developed to enable the relevant government agencies to share information on children with a sexually acquired sexually transmitted infection. In addition to these specific measures in response to the Gordon inquiry, the government is also undertaking the biggest overhaul of child protection in Western Australian history, with hundreds of million of dollars of extra funding and a massive injection of new child protection workers. By the end of the year, legislation will be introduced into Parliament requiring the key professions of doctors, nurses, teachers and police to report child sexual abuse.

We have also recognised the specific problems regarding not only child protection, but also housing and health services in Halls Creek, and have responded accordingly with a significant new package of measures funded at a cost of \$36 million. This includes a \$21.6 million package for safe accommodation and support for children most at risk, with the construction of two residential care homes for children. Once fully implemented, the Halls Creek hostel complex will be able to support up to 18 children under 15 years of age. This rollout of initiatives builds on a number of specific projects announced last year, which includes the appointment of a new community child protection worker, detoxification services at the new Halls Creek hospital and new public housing.

If education, training and community safety are vital in establishing the preconditions for economic engagement I referred to earlier, no less so vital are health services, and here there is a big story to tell.

We inherited a terrible legacy of neglect, and have responded with a massive investment in hospitals and health facilities in the northern part of the state that is unprecedented in Western Australia's history. The first of our key investments in the Kimberly has already been completed. The new \$8.7 million Halls Creek hospital has been built and opened. A significant upgrade of health and aged services in Kununurra has also been undertaken. A \$2 million upgrade to Kununurra's residential aged care facility was completed and opened in 2005. The local hospital in Kununurra has undergone a similar redevelopment and \$6.8 million in funding was provided for its refurbishment. As was previously mentioned, the government also has invested \$15.7 million to build a new hospital in Fitzroy Crossing, which I am pleased to advise is on schedule. In addition, the Nindilingarri Cultural Health Service will be the first Western Australian Aboriginal medical service to be co-located within a public hospital. The final stage of the \$14.5 million redevelopment of the Derby Regional Hospital has also been recently completed. The \$42 million upgrade of Broome District Hospital is also underway and is anticipated to be completed in early 2009. Site works for the second stage of Port Hedland's new \$114 million health centre have also now begun, with construction to begin in February next year. The new centre is being built alongside the Karlarra House aged care facility, which was opened early this year. In Carnarvon, stage 1 of the redevelopment of Carnarvon Regional Hospital will be completed later this year. This part of the development includes, among other upgrades, a dedicated maternity area within a general ward. Planning has already begun for the second stage of the \$6 million redevelopment of the hospital. All this work follows our first key investment in regional health facilities, which began with the new \$49 million Geraldton Health Campus and which was formally opened in May last year.

This government also recognises that housing is a key area of need for Aboriginal people and communities. The current works of the Department of Housing and Works include providing housing, infrastructure and housing management services in remote and town-based Indigenous communities. This includes supporting 34 Indigenous housing service providers to manage 2 200 houses and to build new houses and refurbish existing houses. An Indigenous housing reform agenda is being implemented and is aimed at ensuring that Indigenous housing is better managed. The department is providing and maintaining 2 445 urban Aboriginal-specific housing stock. The Aboriginal home ownership scheme, which is offered through Keystart, also supports Indigenous Western Australians to realise home ownership. The state has also allocated \$35.3 million to Aboriginal town-based communities over the next four years to improve power and water supplies, to undertake critical maintenance work and upgrades on housing, and to implement improved housing management services in more than 30 Aboriginal town-based communities. Through the Aboriginal remote communities power supply project, we are normalising electricity supplies to large, permanent, remote Aboriginal communities with populations of 200 or more. Two are already completed and another three will be completed by December 2007. Funding has been provided for another four communities.

I have touched on just some of the government's efforts towards establishing the fundamental preconditions that will enable Indigenous Western Australians to participate more successfully in the state's economic future.

Tourism and the arts represent another avenue that provides a unique opportunity to develop new Aboriginal businesses and employment pathways whilst ensuring that Aboriginal cultural heritage is maintained. There are some exciting potential developments in Indigenous arts, but today I will focus on tourism. International demand for engagement with Aboriginal tourism is increasing. WA has a critical mass of diverse, authentic Aboriginal tourism attractions. Last year, the state government launched "Listening, Looking, Learning: An Aboriginal Tourism Strategy for Western Australia", to provide a framework to market and develop Aboriginal tourism in Western Australia. Importantly, the strategy looks at employment opportunities within the Aboriginal tourism sector, and it looks also at providing support for existing Aboriginal tourism operators who wish to promote their businesses to the international travel trade. The Indigenous Better Business Blitz program will help build the capacity of existing Aboriginal tourism businesses. On a similar note, the Small Business Development Corporation has also been funded to develop and pilot an Indigenous business support program next year to help break down the current barriers for Aboriginal people in the establishment and management of small businesses. This is typical of how the state government agencies have been facilitating job development. The Office of Aboriginal Economic Development within the Department of Industry and Resources is playing its role in engaging with the private sector to create employment opportunities.

