



# ***YOUTH JUSTICE REFORM SELECT COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Ms SL Bolton MP—Chair  
Mrs LJ Gerber MP  
Mr AD Harper MP  
Mr JJ McDonald MP  
Mr DG Purdie MP  
Mr LA Walker MP (virtual)

**Staff present:**

Dr A Beem—Committee Secretary  
Dr S Dodsworth—Assistant Committee Secretary

**PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY TO EXAMINE  
ONGOING REFORMS TO THE YOUTH JUSTICE  
SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Friday, 8 March 2024**

**Brisbane**

## FRIDAY, 8 MARCH 2024

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### **The committee met at 9.00 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning, everyone. I declare open this public hearing of the committee's inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime. My name is Sandy Bolton. I am the member for Noosa and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we now share. With me here today are Laura Gerber, member for Currumbin; Aaron Harper, member for Thuringowa; Jim McDonald, member for Lockyer; Dan Purdie, member for Ninderry; and online we have Les Walker, member for Mundingburra as a substitute for the member for Hervey Bay. We have apologies from Jonty Bush, member for Cooper.

The purpose of today's proceeding is to assist the committee with its inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland. This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

Witnesses before the committee have called on all sides of politics to deliver bipartisan youth justice reform. I would like to restate the bipartisan approach that each member of this committee has committed to in the undertaking of this very important inquiry. As chair, I remind all members of the committee that questions put to witnesses must be relevant to the inquiry and it is my expectation that these are asked in good faith.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Before we continue, please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode. I now welcome representatives of our First Nations community.

**GATER, Reverend Aunty Alex, Private capacity**

**NUTLEY, Mr Brett, Private capacity**

**McCONNELL, Aunty Joanne, Private capacity**

**ROBERTSON, Professor Boni, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Good morning to you all. Thank you so much for giving up your time on International Women's Day. Would you like to make an opening statement before we proceed with some questions?

**Ms McConnell:** Yes, I would like to ask Aunty here to do a welcome to country, because she is a traditional custodian of the land on which we are meeting. As per Aboriginal culture and tradition, that is what we do.

**Rev. Gater:** Thank you so much. Thank you for your invitation. We are privileged and honoured to be here today. Thank you. First of all, I would like to acknowledge our creator, God; to acknowledge all our ancestors from the four directions, from the north to the south to the east and to the west; to acknowledge the traditional custodians on whose ancestral land we gather; to all our elders past, present and future; and to acknowledge each and every one of you and where you come from. Thank you, all.

**CHAIR:** Thank you Aunty Alex.

**Mr Nutley:** If it is okay, I will do an opening statement to get things rolling and to move ahead. I want to acknowledge elders past and present, especially the ones who are present at the moment, because this is a very important issue that we are discussing today. I want to say that today I am also

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a designated representative of Minjerrabah Moorgumpin Elders-in-Council. That is the social and youth justice group. Uncle Dale Ruska from the island has asked me to represent him today because he has other business to attend to this morning.

I know that you have been gathering evidence from around the state and I know that these things take time to put together. I spoke to the aunties previously. We had a pre-meeting meeting about telling a bit of our story—what we are doing in our space and ideas about what we could probably deliver to the community from where we are standing. I will talk a bit about my story, and there is a point to this. It is not about me; it is about my point. When I was six weeks of age I was actually in foster care. I spent a long time in foster care. Then I was adopted but that did not work out. It started at six weeks of age that I was in care. I was put around to different homes and things like that.

When I was a teenage boy, I was not a very happy young man. I used to get up to a lot of mischief up in Ipswich. I thought it was funny and I thought I was showboating and all these other things. I was pinching cars and things like that and doing really silly things. I could have kept going in that direction if I had not been put under the guidance of people who gave me an opportunity to stop that type of behaviour. The people who helped me through that were fantastic. One of the families that I stayed with was that of Dr Derek Chong. I actually grew up with Derek and his dad, Fred Chong, and those people. Also my high school teachers helped me out.

From having an opportunity, being helped out and having assistance it is a real story, because foster care is not a playground. It is not a very nice place and bad things happen to people. When I was halfway through grade 10 or grade 11, my teachers mentored me. There was a school guidance counsellor called Lance O'Chin, and we all know Uncle Lance. If I had not been given that assistance, that help and the resources, I would have taken a different direction altogether. It was actually community that supplied the resources needed for me to change my behaviour.

As a result of that, I ended up being the first Aboriginal exchange student in Australia and I went to high school in Portland, Oregon. I went from that to being the first Aboriginal exchange student in Australia. Leading on from that, I went on and got a trade and I worked in the prisons. We have spoken before about me working in the correctional facilities, but I will not get into that. From there I worked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Brisbane and South-East Queensland for quite some time.

I went from foster care to all those journeys. I had two wonderful children. This is why I am talking about changing direction and changing generations. My daughter is the manager of the Indigenous unit at the University of Queensland, which is a very high profile position, and my son is working at Hymba Yumba Independent school and now he is working in the community doing other things. The good thing is they are both good people; they have good hearts and a lot of respect in the community.

My wife's family grew up at Woorabinda; her dad was on the Aboriginal mission. Both she and I have similar stories. She has a very strong family. When we got together we had these two wonderful children. From there I ended up being the first Indigenous liaison officer of any parliament in Australia. You can see how opportunity can actually change someone's direction. When I worked in corrections I found that I was actually in care with all those guys who were in jail. I could see the big difference because of those opportunities.

What we are putting forward here today is to give you a bit of an idea of the things that we are doing in our space. At the moment on Minjerrabah, on North Stradbroke Island, we have the national justice investment in the community in partnership with Cooeee and the other organisations there. We have 17 partners as part of that on the island. It is like a healing or deterrence project on the island. It is only small-scale, but it is growing and it is getting bigger.

There are holiday programs on the island every school holidays, and the police are involved as well as other stakeholders such as the council. There is a whole range of things. People are mostly doing this out of their own pocket, and you can see what the crime rate is. It is actually alleviating over there. A lot of good things are happening in that space and it is all getting done with no funding and for no money. It is about community readiness in that space, getting these programs up and running and doing these things.

We all know about the big disparity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the rest of Australia. There is a big disparity there. One of those disparities is—and I think we have mentioned this before—about the non-Indigenous businesses getting funding for Indigenous moneys. A lot of our elders and especially community members think we are starting to become a bit of a commodity for businesses. I am talking about big organisations like QCOSS and what have you.