We have ensured that a specific allocation from the regional investment fund will provide support for Indigenous community development through the Indigenous regional development program. The government has committed \$12 million over four years to fund a range of projects such as the completion of indoor and outdoor areas of the Mowanjum Art and Cultural Centre near Derby, which has been allocated \$500 000. Under the \$7.3 million regional co-location scheme, eight Indigenous communities have been funded to develop multifunction community facilities. The Department of Local Government and Regional Development is working with approximately 12 other Indigenous communities that are interested in developing similar community facilities.

The government is also working to make a difference with Indigenous engagement in primary industries and natural resource management. The \$7 million Department of Agriculture and Food's Indigenous support strategy is providing assistance through mentoring and training support services for approximately 60 Aboriginal held or managed properties. The four regional projects, which include the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, not only provide significant support to assist enterprises to develop and grow, but also are working to provide training and employment opportunities, particularly for youth, in the pastoral industry. This program has been recognised by the United Nations as the best of its type in the world. In addition, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will establish a collaboration between the Pastoral Lands Board and the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development in DOIR to work with Indigenous pastoral leaseholders to broker changes to pastoral tenure, to increase land flexibility and to

encourage the development of a range of appropriate businesses on pastoral lands held by Aboriginal interests. Incidentally, from a direct employment perspective, today there are an extra 800 Indigenous employees in the Western Australian public sector compared with the year 2000. The number of Aboriginal people employed in the Western Australian public sector in 2000 represented just 1.8 per cent of the workforce. Today that figure has grown to 2.5 per cent.

Although much progress has been made, we recognise that much more needs to be done. Some time ago, the state government commissioned a functional review of the Department of Indigenous Affairs. Today I would like to outline our response to that review. Many people believe that this department should be abolished. I do not subscribe to that view. We need the department to maintain a specific voice for Aboriginal people across the government sector. However, we should not believe that it is only the Department of Indigenous Affairs that should be concerned for Aboriginal people. As evidenced by the programs that I have already outlined, I believe it is up to all government agencies to ensure there is a fair and equitable delivery of services to Aboriginal people. Having a Department of Indigenous Affairs does not mean that other agencies should abrogate their responsibilities to Aboriginal people. However, I believe that the department must be restructured and refocused. Therefore, the Department of Indigenous Affairs will be restructured into two specific areas. One area of the department will deal with the specific statutory roles of land, heritage and culture. The Office of Native Title will be transferred to the Department of Indigenous Affairs, but that will not occur until early in 2009 so that we do not disrupt the good work that is already underway on many significant projects. The other area of the department will play a lead role in developing Indigenous policy, economic development in particular, and in determining and measuring how strategic outcomes are being met. This will ensure that the department is well placed to drive and lead change through a coherent policy framework that is focused on economic development and social responsibility. In short, I want to give the department some grunt. To ensure that these goals are realised, a cabinet standing committee on Indigenous affairs will be created.

The committee will be chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and will include the Deputy Premier in his capacity as both the Treasurer and the Minister for State Development; the Minister for Police and Emergency Services; the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure; and the Minister for Child Protection. This will ensure a unifying focus for all ministers involved and stronger accountability measures in the delivery of programs.

Another area of serious concern for the state government has been changes made by the federal government to community development employment projects, the result of which is that many programs have had their funding cut. As with the Howard government's approach to the abolition of ATSIC, its destruction of CDEP has not been accompanied by a superior or even viable alternative. Nothing has been put in its place. Programs under threat include Broome Youth Support, the Geraldton Streetwork program, and patrols in Midland, Fremantle, Broome and Geraldton to move Aboriginal people - adults and children - who may be at risk of abuse or who are drunk from the town centre to their

home or sobering-up shelters. As Premier, I find this situation unacceptable and I will not allow this to happen. Therefore, funding of \$1.7 million will be provided to those programs that have been cut by John Howard that deal with community safety, child protection and domestic violence.

To further improve our job readiness and training effort and to build upon the initiatives I have outlined in some detail already in education and training, four new mobile training facilities will be provided in regional Western Australia at a cost of \$2 million. Access to mobile or portable facilities to support employment-related training delivery will enhance delivery options in remote areas. It will require a prime mover style vehicle that will be fitted out with a generator and welding and general equipment to deliver pre-employment plant fitting, machining and boiler making skills. Mobile units are being considered for applications to locations in Bidyadanga, One Arm Point, Lombadina, Looma, Noonkanbah, Balgo, Turkey Creek, Oombulguri, Kalumburu, Ringer Soak, Mud Springs, Beagle Bay, Mullewa, Mt Magnet, Marduu, Buringurrah, Leonora, Laverton and Norseman.

Continuing with the theme of the importance of economic development, I announce our intention to conduct a major Indigenous employment and economic development forum in Perth on 30 November. I want to bring together the leading figures in business and industry, Indigenous stakeholders, training providers and government to discuss and develop new initiatives to promote Aboriginal job creation in Western Australia. This will provide an opportunity for the issues to be canvassed openly and directly, for the decision makers in industry to lay down or take up challenges, for obstacles and impediments to progress to be identified and resolutions to be suggested. I do not intend this to be a mere talkfest where representative bodies with no real decision-making power are the only attendees. I want direct engagement from the real decision makers in business and, so far, from all those I have spoken to personally about the forum, the response has been universally enthusiastic. In fact, as I alluded to earlier, I now expect some major developments to be announced well in advance of the forum date. It is important to emphasise here and now that we are not simply talking about employment opportunities in the resources sector but, rather, across the entire economy. Why is it, when one goes into a major retail store, for example, one is extremely unlikely to see an Aboriginal employee anywhere in Western Australia? What can we do about that? Is there a preparedness for employers to do anything about that? I have asked the question and they have told me that there is a preparedness. We can and will pose the same question across other industries. I believe we can make profound change, and the time for that change to occur is now.

Much has been achieved in the past six years, but there is so much more to be done, and we look forward to the challenge.

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville) [10.44 am]: I want to take the house back to the earliest years of my memory on this planet. I have worked out that I was approximately three years old. I was on a remote Aboriginal community in the Kimberley. All I remember is a sea of legs - largely white - and a black night and a huge bonfire. Aboriginal people were

conducting a traditional corroboree. It was not occurring for the purpose of entertaining the white people who were there, but as part of their tradition and their culture.

At that time my father was working as a stockman on Kimberley Downs and Napier Downs stations; hence my name Kim. In that time Aboriginal people were working largely as stockmen; my father being the only white male in the community. They would go out and work long hours. My mother would live in a hut with a dirt floor, and the fire was a circle of stones outside. She would work with the Aboriginal people and, in effect, live with those Aboriginal people. All they got from the white people those days - because most of their living was traditional - was sugar and flour, and beef when a cow was slaughtered. That was their lifestyle. As we know, things change. When the stations were required to pay a wage to those Aboriginal people - as they should have - they refused to do that and the Aboriginal people were kicked off the stations and their traditional lands. They ended up going to what, in effect, became feeding lots. They were supplied food by government departments in places like Balgo.

Members of the Education and Health Standing Committee recently went to Queensland, where we met Noel Pearson, an Aboriginal person for whom I have enormous respect. He has a view about the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children. He said that when those Aboriginal people were kicked off the stations, three things happened to them. Firstly, they had nothing to do. They had no employment. Employment is a key to the issues that are devastating the lives of Aboriginal people. They had no employment and they were provided with the dole. They had money in their pockets and time on their hands and they were given access to alcohol. He said that those three things together led to the first cases of sexual abuse in Indigenous communities. He said that what is happening now has happened so often in the white community. Those children who were abused are now becoming the abusers. Some people have said that this was part of Aboriginal culture. It is nonsense. It is those people who were abused who are now the abusers.

The Premier talked in his speech about a new direction taken when his government came to power. One of the difficulties for us in opposition is that we got a copy of his speech only two hours ago whereas he has had it for months in preparation. When the current Premier came to power, he was the Minister for Indigenous Affairs. The very first thing he did was to close down an expansion of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs into communities across Western Australia. I think we had expanded DAA into 26 communities to give Aboriginal people a voice with government departments. He likened it to some other government department - disability services, I think - and said that it was not functional. The problem for those Aboriginal people in those remote communities - we have seen the effects of that in Halls Creek - is that they do not know how to deal with government departments; they do not know how to deal with Homeswest, the Department of Housing and Works and the Disability Services Commission. They do not know how to deal with issues such as sexual abuse in their communities. The purpose of the department was to be an advocate for Aboriginal people; to go with Aboriginal people to Homeswest offices and advocate on their behalf. The first thing the now Premier did in government was to shut the expansion down. He also scrapped the State Commission of Elders Council, which was a forum started by Premier Richard Court to give Aboriginal

elders the opportunity to come to the top of government and have their say about issues affecting Aboriginal people. He dismantled the Aboriginal Justice Council, which was overseen by Glenis Sibosado. She was a very well-respected Aboriginal person. Their requirement was to oversee the introduction of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and, again, advocate on behalf of Aboriginal people in prisons. The Premier's suggestion that the Court government was not a strong supporter of Indigenous affairs is totally wrong. When I go to remote Aboriginal communities, people still say to me that they got a much better deal under our government than they are getting under the current government.

We introduced many programs when we were in government. One of those programs that I was involved with was the swimming pool program that put swimming pools into three Aboriginal communities because of the health benefits that they would provide. Two more are about to be funded by the federal government. For those communities that did not want to have those swimming pools - the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara has admitted that he was one of those people who spoke against it but he has now changed his view, I am pleased to say - we still provided significant upgrades to those communities, particularly sealed roads and a reticulation and greening program that went along with the theory that I had on health benefits in Aboriginal communities. We carried out other major upgrades in conjunction with the federal government's funding programs.

When I was a backbencher, under the direction of the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Housing, Kevin Prince, we wrote the normalisation report. It recommended normalisation of remote Aboriginal communities. I give credit for that report to the member for Victoria Park's father, who was the driving force behind that normalisation program that we wrote and adopted when we were in government.