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We can look at the cost of incarcerating a young person. I think we did some math on it a while back. To build a correctional facility, one cell, one youth, it comes to near on a million dollars. Have a look at the cost of that type of thing with, say, an Aboriginal organisation that is highly respected and well sought after, with proper programming that we could roll out. Say there was a pilot program over a four-year period of \$20 million—and I am just throwing a ballpark figure out there. In hindsight, \$20 million is 20 children per year per correctional facility. Can you imagine if over a four-year period we could save 100 children from going that way and what the value of that would be? When you weigh up the numbers—those ballpark figures—like that, it is going to be a big cost saving for the taxpayers, a big cost saving for governments and it is also going to save our children from those generational issues that I spoke about before when I was given an opportunity back in the 1980s. I was lucky enough to have those strong people around me to support me.

We have spoken about healing centres and things like that. There is a formula for that. How would we formulate that? We would work in partnership like we do on North Stradbroke Island, on Minjerribah, with the 17 partners. You can see how that partnership could work. It can work. If it is giving them the opportunity, I think that should be one of the strong recommendations. The amount of \$20 million is just a ballpark figure I have come up with. I am just throwing that out there, but the costings and things like that would have to be rolled out.

I just want to share a quick story before I pass over to the aunties. I am timing myself because I want to give the aunties an opportunity because what they say is very important. They have a lot of experience and a lot of heartfelt messages to share this morning. There was a young fellow—and I got his permission this morning—who was working for Redland City Council. He went through a bad trot. He was living on Minjerribah. He was a good, young fellow. I knew he had a good heart. He went down the wrong path and did things which he regrets. He lost his family. He had to move away. Then one day he did not have much left. Council picked his dog up and put it in the animal shelter. I got a phone call. I went up there and the young fellow was going off. He lost everything and then council had taken his dog. He was in a really bad place.

I spoke with this young man and I helped him like I was helped. I did it off my own bat. That young man today has gone from there. He has his family back; he is living in a home. He went and paid for his own rehabilitation out of his super. There were no rehab facilities available, so he took \$20,000 out of his super to go down to New South Wales to get healed. He came back and he had just been back and then his mother overdosed on drugs and died. I thought, 'This bloke's going to fall down,' so I rang him and spoke with him. He is going great guns now. He is doing his counselling degree. He was working in a rehab facility and now he is working for a national body for justice reinvestment and healing. He donates his time every Friday at the council library helping out young people on the island. You can see the importance of a rehabilitation program being put together. That is just one story of what could be many.

People have nowhere to turn. We know there is an ice epidemic, we know there is a drug epidemic and we know there are all these other things happening. I really wanted to point that out. That is a real story. My story is real. His story is real. There is the real option to hit a reset button here. We may not see the results in a couple of years, but it will happen if opportunity is given. I want to finish off and say something when we are done here, but I know you will have questions and I want to pass over to Aunty Alex now. Thank you for your time, too, aunties.

**Rev. Gater:** Thank you, Brett. My story is I was born in Brisbane. I grew up at Cherbourg. My mum was working down here at the time. My father fought in World War II. My mother thought my sister and I would have a better chance of survival if we were sent to Cherbourg. Our grandparents looked after us—our grandparents were mum and dad and adopted us. I come from one of the oldest respected families in Queensland. I have made a valuable contribution to Queensland and Australia through hard work and respect.

Growing up in Cherbourg, I went to school five days a week, Saturday was for family outings down at the waterholes, swimming and taking our own picnic, and Sundays we went to church. I thank God for our beloved grandmother who instilled the love of God in us at a young age. They could not read nor write, could not read the Bible, but they had great memories and they could listen and hear. My shirt that you see I am wearing is called Walkabout Aboriginal Ministry. I am the first Aboriginal woman in Queensland to be ordained into the Anglican Church, Australia. I give thanks to the Lord. I give thanks to God for my beloved grandmother and, as Brett was saying, the family support.

We Aboriginal people are a spiritual race of people, a peaceful race of people, and a sharing and caring race of people. That is how we survive—by caring and sharing for each other, looking after each other. There was no money around, no dole and no Aboriginal Legal Service to complain to. It was the elders who put a roof over our head, put food on the table and sent us to school to get an

education. Caring and sharing was how we survived and by going to church every Sunday. I loved going to church. I loved listening to the stories of Jesus when I was a little girl. I went on with religion and all the things I have gone through in my life. I got married when I was young. I was widowed at 21. My husband was killed in a car accident. The last thing he said to the paramedics when they were taking him down to the Royal Brisbane Hospital was, 'Tell my wife and son I'm going home.' So I was a widow at 21.

I went on and I came down here to Brisbane. My husband is in the background here. This fella here is called 'Pomoriginal'. He was adopted by the Aboriginal people. He came from England. They call them Pommies. Our people adopted him and called him 'Pomoriginal'. He has been very supportive to me.

My ministry has taken me around Australia. I have officiated at weddings and funerals, and that is just one of many things I have done. I worked in the prison, as has been said—28 years of service in all the prisons. I worked in the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. I sat on the Brisbane Murri Court; I am a Murri Court elder. My passion has been justice. I came from a family of bush lawyers, fighting for rights. My father never marched with the Anzacs and I asked why. He said, 'I remember the horrors of war.' He said, 'I would go into the pub and have a drink for my mates. When I walked into the pub, this girl said, "I'm sorry, sir, we don't serve blacks in here."' He said, 'I am a returned serviceman and I helped to fight for this country and if you don't serve me, I'll jump the bar and serve myself.' Well, he was served. This was in the fifties. He had no right, but he knew his rights and stood up for his rights.

That is just one of the many things I have done in my life. As Brett said, I thank God for where I am today. We had a strict upbringing and a Christian upbringing. I hated the strict upbringing. Nobody likes that. You sat and you listened because you were told. We did not backchat. Family values were taught in the household, and you did not backchat; you just listened—you watched and listened. That is how we learned. We watched our elders. Our grandmothers taught us how to cook and how to wash, taught us about hygiene and how to look after ourselves, take pride in ourselves, to love ourselves and respect ourselves. That is what we were taught—family values.

What I witness now in my journey, what we are seeing and hearing today with all the children is not good at all. These children are doing this, this and that, which is naughty. Back then, in our house, the first teachings begin in the home before that child goes to school. You teach them family values, right from wrong, respect and manners.