We also significantly increased the number of communities for which this state government was responsible. There was a so-called list of 48 communities. In those communities that had a commonwealth-state agreement, the state would manage their infrastructure services once they had been established by the commonwealth government. We started that process through an agreement with the commonwealth government. We significantly expanded those communities. The Premier's government has continued that expansion. I give him credit for that because I think the number of communities involved is up to 70 or 80, for which the state government now takes responsibility.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Ninety-one.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is now 91. I congratulate the Premier on continuing that program that started under our government. We also arranged to get the commonwealth and state housing funds brought together under the then Department of Housing with an Aboriginal board elected by Aboriginal people overseeing the proper distribution of that funding for housing in remote Aboriginal communities. I do not know what funding now goes to housing in Aboriginal communities but under Homeswest, the government is currently building half the number of houses that we built when I was the Minister for Housing in the Court government.

The Premier talks about and takes great credit for his investment in hospitals in the northern regions. It would be a great state of affairs if, when we form government after the next election, I take credit for Fiona Stanley Hospital because we built it. Quite rightly, the efforts of the Minister for Housing and Works have obviously had an enormous impact on the construction of that hospital. If I took credit for it when we built it, there would be outrage from government members. What was on the 2000-01 budget of the Court Liberal government? There was Port Hedland Regional Hospital, Halls Creek District Hospital and Geraldton Regional Hospital, all hospitals for which the government now claims credit. Sure, the government continued the process of funding that we initiated, as will we -

Mr E.S. Ripper: It's a pity there was a \$450 million black hole.

Dr K.D. HAMES: How big a black hole will we inherit with Fiona Stanley Hospital when we win government at the next election? How much money does the government still have to put into Fiona Stanley Hospital? It needs to put in at least \$500 million or \$600 million. How much does it still have to put into Princess Margaret Hospital for Children that it said it was committed to? It has to put in \$300 million to \$400 million. The government has seriously underfunded most of its infrastructure projects in the state.

The Premier went on to talk about his role in the success of the Clontarf Football Academy and Gerard Neesham's role in that. It is true that the Premier has provided funding and great support to that program, and I congratulate him for that, but he must remember that everything has its origin and every tree starts from a seed. The Court government started the funding of Gerard Neesham's Clontarf program. The Water Corporation, for which I had ministerial responsibility, provided early funding to allow the establishment of that program, as did other government departments.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It's an interesting example of fiscal policy.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It does not matter because I can prove it to him. The Minister for Water Resources can also prove it to him because all he had to do was go back to the budget figures for 1999-2000 and find the contribution to Gerard Neesham's Clontarf program. Nevertheless, I give the Premier credit for expanding that program. We will continue to support that program because it is a fantastic program.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Even though the Premier gave you no credit for your work.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is true.

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Mr Speaker, I would like the same protection that you offered the Premier.

The SPEAKER: That goes with a modicum of restraint from both sides of the house. If there is an attack launched from interjectors from the left and, unfortunately, there are responses from the right, it does not take us anywhere.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I wanted to talk about other things that the Court Liberal government did. I refer particularly to the member for Cottesloe, who was Minister for Education at the time. When the member for Cottesloe was minister, he started the first Aboriginal-only school in Western Australia. It still exists today in Midvale, close to Midland. He particularly started programs of extreme importance for kindergartens and primary schools. He initiated the programs across the board but they were particularly relevant for Aboriginal children who are disadvantaged right from the start through the effects of parental consumption of alcohol and cigarettes and problems with early education of Aboriginal people. If Aboriginals are ever going to gain employment opportunities, it is critical to ensure that they get a good start during those very early stages of life. The member for Cottesloe also initiated an Aboriginal studies program, teaching Aboriginal history in schools in Western Australia.

I turn to the Swan Valley Nyungah Community. This side of the house supported the closing of that community. I support the closing of the community. We must remember that it was closed for a specific reason, largely because a specific person created what all of us regard as an intolerable situation in that community. We did start that Swan Valley community. Kevin Prince allocated land to the Swan Valley Nyoongah people. Why did he do it? Because at that time Robert Bropho was a respected elder and he regarded that as his community, as did other Aboriginal people. In the same way that the government has given land to Aboriginal people in other areas, we provided that land to the Swan Valley Nyoongah people to give them a place of refuge and a home from which they could operate. That is no different from the government providing land in some other Aboriginal community and then finding that an individual from that community commits a crime on a young person in that community. That closure led to the Gordon inquiry. Once again, I give the government credit for establishing that inquiry. I have a huge amount of respect for Sue Gordon. I have met with her and discussed the issues. In case members do not know, she is disappointed at the progress of the implementation of those recommendations. I do not want to put words into her mouth but she has told me that. I believe there needs to be much greater scrutiny and improvement in putting those recommendations in place. Again, I can see that the government has addressed a large number of those critical issues. The government has progressed on things that we started in government. I want to talk about where I believe those things started. When I was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, discussions about sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities was an absolute no-no. It was seen as being totally disrespectful of Aboriginal people to even suggest that these things may be occurring. There was a blanket silence. Nobody in any state was talking about it. The Premier referred to the ministerial conference that he went to in Queensland. When I was in Queensland as the minister I raised the issue of sexual abuse. It was the first time it had been raised at a ministerial conference.

After that the floodgates opened and people started talking about the fact that Aboriginal children were being sexually abused. People suddenly started to open up about that subject and it was recognised as a major problem in Aboriginal communities. When I look back at what the coalition government did, I do not believe that I, as the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, did everything that needed to be done. However, in my defence, it was early days; we were just starting to talk about those things.

The Premier referred to a speech in *Hansard* of the former member for Ningaloo. I want to debunk the myth that the Premier promoted in his statement and that he continues to promote in his interjections. In his 2003 speech, the former member for Ningaloo referred to two separate issues. In the lead-up to an election, I was in Ningaloo to visit an Aboriginal community. Mr Sweetman asked me whether I would visit a women's refuge that was for not only Aboriginal women, but for all women. I told him that women's interests was not part of my portfolio and that I was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He replied that I should visit the women's refuge, because I was already in the area and it would be good if I accompanied him. There was an issue at the refuge, but it did not relate to sexual abuse; rather, two Aboriginal factions in the women's refuge were fighting for control of the refuge. Rod Sweetman asked me to visit the refuge, so I went along to help him out.

Another issue is the so-called \$2.4 million advertising campaign that was initiated by my department. It came about in response to the first indications that Aboriginal children were being sexually abused. We discovered that Aboriginals in those communities were too scared to say anything about the sexual abuse. Further, they did not want to say anything because they did not want the family member who was responsible for the sexual abuse sent to jail. Aboriginal people did not want to tell the Department for Community Development that Aboriginal children were being sexually abused, because they did not want their uncle, as it normally was, to go to jail. They just wanted him to stop doing it. We were trying to find a way to get them to stand up to what was happening. Aboriginal women were not standing up for their children if they had been sexually abused. In those days, we were not aware of young children being sexually abused. However, we knew that young girls aged 14, 15 and 16 years were being sexually abused by family members. The mothers often said that their daughter deserved to be sexually abused because she had worn a short dress. They would blame the child. We wanted to turn that around. In consultation with the Aboriginal communities, we developed a video which was produced by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people and which was to be distributed in the communities. DCD opposed it, because it said that it would create too much work because of the number of people who would suddenly come forward. That was an absolute disgrace. After we lost government, the Labor government, under Geoff Gallop, gave that program the Premier's Award. The year after we lost the election, our so-called useless advertising campaign won the Premier's Award for providing services to Aboriginal people. That is an issue that I wanted to put to bed.

What is in the Premier's ministerial statement? I have to question why he has done what he has done. Why would he say that it would take an hour to read the statement when it did not? Why did he suddenly decide to release a ministerial statement now? What was in

it? The Premier gave a ministerial statement about Aboriginal affairs now because of the strife that the government is in, particularly with issues relating to law and order. That strife has been reported in the media, and the Premier wanted to distract the public's attention.

The second reason for giving the brief ministerial statement was to hand down the review into the Department of Indigenous Affairs. We have been waiting over a year for that report. Suddenly, here it is, buried in the ministerial statement. What does it say? It says nothing much, which is a problem. After all the wait and expectation of a great report about what happens in DIA, the report is a fizzle. The Premier decided to concoct a big story around it so that he would have an opportunity to bash the opposition. I am disappointed in the Premier. I was looking forward to hearing the ministerial statement, because what I anticipated was not the bashing of the opposition, but a vision for the future. The Premier could not resist the opportunity to bash the opposition.

There are four major components to the statement. One is the restructuring of DIA into two areas, with one dealing with land heritage and culture and the other dealing with policy, economic development and strategic outcomes. That is what the DIA does now; that is what it did when I was the responsible minister. The key to this will be the funding that is provided. The department received \$19 million when the coalition was in government. I look forward, Treasurer, to seeing how much money it is allocated in the next budget. Another component is the establishment of a cabinet standing committee. We had a couple of those, one of which comprised all the chief executive officers of all the major government departments. It was established to work out what needed to be done in the Aboriginal communities. At one meeting a representative from the Department of Health, which was putting sewerage into an Aboriginal community, sat next to a representative from the Water Corporation, which was responsible for looking after the sewerage once it had been put in place, who was not aware that the Department of Health was putting it in. Premier Richard Court also established a justice committee, which comprised many ministers. I cannot remember them all, but I know that in addition to me, the committee comprised the justice, health, community services and education ministers. About five or six ministers met regularly to discuss specific Aboriginal issues. Our committee was similar to the Premier's cabinet standing committee, but it comprised more ministers. It is good that the government is establishing that committee; I do not know why it was not established earlier.

The third measure that the government is introducing is the mandatory reporting of sexual abuse. Well, about flaming time! Hon Barbara Scott has been trying to have mandatory reporting of sexual abuse implemented for years, but the government has been stonewalling and saying that it will not bring it in. Finally, the government has done a backflip. Good on the government for doing that, it is about time.