Past governments said, 'You can leave home at 16 and we will pay you.' So, they did that to the families. They took the rights and responsibilities away from the families to discipline their children. Our son wanted to leave home. I said, 'Where will you live? What will you do? You can't live on this.' He wanted to go. His father said, 'Let him go. Let him go.' He went. He was gone for a week. I was in the city one day waiting to come home and who should I run into—our son. 'Mum, can I come home?' He has been home ever since. He is 40 now.

What I am seeing now today with these little children: they are also victims. Boni and I attended a three-day conference last week and I was listening to all about what is happening throughout Australia, what is happening in their country, what government has done. I am listening to this, this and that. What happened in the past is still happening in the present. Nothing is being addressed. This is what I was hearing. I stood up and I said, 'This is a national disgrace what I am hearing from you today. These children!'

Also, I read the Aboriginal prayer there. At the end of the prayer it says, 'We make a home for everyone in our land.' The people who come to Australia need to acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal people of this land. We, the Aboriginal people, are not being acknowledged or respected. Just last week I was at a youth forum at the Trades Hall. We sat around the table and they were talking about what was done to all the little children. The lawyer said, 'I witnessed this story where this young boy was beaten up in the watch house. He was beaten by three officers.' I said, 'That boy is my great-grandson.' Three police officers came in and beat him. Beat him! Another, a girl, was sexually abused. This is what I am hearing. All the families who come to me—the families and little children: 'This happened to me.' At the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre when the girls were showering, the men were—with respect to you men—perving on them. They came back and they told me all of these things. They said, 'Who do we trust? Who do we trust? Where do we go to? Who is listening to us? Who cares?' These little children are being abused.

I got a phone call yesterday morning from this mum saying these little boys are up there at Ipswich and at seven o'clock in the morning they stole a car. I went out and she told me the name of this little boy—

**CHAIR:** Auntie, sorry, I do not want to interrupt, but I ask you just be mindful about either identifying someone in case any matter is before the courts at the moment. Thank you.

**Rev. Gater:** Yes. This is at the court at the moment. Also, this young boy who stole the car was at a train station with his cousins, waiting for the train to come to go home to his family where he was beaten by three men. These men from a different country beat him and threw him to the ground. He said, 'I'm only a kid. Don't hurt me.' They said, 'I'll kill you.' This is what these little fellas are doing today; they are lashing out at the people who hurt them. It is a cry for help. They are lashing out at the people who hurt them. This little boy, only a baby, should not be out stealing a car. He should not be doing that. He should not be doing this and that. When the mum went and made a complaint she said, 'No-one's listening. No-one cares.' What they are saying here today is just one of many incidents. As I sit here today, I am saying what is told to us. We are telling you this is the truth. You need to hear the truth. These are stories—real stories—of people who are coming to us saying, 'This happened and this happened.'

We say to our families, 'Don't go out and follow anybody else. Be yourself. Don't copy anybody else. Don't follow anybody else. You just have to be in their care and if something happens, you'll get blamed; you'll get accused. So don't follow anybody else. Be yourself. You go out together; come home together. Stay safe. Stay well. Don't do this.' We tell them about the drugs: 'Don't do drugs. Don't take drugs.' I worked in the prisons—the drugs. I say, 'Don't take drugs. Say no to drugs. No to drugs. Let them call you names. You say, "No." The drugs will lead you down the highway to nowhere, the highway to hell, and that is where you will end up. You are family. A lot of you come from good families.'

You hear the stories here—a lot of stories. I can tell you a lot of stories. One fella got out of jail—he spent his life in jail. I have known him from the old Boggo Road. He said, 'I just let that do the talking. That's why I am here; I have seen a lot.' Anyway, he said, 'Now I let my tongue do the talking.' He had no education. He loved the land and went and did what's-the-name? You know what he did? He went to uni. He did three years at uni. He was a role model. The general managers—if any of the boys mucked up, he got them all in a circle and he said, 'Don't knock the system. Listen, do what you have to do and you get out, go home and be at home with your family.' He was a mentor. Everybody looked up to him—elders, everyone. He got out of jail. He met this young girl. They fell in love. He asked me to officiate at their wedding last year. This is just one of many happy stories I can tell you of what has happened to our people.

Brett shared his story of where he came from, and look where he is today. This is what we have seen. These little ones need support, not prejudice. They need healing. We have been calling for healing centres and rehabilitation centres. When we mucked up, they took us out on the country. They took us out and that frightened the hell out of us. When you went out there, you met your ancestors. They will come after you. It frightened them. We have to go out and teach these kids. Take them out and teach them about survival—how to fish, how to hunt, how to gather. Teach them to work with horses and stuff. Take them over to Stradbroke. There are many places where you can take these little children. They need healing and the families need support so that they can grow up well. They are our future leaders when we pass on. We are not always going to be here. We said to the families, 'You are listening now. Watch, listen and learn.' 'Yes, thank you, Nan.' They will come up and say, 'Sorry, Nan. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.' Too many people know: 'If you muck up there, I'm going to tell your nan on you.' 'Yes, sorry, Nanna.' I just wanted to share that with you today. Thank you all for listening. Thank you for inviting us.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Auntie. Auntie Joanne?

**Ms McConnell:** I am Joanne McConnell. I am the eldest of eight in my family, and I have eight children as well. I am a proud Yiman woman. For those who do not know, that is up Taroom, Rocky way. My journey is completely different. Everybody has a personal journey. I live at Redbank Plains. Why I am telling you that is that my grandmother and great-grandmother were at Deebing Creek Mission. Then through orders, my great-grandmother went back to Taroom, married up there and raised quite a few children as well.

I have been on Murri Court. I am the longest serving Murri Court elder in Ipswich. I survived the first round when all the funding was cut. We kept going there and we got it up again. I can see through Murri Court programs that people are not going to prison; they are turning their lives around. One great example is this mum who was in a DV situation. We helped to get her out of that. Two of her children were involved in youth justice, and the youngest son was heading that way as well. He would not go to school and had lots and lots of problems. I am sorry, I have to think not to name her. We organised counselling for her and mentored her. I actually personally mentored her—talking on the phone, things like that. She would see me in the shopping centre and we would give big hugs, as Brisbane

is very prevalent in our culture. She got herself a job. She turned her life around and has not committed any crimes whatsoever. Am I allowed to say what crimes she committed? It was shoplifting. That was the level of her involvement. Because she set such a great example, her children were no longer involved with youth justice and her son actually got up in the morning, got himself ready and got himself on the bus to go to school. This is just one example of the sort of justice we do in Murri Court which leads to their lives being turned around.

I used to work at a flexible learning centre. We had kids who did not fit into the mainstream. There were quite a few Aboriginal children. Because I was the older person there, they would come and talk to me. That sort of mentoring—the interaction between young people and an elder—helps turn them around because they have somebody who listens to them. You ask them, ‘Who is your mob?’ ‘I don’t know.’ We help them find out who their mob is. That gives them that sense of belonging. A lot of kids do not have a sense of belonging, of who they are. With a sense of belonging comes self-confidence and self-esteem. You work with these kids. We had another networker who came in and he learned the didg. That made his self-confidence and self-esteem grow more and more. You could sit down and talk to him and have a big conversation.

At the present time in Ipswich, they have a program for the pregnant mums and dads. They go into this program until the child is two. They have uncles and aunties there, health workers and all those sorts of things and they work with them. Those little babies, not even out of the womb, have a head start on a lot of other people because their parents are being taught to be parents and to look after the bubs. They will have a marvellous start. It is only a fairly new program. We are watching it very closely. We have referred a lot of people to that program, as in other networks.

Having these networks come together and having this all around community means we are part of the community. We are creating a community. One of the most important things in an Aboriginal community is the elders. It is the nannas and the pops. It is the aunties and the uncles. If you have a child who is misbehaving, you do not go to the parents; you go to the grandparents. I used to work in a mainstream school. There were a couple of kids who were really acting up. The teachers were saying, ‘What are we going to do?’ Contact their grandparents. I said, ‘I’ll contact them for you.’ I did that. I talked to them. The kids were soon brought into line because it is the grandparents who are telling them. The grandparents will make sure that those kids behave because they do not want them turning out like the child’s parents did. Get them onside. Community groups work so well and have high achievements when they have the aunties and the uncles involved. That is a resource. You cannot put a money value on elders as a resource.

In Ipswich, I have talked to the co-responders and youth justice people as well. The biggest problem seems to be a lack of communication. At the moment, there are government programs that are around the place with this one and that one and something else. The problem is that they do not communicate. That is a big flaw. Some of them do not have elders involved. Whatever program you are running, you must have the elders. It is almost setting up to fail if you do not have their involvement and respect their involvement. It is not just saying, ‘We will get aunty in and she’ll do this and do that.’ It is has to be done in a respectful way.

Culture gets passed down to the kids. The boys used to out with the elders on country and learn stuff. The girls would go with the aunties and learn girls’ business stuff. You can have million dollar programs but if you have not got community elders involved then you are throwing the money to the wind. There is a great example up at Torres Strait Islands. I think it is the Tiwi Islands but I am not 100 per cent sure. There were kids playing up. One of the uncles got some funding, got a shed and started a boxing club. That started off as reactive because he was reacting to the problems that were there. It became very proactive.

The kids had to go there two or three days a week. They were fed and they learned cultural stuff that was embedded in the boxing program. It became proactive because younger siblings would come along because big brother or big sister was going and having a great time. The kids are not running around the streets. They go there and the program is a very proactive one. They sourced funding from the federal and state governments. These kids have won boxing competitions. They have come to the mainland and gone down to Townsville. You can see the self-esteem and the self-confidence. It is all building. They are very much part of that little community. When they come down to Cairns, Townsville or all the way down, they realise that they are part of a bigger community. It is that sense of belonging.

So much damage has been done to our people through the stolen generations. People know that they are Aboriginal or they know that they are Torres Strait Islander, but they do not know who their mob is. Who knows? It could be anything. It is important to teach the basic values of Aboriginal culture. Like aunty said before, sharing and caring.

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**CHAIR:** Thank you, Aunty Joanne. Professor Boni, I know that we are running short on time. Would you like to share some experiences with us?

**Prof. Robertson:** Do I have five minutes?

**CHAIR:** Absolutely.

**Prof. Robertson:** I would like to start by paying my respects to the elders past and present and all the elders who have given me the opportunity to work with them over the years, including the elders who are sitting here and my little brother Brett. I wanted to say—and I think you mentioned this in the opening—that we also came here today in good faith because we are tired. The elders are tired. We are tired of saying the same old, same old. I have worked with elders since I was 19. I got out of hospital in the early hours of this morning and I did not want to let them down, which is why I am here.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you.

**Prof. Robertson:** No, this is really important. It is important because I think we have all been living in decades of delusion because of this. As I said, we came here in good faith to ask you for help because we are tired. I am tired. I am so tired. We see what is happening to our kids in the system. We go out to the prisons. The walls are filled with our men and women. We go to places like West Moreton and we see our children out there.

Before I start, I should give an apology for Aunty Colleen and Aunty Margie. If they could have they would have joined us today. They are two strong black women. It is hard to speak in five minutes—

**CHAIR:** If no-one minds, we can extend into our morning tea break so that we can continue. Please, take whatever time you need.

**Prof. Robertson:** For many years we have had forums like with the Productivity Commission and various levels of government with the work that we do. When we apply for funding they are always talking about accountability. We have demonstrated accountability but we have asked for an audit of accountability for the millions of dollars that have been given to non-Indigenous organisations to help our people, with very little outcome. What happens often is that they get the money and the difficult cases, the First Nations cases, they bring to the elders or they bring them to organisations like Cooee. They get the money and we get the heartache. We get the stress. I can tell you now, we can all stand proud because we have had a high level of productivity that is all evidence-based and it is all audited.

We can take you—and I would love you to join us—to the community, to a group through Cooee and the Minjerribah elders and the Greater Brisbane alliance of elders. Over a period of 40 or 50 years, if not longer, they have been able to evidence their abilities to look at a social issue, often one that government cannot deal with. They come up with very innovative, proactive resolutions. They put them in place. With the evidence that we are talking about, we can absolutely show the proof of the success of those programs and still they are struggling for funding 40 or 50 years later.