The last measure is the jobs forum, which I welcome. I hope that it does something and that it is not just a talkfest. That is about the only new initiative in the ministerial statement. The government is sending groups to those communities, which is good, because that will help. However, that is virtually all the government is doing.

It saddens me that I have to address the misinformation released by the Premier. I thought we would now be talking about the future and about working together to improve the lot of Aboriginal people, particularly in the area of education. After getting through half of my speech, I finally get the chance to look at what is important for the future. What is important is not the government's knee-jerk reactions. The government's response to the situation in Halls Creek was a knee-jerk reaction to a good article written by a journalist from *The West Australian*. After that article was published, the government suddenly came out all guns firing. The same thing happened with the situation in Fitzroy Crossing and the hotel issue. After a report in the media, the government came out all guns blazing. Those communities are not the only ones with issues. Many Aboriginal communities have exactly the same issues as Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, yet the government only addresses them on a media-driven basis. It does not address the issues that need addressing by all agencies of government.

Mr E.S. Ripper interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I do not have time to take an interjection.

What is the opposition doing about this problem? Is the opposition sitting on its hands and doing nothing? No, it is not. With the support of the Liberal Party, some months ago I prepared and released a draft Indigenous affairs policy paper. It was distributed to most Aboriginal communities and many government members, including the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and the Premier. The opposition believes that governments should work together for the future. I will go through some of the key components of our recommendations. Some of them have been implemented by the commonwealth government and some have been proposed by state governments. I reiterate that these are proposals. They are not policies - they have not been costed - and that is stated in the document. We will work towards that in the lead-up to the next election. As stated in the document, we want to reintroduce Aboriginal committees to review the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and to provide advice to government.

We will make sure that the recommendations of the Gordon inquiry are also taken up. We want to invest in Aboriginal leadership training and community governance capacity, one of the major failings in remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. We want to support Aboriginal role models in education programs, especially programs relating to diet and lifestyle such as the Unity of First Peoples Australia diabetes management and care program, managed by Ernie Bridge; the Kulunga Research Network at the Telethon Institute of Child Health, which involves Troy Cook and David Wirrpanda; the Up 4 It diet, exercise and drug program, which is run by Ricky Grace and David Wirrpanda; and the Clontarf football and education program, run by Gerard Neesham.

I might point out that this document was written perhaps six months ago. We want to make a strong commitment to an Aboriginal early education support program - again, a program that I said was critical. We want to provide opportunities for a pre-school breakfast program in all state schools, and particularly to ensure that Aboriginal children

have access to early education support programs. We want to recognise the severe disadvantage of living in remote communities, especially with regard to its effects on the significantly reduced life expectancy of Indigenous people in all age ranges. As members know, the average life expectancy for Aboriginal people is 20 years less than the Australian average. We have a series of recommendations that relate particularly to health issues and addressing health problems within Aboriginal communities.

We want to initiate a series of reforms to improve housing standards for Aboriginal communities, and in particular setting targets for maximum occupancy rates. One of the major issues facing Aboriginal people is overcrowded housing. We want to set maximum occupancy rates for Aboriginal housing to ensure that all governments keep up to the mark in providing housing for Aboriginal communities, because that is a key reason for Aboriginal disadvantage. We want to initiate programs to enhance home ownership for Aboriginal families, and I refer not only to the current home ownership program. I do not know which government started it; it was certainly there throughout the term of the former coalition government, and it is still there under the current government. We want to commit to the normalisation of Aboriginal communities.

The previous government initiated a program under the direction of the father of the member for Victoria Park. It included power and water upgrades for those communities, particularly in town reserves - communities attached to, but regarded as separate from, major towns. I have to say that some of that was achieved while the coalition was still in government.

I do not know where the Premier has gone. I listened to him; I thought he would listen to me.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I'm listening on his behalf.

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: He is probably out doing the media without worrying what is happening in here. It would be good if he bothered to read it sometime.

We propose the construction of a police station with a minimum of two police officers in all Aboriginal communities with a population of 200 or more. These are the communities the Premier talked about before. There are 19 of them. Once again, I commend the government for following the Gordon inquiry recommendations to put police stations in Aboriginal communities. I tried to get some and had difficulty. When members talk about money being spent, it should be remembered that the coalition government went through the South East Asian financial meltdown. Funding for government in those days was extremely difficult to obtain without increasing taxes and charges. This government has had the benefit of the boom in China. The good old Chinese - along with the Indian and other South East Asian economies - have led the boom. However, in our time, the meltdown occurred, particularly in countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia, which were struggling and almost went broke. The coalition government had limited capacity to

provide extra funds to Aboriginal communities. Our commitment now is to look at including in the budget a commitment to all Aboriginal communities with a population of 200 or more.

An opposition member interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: No, I cannot; sorry.

We want police in Aboriginal communities to have a no-tolerance policy for all sexual abuse of children, drug use, and petrol and solvent sniffing.