About 25 years ago, a group of our young people took their own lives in a very short space of time in one area. The local council at the time did not know what to do about it and the state government did not know what to do about it. The elders stepped up and started to analyse what it was that was happening that should not be happening and what it was that was making our children feel as though that was the only option. Several things came out of it. One is that they uncovered the fact that a lot of the children were being excluded from school, expelled from school, with no follow-up and no help. They were allowed to run free. The second thing is that lot of the service providers were saying that they were helping our people but, when our people went to get help, often there was no help that was culturally appropriate. Often it was just a merry-go-round from being excluded from school, families being under pressure because of impoverishment, going and asking for help from service providers and very little support being given. Then they would end up in the clutches of Child Safety and Youth Justice and then the adult detention centres. The elders decided that they needed to break that cycle.

We have been honoured and privileged to work with the elders and, I might say, the then chief justice of the Magistrates Court to develop the Murri Court. I was there with the elders when they came up with how that would work and how you get a system that gives life to all of the commitments that government have made to reconciliation, Closing the Gap, the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations. How do you give life to that so it has meaning to our people and it is not just a volley of reports that sit on somebody's table but mean squat to us when it comes to practical implications?



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They thought that we needed to get our L-O-R-E working with L-A-W, not to usurp the western system but to let them see that our elders and our knowledge holders, working along with your knowledge holders, could bring about change. Think about how much change has happened through the Murri Court. You have amazing magistrates who have stood diligently with our people to make sure of that through the community justice groups. If there is ever, ever, ever an under-recognised resource in this state, it is the community justice groups. They are out there after-hours and on the weekends, preventing and deterring our people from getting into trouble. The police call on them. The courts call on them. Child Safety and Youth Justice call on them. They are elders. Some of them are 80 or 90 years old. Thank God, through DJAG and courts innovation, there is funding but they are grossly underfunded.

I would ask you to look at the evaluation that has just been done on the community justice groups. You would be very pleased with the level of productivity that they have been able to evidence—not by anyone telling them how to do something that is locally based but by looking at their own people's needs and coming up with things that are really innovative, including the program that Auntie just spoke about. The group that I was talking about which helped negotiate the Murri Court set up a program, and over the years over 2,000 children have had their lives saved—to the extent that I went to meet with one of the ministers last year on a committee and when I walked in the new policy adviser got the fright of his life because he was one of the first young fellows that we had. He was found underneath the bridge, living in a squat with 37 of our young people. Each one of those children have got back into school; each one of them have gone on either to university or to build up their own companies. Was there a magical formula to help that happen? Not really—it was just the elders working with the community and service providers, knowing full well what needed to be done to help our people get themselves back on track.

When we come to the table and in good faith we ask for help, the answers have already been given. They are just not being listened to—building multimillion dollar youth detention centres, when the elders have been asking for healing centres and rehab centres. I went back and looked and it is 27 years since the first letter was put in and they are still asking for rehab and for healing centres. We still have community-based programs that are out there doing extraordinary work, evidence-based work, all with measurable outcomes on very minimal funding, not recurrent funding. They have to go out and beg for funding.

We spoke to a particular person in government last year and said, 'This is disgusting. It's an abhorrent blemish on their whole commitment to reconciliation and social justice reinvestment and reform,' and the gentleman said, 'Well, if the elders had been using their money so far they can keep on using it.' That is the attitude that some people have towards our people, but it is unfair, it is unjust and it flies against all of the principles of reconciliation and social justice. Everything that we have been able to do, we have been able to evidence that.

Last year was really horrible for all of us, all Australians. We know why. I do not want to say why; I do not want to give it life. We are all living with the casualties of colonisation—the justice system, the policies, the practices. Each generation might come up with a different name of a policy, but fundamentally the recommendations and the principles are the same. Our people come to the table in good faith, as people on the other side do, and here we are 40 or 50 years later still talking about the same thing. You need to ask yourself, 'Why? Why is that the case?' It is because people are complacent and happy with the same old, same old. They have a new policy and a new set of programs, but the practices are not right. The practices are not right because the money is not being invested in the most appropriate way. The most appropriate way is to let our people have carriage of the programs, the services and the practices that we know will work. We have evidenced it and we have been able to prove it 1,000 per cent, and I can take you and show you. We have been able to evidence not only proactive outcomes and measurable outcomes.

The one good thing that has come out of it is that we have been able to encourage a greater collaboration between our communities and service providers. In the Redlands we have actually set up the Redlands Indigenous service providers network. That was designed to help stop the squandering of funds by people duplicating services for the one family. One family might have had seven or eight government departments working with them, all at loggerheads with each other, but now they are all working in a much more sequential way.

We need to acknowledge that there has been a process of racial profiling of our people. If you walked into the courthouse—not so much now, but last year and the year before—there was always an Aboriginal man's face on a poster about violence prevention. Violence should never have a gender or a cultural face to it. Violence generally should never be accepted, but unfortunately our people are still often the casualties of the abhorrent situation where people think it is all right to speak to us in

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the most abhorrent way and to speak about our people in the most abhorrent way. More sinister than that, they still think it is all right to let our people work so many hours—often diligently using their own funds—to bring about change with no support, or very little support.

Those departments that do give support, we honour them and we thank them, but there are a lot of areas that could be giving our people support in the communities to bring about change but either they are prohibited from doing so because of the policies—which would be ridiculous given that we are living in an environment of reconciliation, social justice reinvestment and reform—or people have just become so complacent to the fact that a lot of our people give their heart and soul in good faith to keep the programs and services going in our communities for our people, often at their own expense. You have no idea how much money our people use out of their own pockets to implement programs for youth, to implement programs for our elders, to implement programs for our families.

I know that today is about youth justice but you cannot divorce the discussion around youth justice from the discussion around colonial consequences—the impact on our families, the abhorrent existence that a lot of our people have had that is still there today, the over-incarceration of our people in youth detention, child safety and adult centres. You cannot divorce any of those social indicators from each other. Anything that the elders have done over the last 30, 40 or 50 years has been to address each of those issues and they have been able to prove 100 per cent that the programs they come up with are not only very effective for our people but cost-effective for government as well. I do not understand why that is not being given recognition and respect.

I will tell you something. We always pay honour to systems, people and processes that we know are doing the right thing. We went out to West Moreton Youth Detention Centre a number of years ago and it was shocking. We are talking about children now. If somebody has committed a heinous crime, of course they have to be held accountable. I can tell you now, and this is true: a lot of our people would rather go through mainstream because it is harder going through Murri Court because they have to stand up and be accountable for lore as well, not just law. We are not sitting here thinking that we need to excuse people who are doing the most heinous, horrible crimes—we are not; they have to be held accountable—but you and I both know that that is a small portion of the youth who are currently in the system. How can a child be put into a system for committing a misdemeanour when we could be putting them in a program, like the elders have evidenced, to help them bring about change in their lives.