I turn to education. Obviously, that is the focus of this program. We have a series of recommendations for the provision of educational opportunities for Aboriginal communities. I will briefly summarise the recommendations. We want to construct hostels in all Aboriginal communities with a population of 200 or more, to provide supervised, safe accommodation for children outside the home, and in all major regional centres to provide supervised and safe accommodation for all Aboriginal high school students. We want to develop an education, training and employment program to lead Aboriginal students through specific training to employment opportunities. That is the key recommendation I need to talk about. We want to engage mining companies, private business and government agencies in providing mentoring and specific training and education opportunities, starting in early high school, and leading to employment. I tell the Treasurer - since he, instead of the Premier, is listening to me - that the reason for that is that when students from Aboriginal communities get to high school, they are a long way from home. Many of them wag school, drop out and go back home. They do not get the proper education they need. Even when they get to the end of their education, it is very difficult for Aboriginal people to get into employment. The government has made high school attendance to year 12 compulsory. We want to make sure that that policy is enforced, but to also create refuges - as presently happens to some degree in Broome - in all major remote centres. For example, in Karratha there could be a hostel for Aboriginal children along the lines of a boarding house. They would stay at the school in the same way that someone might come to Perth and stay in a boarding house. Boards would be set up to look after them, run by Aboriginal people where possible. When those children get to a certain stage - say, year 9 - different organisations, such as mining companies, government departments or local employment groups within the town, would come to the school and provide for those children the range of education opportunities available to them. The children would choose a prospective career; they might say, "I want to be a nurse." The Department of Health would then set out the type of program the child would need to study in order to become a nurse. The health department would provide support and extra tutoring if required, to make sure the child could follow the program through. It would be the same situation in the mining industry: if a child wanted to be a Haulpak driver, Rio Tinto might say, "These are the qualifications you need in order to achieve that." It would mentor the children and take them to their place of employment. It would make sure that the children knew the direction they needed to follow. At the end of the program, it would offer a job to those children. There would be nothing to prevent

children from changing their minds along the way, but they would have a guaranteed employment stream to get them through.

We consider programs such as these to be necessary to provide children with the opportunity to get a proper job. It is not just a matter of them finishing high school, getting a job and being left to fend for themselves in Karratha, if their home community is, for example, Jigalong. There needs to be liaison with the Department of Housing and Works and other government agencies to ensure that those children have a place to stay. It might be, for example, a Department of Housing and Works or Homeswest home in Karratha that provides them with a place to stay. Perhaps it could be a purchase program that would allow houses to be bought for children to live in. We want to mentor children from early childhood and through school, and ensure that within their own communities they have a refuge to go to, so that if they are being abused or poorly managed at home, they can receive proper care. We want to make sure that they get proper health care as they go through their education. We want to make sure that if they miss out on early education at home, they can have it provided by the government. We want to make sure they get food provided by the government and that they have a place to stay. Through all that, they would still need to maintain links with their traditional heritage, so children in hostels and high schools in Karratha would still get to go home for law business, funerals or other Aboriginal heritage or family issues that require them to leave the school. It would not be a case of just abandoning them and letting them go, but of making sure they get help to get through that heritage or grieving process and to then get back into school and be provided with educational opportunities for the future.

We do not need the government saying how bad the previous government was, and this is not about the opposition saying how bad the government is. It is not about us bagging the commonwealth government, and the commonwealth government bagging us. Those things happen over and over again, and we never get anywhere. To make progress, the opposition, the government, the commonwealth government of whatever flavour, Aboriginal people and private enterprise need to work together to find a future. Maybe the government's forum will provide an opportunity to begin that process, but the government also needs to consider the initiatives put forward by the opposition. They do not come out of nowhere; they are not just plucked out of the air. They come from a long period of experience for me, Aboriginal people who have had input, and others who have tried to put together a program that does not bag the government or past governments, but rather tries to find a way in which we can work together towards a better outcome for Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

I will conclude this presentation by reading small excerpts from the letter I have attached to the Liberal Party's Indigenous affairs policy discussion paper. It begins -

The history of Aboriginal policy development and implementation has been characterised by uncoordinated and poorly planned attempts by numerous State and Federal Government Ministers and agencies, most with good intentions, to understand and adequately respond to the needs of Aboriginal people.

In this document the Liberal Party set out to create a new approach, clearly listing many issues relating to Aboriginal disadvantage, and proposing pathways to address these problems.

I went on to write about what we need to do in the future. The letter concludes -
For now, let us put all ideas on the table, and develop a policy that will truly address the future needs of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

There are those who say we must recognise and accept errors of the past before we move forward. There are those who say we must forget the past and focus on the future.

The reality must be a compromise if we are to have any hope of successful change.

In accepting that the problems of the past have shaped the issues of today, we now plan together to change the future.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Stirling) [11.23 am]: I will respond very briefly to the Premier's statement on behalf of the National Party, in the absence of the Leader of the National Party. I am a tad disappointed with the statement from the Premier this morning, particularly its loaded politics. The issue is above politics, as has been highlighted by the member for Dawesville. Successive governments, both state and federal, have been tripping over themselves to try to resolve this problem. There is no doubt that it is a very complex problem, and therefore it requires many people with many good ideas and a bit of guts to resolve it.