We went out to West Moreton and, as I said, it was horrible. I do not know if you have ever been to Alcatraz but I have and it reminded us of that. In good faith, we had a very long discussion, open discussion, honest discussion with the manager and a young Aboriginal girl out there, Kelly, who was in charge and they listened. They listened to what the elders were saying. If you go out there now, there is a cultural vibrancy there that is amazing. It is absolutely amazing, and all credit to that institution—and I hate that word. That facility is trying so hard to let our children rehabilitate and change their lives, but the biggest impediment is that, when they get out, there are no transition centres. That is nuts. There is no cohesion between what governments are doing to prevent and deter, rehabilitate and transition—even for the adults. They get out and that is it. We used to have transition programs here in Brisbane. They are all gone now; they have been defunded. It breaks your heart when you see a little jarjum being released at seven o'clock or eight o'clock at night and there is nothing there for them. There should be programs that help them transition successfully back home, back into school, back into whatever it is they need to have their lives transformed.

Having said that, we noticed that a lot of the young ones out there were the most extraordinary artists. They did the most beautiful art, but it was going nowhere. We need to show them that that is a skill and a gift and something they can make money from. The manager out there and the staff—all praise to them—have now got a program where periodically they will have an auction and those young people get to sell their art. Their intellectual and cultural property rights are protected. It is acknowledged that they are the artists and any money made goes into a trust for when they are released. They come out thinking, 'I don't have to go out and steal. I am actually somebody who has skills and knowledge to make a living for myself.' The biggest impediment is, like I said, there are no transition centres.

When we are talking about youth justice, we cannot just be talking about the types of crimes and the volume of crimes that are happening; we have to be looking at why. I know people are asking, 'What is causing all of this unrest amongst youth?' Systems also need to stand up and take accountability—like the day government said to families that children are able to leave home at 16 or whatever it is. These children do not have to answer to their parents; they do not have to be accountable. We are giving them the right to leave home and some even divorce their parents, although not in our mob. What happened to the consequences of that? They took away the parental

rights. I am not talking about beatings or anything like that; I am just talking about the right to teach children the right way and how to be a young adult: respectful, honourable, not cheeky. That is what Aunt was talking about before. A lot of our families have got into trouble because they have still tried to maintain those cultural and familial values but then the system will step in and say, 'You've abused your child.' 'No, I haven't.' 'Yes, you have. You don't have the right to tell them what to do when they're 17 or 18.' That is because government put in place a policy all those years ago that said to young people, 'You don't have to answer to your family. As from this age, you can go and do whatever you want to do and we'll help you do it.' Now we are at a stage where I think we are reaping the terrible rewards from that. That is one thing.

The other thing is that in this country—and I am talking about our mob now—we are still trying to deal with the casualties of colonisation. People are still trying to find their way home. For a lot of our people—it does not matter who they are or how well placed they are—it does not take much to scratch the surface to understand that they have had to rise above really serious adversities, really horrible, horrific crimes that have been committed against them and their families, and no-one has been held accountable. You cannot divorce any of this from the discussion around youth justice because you cannot divorce youth justice from families to children to social issues.

One of the things we want to do—and we know you are all very busy people, and we actually respect the time that we have been given today—is have a broader forum so you can hear from our people. Aunt is the chair of the Greater Brisbane elders alliance and we are all highly connected to community in one way or another. Did I say I was a Kabi Kabi Goreng Goreng woman? There you go: I even disrespected my own family. I am sorry; I was so keen to get all of this out because it is important, but so is my cultural heritage. We would like at some stage to ask that we host a forum and we invite you to come to it and you listen to some of our children.

At one stage some terrible things happened in the area that we live in. Some young people were involved, but they all did well when we gave them support. Just recently I was walking through a shopping centre and I saw this girl coming towards me. I thought, 'Gee, I know that girl.' She said, 'Aunt, don't you remember me?' Honestly, I burst into tears. That young girl is now in university. She is a mum of two. I said, 'I remember how beautiful you were. All those ugly things that you did, that is all in the past. You have turned your life around.' Our people can evidence that we do have the formulas for change. We do have the programs and the services that show there is value for money. It is all evidence-based. It all aligns with every single government policy that you can think over the last 30 or 40 years because of this.

Every time government comes up with a new policy or program, in good faith we come to the table. We change our thinking. We modify what it is that we are doing, if possible, to meet that KPI, but the KPIs that come back to us do not do the same. They still treat us in the same manner by underfunding, not giving us recurrent funding and not evidencing the extraordinary work the elders in the community do to help bring about not only change for our people but change for the greater good. Every time we turn one of our children around, that is a contribution to the greater good. Thank you for today. I could go on for the next two hours, but I will not because I am eating into morning tea.

**CHAIR:** Is everyone okay with us taking another 10 minutes for a couple of questions?

**Prof. Robertson:** Yes.

**Rev. Gater:** Aunt Boni has touched on everything. Everybody touched on everything. She mentioned art. We come from one of the oldest ancient cultures in the world. We did not learn about our culture in school; we were taught it in the home. It has been passed down from generation to generation. When you look around you see Aboriginal art on Qantas, the flying kangaroo. That is a symbol of our culture, the flying kangaroo. That is my totem. You see Aboriginal art on the trains going down to the Gold Coast and Redlands. You see Aboriginal art just outside the building here under the walkway. Aboriginal art is on the Brisbane ferry. Aboriginal art is everywhere. There is big money in Aboriginal art.

In our culture, Aboriginal people, our prayers, everyone acknowledges and recognises that respect. The boys in the prisons make big murals and give them to Zoe's Place for children with terminal illnesses, the Arthur Beeton Foundation for diabetes. Aboriginal art makes donations to communities. Aboriginal art is worth tens of thousands of dollars. If we are just talking about Aboriginal art, now it is everywhere. Do you know the big jumbo jet with Aboriginal art all over it? Does everybody remember that, the big jumbo jet? We were in London and I saw that on the tarmac in London. I said, 'Hey, look at the jumbo jet!' I went to Los Angeles and it was on the tarmac in Los Angeles. I flew home on it from Honolulu. I went up and I said, 'Could you take a photo with me and the plane?' I knew some of the men who painted it. Aboriginal art is big. Like you said, they are promoting our culture and art is very big. I want to thank you all for what you said.

**Ms McConnell:** A lot of our programs that we run as elders, as Aboriginal institutions—that is the wrong word, but we help our participants to help themselves. We do not tell them; we help them. That lesson they learn is more effective than anything else, than being told.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thank you all for being here. It is good to see you again, Brett, and great to catch up with you. Aunties, thank you for the help and support you give your communities. That topic for me is something we need to see improve in the system. It is very clear to us that kids who have great family support and help in the community will get on the right track. We are looking at the whole system. My issue has been about compulsion. I fully support self-determination. Aunty Boni, you spoke about consequences for action and law versus lore. It is easy to say that these kids have to consent to a program, but they have made bad choice after bad choice. I think it is a fallacy that they will just change and make a good choice. I would be interested in your ideas around compelling kids to do programs. I am not taking away from your expertise to take three weeks or three months to get the kids to determine for themselves the right pathway. Some of these programs are three days or six weeks. I would be interested in your thoughts.

**Prof. Robertson:** I can tell you now that I wish we could put in writing what it is that our elders do to address that issue, but you cannot. It is all about cultural values. I will give you an example. There was somebody at a particular courthouse with the most abhorrent behaviour. It was a man, not a child. It was shocking behaviour. Even the security did not know how to deal with it. The elders called that man into the room. I will not tell you what they said, but he came out and apologised to everyone. We know how to speak to our people, we know how to speak for our people and we know what it is that needs to be said. If people think for one minute that the way we deal with it is to give a soft touch, that is certainly not it.

I really respect what it is that you have just asked. Often people say, 'How the hell did you get that one to change their approach?' It comes from the heart. It comes from within, how we deal with our people culturally, spiritually, emotionally. They know when they have done the wrong thing. For a lot of people in the sector it is like a soft touch. The elders do not hurt them physically, but they know quite well how to call upon them spiritually, emotionally and culturally to do the right thing. That is how deep our cultural values lie.

**Mr Nutley:** I just want to reiterate what Aunty Boni said. When we go along to service providers or big conferences and what have you, we speak about these things. We actually have comments about them. The non-Indigenous organisations are writing all of our ideas down and taking everything with them, and then they apply for the funding under the same umbrella using what we have just said. It happens very regularly. It does happen. I just wanted to make everyone aware, FYI, that that does occur.

**Prof. Robertson:** It does occur. The cultural skulduggery that goes on when they pinch intellectual and cultural property rights is shocking. At the end of the day they do not know how to do it, so what happens is they get the funding to do the same old, same old. They might put a print on the wall. They might say 'I pay my respects to', but then they go ahead and do the same thing. Recently there was a process where they were saying that all government departments had to do cultural competency training. How the heck do you do that other than being able to treat each other respectfully? You cannot walk in the footprints of our people. You can be respectful, as we are respectful, but I think it is really important that we need to be the champions of change for our people. We cannot do that just by the mere little bits of financial support we get. There needs to be an absolute process, and they already do. Governments trust us to do the work that we are doing. That is what the Murri Court is about. That is what the justice groups are about. But there is very little funding. The justice groups get funded, but not enough. There are many, many programs where they can see the change, but they do not support them enough. They support them, but not financially.

**Rev. Gater:** With the youth and adults in prison you are talking about health, but some of them have literacy problems. Some have autism, ADHD. If you put a paper in front of them they do not know how to read it. When they are released from jail they have to go to Centrelink. They are told, 'You have to have this card.' They do not know what that is. 'You have to go and do this, this and this.' They do not know. Nobody goes in there with them. They come and tell us, 'They told us we have to do this, but we don't know what they're talking about.' They talk to them from up here instead of talking to them at their level of understanding. A lot of them do not understand. This is about providing that service to our people, teaching them culturally appropriate ways. The other thing is about respect. We have earned respect working with the judges and magistrates and others. They call us aunty, even the Commissioner of Police, the Lord Mayor, everyone. We have earned that respect. They refer to us as aunty and uncle and they invite us. It is about us breaking down barriers and working together and working in partnership to make it better. It is about change, isn't it?

**Mr HARPER:** I do not know where to start. There is just such a wealth of knowledge in front of us. Thank you all very much for sharing deeply personal stories. Brett, I know that you and I have yarned over in the precinct and in our travels when you were working here. We shared some similar pathways. Congratulations on what you all have achieved. I cannot believe you came out of hospital to be here today, Boni. That is like Trevor Gillmeister.

**Mr Nutley:** I got a phone call last night and I'm going, 'What!?' I was worried about it and she rang up and said, 'I'm coming!'

**Mr HARPER:** I work with some elders up in Townsville: Aunty Grace, Virginia Wyles and Uncle Francis Tapim. You said it: they are not just tired; they are getting old, too.

**Ms McConnell:** Age is just a number!

**CHAIR:** I am cognisant of the time. Could we get to the question, please, member.

**Mr HARPER:** Going to the member for Lockyer's point, I work with Uncle Karl McKenzie with the Townsville Justice Group, too. I take your point about funding. We have had to fight tooth and nail. Whether it is through the Murri Court or through the magistrates, should we be increasing their sentencing options to diversionary sentencing? Thank you for articulating that, because there is a bit of community anger throughout with violent people. They do belong in custody. It is about what happens when they transition out. You articulated that well. Should we be making recommendations through this committee about increasing sentencing options and diversionary sentencing? What are your thoughts?

**Prof. Robertson:** Absolutely. The thing is: if you are going to do that—and praise God if we could do that—you have to align it with the availability of programs to divert them to. We have been asking for diversionary programs now, a bit of property, for 20 years, if not longer. Absolutely I think there needs to be that sort of provision. In actual fact, they do it now. For example, down in Cleveland or Wynnum the magistrate will say, 'I order you to go and work with the Cooee elders', or the Minjerribah elders, 'and then come back'. In some ways it is happening now, but it needs to be more articulated within the provisions. To do that, you have to make sure there are proper facilities there to do that instead of investing in multimillion dollar brick correctional centres. All we are doing is just containing more kids. It is not changing anything. Do not get me started on that.

**Mr HARPER:** Does anyone else have any views?

**CHAIR:** Member, sorry, we will not even get a cup of tea at the moment. Is there anything you have not been able to share with us or thought about that you can put in a submission?