In 1968 and 1969, my father was the principal of Camballin Primary School. At that stage I was five or six years old, and I attended grade 1 in Camballin. I remember the time very vividly; it was a tremendous experience. I think there were 13 children in the school, of whom three or four were white people like me, and all the rest were local Aboriginal people, mostly from Liveringa, a station about seven miles away. Those two years in that community were a tremendous educational experience for a young primary school student. I learnt a huge amount about Indigenous culture. I learnt about tracking and trapping animals. Even in the school grounds, the Aboriginal students were teaching me about animals and their culture. I had the good fortune to go back there six or eight weeks ago and visit the Looma community, which is adjacent to Liveringa.

I remember what I experienced in the 1960s. At that stage, the community largely worked for the Liveringa station. I would not suggest that their camp was anything modern; it really was a series of humpies, and no money had been spent on it. However, there was no doubt that the culture was alive and well, and people were very proud. I remember being given a number of artefacts made by the Aboriginal people, which I still have. The leader of the community, whom I remember only by the name "Killer", walked seven miles from Liveringa to Camballin to show my father how to make fire with fire sticks. I

remember watching this; my father still has it on a super 8 movie. Killer was more than happy to impart his skills and knowledge to us.

I compare my experience of being a young fellow at that time with the experience of going back to Looma and Camballin. Signage at the Looma community says that it is a closed community and permission is needed to visit. Alcohol and other substances are prohibited. At the entrances to many of these communities are heaps of empty cans. At the community, there is no doubt that there has been a tremendous investment of government funds in buildings, schools, recreational facilities and support services. We must ask ourselves what has changed, what has improved and what has not improved. There is no doubt that a lot more money has been spent and the facilities have been improved. They are living in houses that are substantially better than those they lived in before. However, a strong argument could be mounted that their plight, and their sense of purpose, have not improved. Some of the changes that have been made, such as the introduction of award wages, have been necessary, but there is a strong argument that things have not improved.

The issues here are not necessarily related to money. They are not things that can be fixed by throwing money at them. It is about ensuring a cultural shift, and looking at different ways of doing things. Arguably, over the past 35 years, a helluva lot of money has been thrown at this issue and it has not necessarily improved things; arguably things have got worse. We need to think outside the box, and that is largely where I am coming from in my comments today. Fundamentally, we cannot even start looking at education and employment until we address the issues of child abuse, child protection, alcohol and substance abuse and Indigenous health in those communities. Those issues require a very fundamental approach and, I would argue, a very different approach. We need to be very open to thinking outside the box about strategies we might use to address those issues. I know that Noel Pearson has been referred to today. I have talked to a number of colleagues about comments he has made. He talks about mutual obligation. He talks about concerns that the community development employment program is creating a welfare mentality. He is looking at some of the strategies outside the box for improving the communities. We should be cognisant of the views that some of the leaders are espousing about possible solutions.

I also found it interesting that the central point of what the Premier was talking about was a jobs forum. The Nationals certainly support that. We need to draw upon a wide range of ideas in the search for solutions. However, also I found it interesting that the cabinet standing committee on Indigenous affairs that the Premier intends to create does not include the Minister for Education and Training. It included a number of other ministers, but not the Minister for Education and Training. We are talking about strategies for addressing employment, and the Premier himself talked about education being fundamental to that. How do we keep these kids in the schools to prepare them to properly engage with the employment market?

I found that intriguing. The Premier may like to comment on that at another time, given that he is not in the chamber at present.

We certainly support the jobs forum. The National Party has been to Kununurra a number of times over the past two years. A lot of jobs are available in that area. The owners of horticultural properties are crying out for workers. However, in the community of Kununurra, there are a large number of people, mainly Indigenous, who are not engaged in employment. We need to find some way of filling that gap. That is a challenge that all face. I certainly do not profess to have all the answers to that. The Nationals have also promoted the establishment of an agricultural college in Kununurra. A great number of opportunities have been developed in that area with the Ord stage 2, and even with the Ord stage 1. It is, therefore, important, given the level of research that is required to support the development of agriculture in that region, to provide for the training needs of people who are likely to engage in employment in that area. The five agricultural colleges in Western Australia are unique in Australia; no other state has agricultural colleges like those in Western Australia. However, the one link that is missing is tropical agriculture. Kununurra is a very appropriate venue for such a college. I recently visited the Frank Wise Institute in Kununurra. There is an opportunity to create some synergies between the research that is being done at that facility, and the provision of upper school training to support the development and growth of agriculture in that region. A very important part of that is Indigenous employment. The establishment of a residential college would enable Indigenous people to be taken out of their communities and reside at the college to get the training they need to participate in the employment opportunities in the region.

The National Party does not profess to have all the answers. We support members on both sides of the house in their attempt to find solutions to the issue of Indigenous unemployment. We look forward to engaging in the jobs forum and to finding some solutions to address this issue. However, fundamentally we cannot neglect the other issues of child abuse, alcohol and substance abuse, and poor health. We will be watching closely to ensure that not just money, but action, is put in place to find solutions to this issue.