**Prof. Robertson:** We did a submission and addressed raising the age, which covered all of the issues about youth. We are quite happy to put together a submission.

**CHAIR:** Anything you can think of. At the moment, as you know, we have serious repeat offenders cycling through the detention centres. You have identified that transitioning out is important. What are your thoughts on how we can keep communities safer right now? What could be done that would keep communities safer right now?

**Prof. Robertson:** Do you want to answer or shall I?

**Mr Nutley:** It does not matter.

**Prof. Robertson:** If you think about what I just said in terms of the community justice groups being funded properly, and I am talking about for our people now, a lot of people out there think that when a perpetrator has dark skin they are automatically Aboriginal. No way. You and I both know that, but that is what is out there: all the youth offenders are Aboriginal. No, they are not.

I honestly think if we invested properly in those community justice groups, the groups that are out there doing the preventing and the deterring now, we would see a diminishing of the numbers. We have seen it. Aunt was talking about the boxing program—and this is all measured by government and not the justice group. The youth offending was up here. Once the young man and his family and the elders up in that area started working with the children, the recidivism plummeted. There is evidence there; we just have to give life to the principles of justice, reinvestment and reform and reinvest the money into programs that have proven they are working.

**CHAIR:** I am trying to work out whether it has just been a funding shortfall. In different communities across Queensland, what happens if you do not have, say, elders, uncles and aunties who are prepared to run programs or do something? We must have had some gaps somewhere to come to the situation we have now.

**Prof. Robertson:** I cannot think of any community that would not have elders providing that sort of support. I am talking honestly there. We deal with people in the north—

**CHAIR:** So they just have not had the funding support and that is how we have ended up in the situation now?

**Prof. Robertson:** Exactly. I know that time is of the essence, but I think also we need to look at the casualties of colonisation. Like I have said, a lot of our children have been taken away from their families and put into care in non-Indigenous homes. Those kids lose contact with their families. I would bet anything you will find a lot of the children in our communities who are offending are children who have had that severance from family. They are trying to find their way home. What they do is they form networks with other kids of the same ilk, and before you know it they are out there doing all sorts of things just to survive. In some ways, we are all trying to deal with the casualties of colonisation but we are not really doing it.

**Mr Nutley:** The justice groups are probably the big key. Even when I was working here, with all of the parliamentary committee engagement that we did around Cape York and remote areas I always went through the justice groups. The justice groups, like Aunty Boni said, are way underfunded. Take the justice group on Minjerribah. The things they do in the school holiday program they do out of their own pockets. Who knows how many kids they have stopped from roaming the streets at night with movie night at the council hall? Everyone does it out of their own pockets. Those things need to be looked at and what the justice groups do really needs to be looked at. Like Aunty Boni said, the justice groups get tired because they do everything. Everyone goes there for everything—if they do not have money for food, there is domestic violence or there is an issue in the community and they do not want to go to the Murri council. You know how it works: one family runs it for four years and another family takes it over four years later. I am just saying that the justice groups are a big key in the community—massive.

**Rev. Gater:** If we get back to art, have the art centres set up and sports—Rugby League and other sports. For instance, the young fellow from Cherbourg—

**Mr McDONALD:** Selwyn Cobbo.

**Rev. Gater:** They call him 'Cherbourg Boy'. He is just one of many kids. In another place they have set up first contact. They went to the youth and took them out to places. There are lots of things we can do, but like we said it is the funding. We need to share that workload and break that cycle to bring the youth back. If you ask them, 'What do you want or what would you like to do?' they will let you know and tell you.

**Prof. Robertson:** As we wind up, might I say that we mentioned at the beginning that we came here in good faith. We are tired. I suspect you get tired as well. One of the things that worries us is the sense of disenchantment that is amongst our people, because they have been coming to the table and saying the same thing for so many years only to be given an assurance that change may be imminent and then finding out that nothing changes at all. In a spirit of partnership, in a spirit of reconciliation, with all of those thousands of reports and recommendations that have been given that were supposed to be uplifting and transformative and in the spirit of cultural support and respect, we really hope that today's gathering does help us bring about change. We will give you the report, but we would like to also reiterate that we would love you to come and meet with a group of our people over at Jagera Arts Centre. You would have hundreds of our people there and they would be very respectful. You could hear from other people then.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much.

**Mr Nutley:** I want to acknowledge my workplace at the Redland City Council. They support me to do this with the elders in the community. It is the only organisation that I know of that does that. I acknowledge the CEO, Andrew Chesterman, and also the council itself. They are really committed to reconciliation. I would not have been able to do this with the elders if it were not for the support of my workplace. Mine is a one-wage family and I would have had to take a day off, but they support me with that. I want to acknowledge the council for doing that for me. I am wearing their shirt today. I wanted to make sure that I acknowledge my workplace and the support that they give me in that space to be able to do these things and help our community.

**Rev. Gater:** There is one more thing that I would like to say. I have taken many funerals around Queensland and even over the border in the Tweed. There were two weddings, one in Canberra and one in Newcastle. Mount Gravatt is where most of the funerals were that I have taken. I see all the ethnic groups all over the cemetery. I approached the Lord Mayor of Brisbane and said that I would like to see a section set up there for Aboriginal people. He agreed. The next time you go to Mount Gravatt, just have a look. They set it up for Aboriginal people.

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I would also like to see acknowledged Aboriginal culture and the traditional custodians of the land. As we say, it is about acknowledgement and respect. When I go anywhere in the world I will take a gift. Native Americans refer to us as their relatives. I say, 'I bring greetings from my people, the Aboriginal people of Australia. I come from my ancestral land to your ancestral land.' I always ask permission. That is what we do in our culture. You get permission to go from here to there. You do not take anything from the land. That is what we were taught in our culture. You do not touch that. Respect matters. That is what we were taught and we pass that down and teach it. That is one of many things that we talked about today. I thank each and every one of you.

**Mr HARPER:** Aunty Boni, you mentioned that there was an evaluation of the community justice groups. Can you provide the committee with that evaluation?

**Prof. Robertson:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Wonderful. I thank all of you so much for today. Our apologies: we will only be able to duck down very quickly to the Premier's Hall. As much we would have loved that cuppa with you, we are running on a schedule. That concludes this public hearing. Again, I thank you all. I thank our Hansard reporters. A transcript of the proceedings will be provided to everyone in due course. I declare this public hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 10.23 am.**