

# CORRECTED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into 2002–03 budget estimates

Melbourne – 23 May 2002

#### Members

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Mr R. W. Clark  
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Executive Officer: Ms M. Cornwell  
Research Officers: Mr M. Holloway

#### Witnesses

Mr K. Hamilton, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs;  
Ms C. Munro, Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment; and  
Mr T. Cahir, Executive Director, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mrs Maddigan)** — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the budget estimates for the portfolios of Aboriginal affairs and agriculture. The Chairman, Mr Peter Loney, is currently overseas attending a meeting of the South African public accounts committee, and I have been asked to chair in his absence.

I welcome the minister, the Honourable Keith Hamilton, Ms Chloe Munro, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), and Mr Tony Cahir, executive director of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, other departmental officers, members of the public and the media.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript next week. Would anyone who has a mobile phone or any other device that makes a loud noise turn it off, please.

Minister, if you would like to give your brief overview on your department, Aboriginal Affairs, and then we will get to questions.

**Mr HAMILTON** — Thanks very much, Chair. Does the committee have a copy of the slides?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Yes, we do, thank you.

**Overheads shown.**

**Mr HAMILTON** — We have rearranged the output groups to better reflect the work of the department, so we now have three output groups. One is indigenous community building, which to my mind is an extremely important and significant part of what we are about. I think that encompasses what I believe the government and the Victorian community has as its largest challenge in Aboriginal Affairs. The second output group is reconciliation through partnerships of government and Aboriginal communities, and the third output group is to address dispossession of Aboriginal land and culture.

I know that all of the committee would understand that those three areas are ones which every government in Australia, as well as the Bracks government, is looking at as a way of getting some progress forward and some positive outcomes in terms of what the government's role is in dealing with communities.

Indigenous community building, which is a new output group that was adopted for 2001-02 — since our last meeting, put it that way — indicates that the government has set up a process where it can work with different communities. I remind the committee that throughout Victoria there are a number of very separate and unique Aboriginal communities, so we must be careful to make sure we have a way of dealing with differences as well as those things which are common to communities around Victoria. We need to reflect that about half of the Aboriginal people in Victoria live outside the metropolitan area, so there is a very large regional focus which fits in very nicely with my other portfolio responsibility of agriculture.

The reconciliation through partnerships of government and Aboriginal communities is a logical consequence of dealing with community building. Community building is a phrase that has gained a lot of common acceptance, as it were, over many years, but to define what we mean and get some general understanding of what is meant by community building is something which is extremely difficult. When we talk about community building, what are we really talking about? In my determination, this is empowering communities so that they are able to make decisions and be responsible for their own decisions. The role of government is to provide the strength and the resources for communities to be able to do that. We cannot do it if we have a separation between government and communities, and therefore that follows on to the next output group, which is in reconciliation through partnerships of government and Aboriginal communities, so what we have endeavoured to do is to get projects which are partnerships between the government and Aboriginal communities in order to provide the strength and to provide better value for the resources that are put into those areas.

The last is the most difficult one, and that is addressing Aboriginal dispossession of land and culture. This is something that has been focused on very much since the Mabo decision, and subsequently since then, since I guess 1988, when there was, I think, a very strong mood change across all of the communities across Australia to try to deal with how we can in fact empower communities which have lost a lot of their culture, indeed all of their land, except for a very few cases, over that period of time. So what we are wanting to do is to get a whole-of-government understanding — that is, through all departments, not just the Department of Natural Resources and Environment

or our Aboriginal affairs section of DNRE. We want to make sure that we get those partnerships built so we can address that particular issue.

On the second slide there is something that I found extremely pleasing and indeed exciting for the output group. The last budget for the last financial year 2001–02 was \$9.9 million. That was revised. The committee might like to get some details on that revision. The output for this year's budget, which we will commence on 1 July, to \$13.6 million represents a relatively large increase and, I think, reflects this government's commitment to actually achieving results from the output groups that were on the previous slide. This year the \$3.7 million increase has been addressed to new initiatives. They are the indigenous family violence strategy, \$1.9 million; the indigenous community capacity building program, about \$1 million; Bringing Them Home, \$0.7 million; and the transfer of the Koori Heritage Trust's chief executive officer from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, \$0.1 million, which add up to \$3.7 million.

The government has identified that there are three major challenges. The first deals with indigenous family violence. There is a strategy in place which will be announced in more detail when we start the next financial year. Indigenous family violence has been of great concern to leaders and elders throughout the Aboriginal communities, and the government is addressing that concern. We must keep in mind that the response has to be community driven and communities need to look at the strategies within the community to resolve this very distressing problem — it is distressing for families and for children as well. We need to make sure that we look at not just a bandaid solution but a solution that is owned by the community and one that will have some real results.

I refer to the community capacity building program. As a member of Parliament one of the concerns that I have had for many years is that governments — not just the Bracks government but also the previous Kennett government — provided resources to communities without putting in the additional training, expertise and confidence for those communities. The best example I can recall is setting up kindergarten committees of management which gave them a lot of responsibility, but we did not ever put in the resources to train those people on how to deal with paying wages, Workcover, insurance, and a thousand other responsibilities. We want to make sure that resources that go into Aboriginal communities are adequate for training programs, for providing experienced people, so that a start is given to those community building programs. That is something I am particularly pleased about.

The *Bringing Them Home* report, of course, is related to the stolen generation. We have wanted to address the hurt that occurred following the investigation by the committee that brought that report down some four years ago now, and to make sure we have structures in place to address them.

In terms of the whole-of-government policy and planning output group, we want to review the Aboriginal Lands Act. The committee will recall that in Victoria the Aboriginal Lands Act refers basically to Lake Tyers and to Framlingham, which were two of the first grants of land in Australia, not just in Victoria, to Aboriginal people which occurred under the federal Labor government at that time. The original act set up shares for all the people on those two mission stations at the time. Since 1972 — that is 30 years ago — the families who were part of that group have dispersed, people have died, and we need to change the structure to enable annual general meetings to be held so that the direction of the spirit of those land grants can actually be encompassed. That is what caused the review of the Aboriginal Lands Act, which at this stage is a penultimate draft which has gone to those communities. We are asking the boards at Lake Tyers and Framlingham to look at the recommendations in the draft and respond to us before we issue a final draft. It has certainly been an area of concern, especially given the significance of those two pieces of land in this state.

The other important development was the implementation of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's indigenous partnership strategy. I am very proud of what we did. DNRE appointed seven liaison officers, all Aboriginal people. There was keen competition to get the jobs. We have selected and appointed seven wonderful people who have great strength of character, who understand the importance of cultural awareness to non-Aboriginal public service staff in the first instance, but also across the area. The other challenge for those liaison officers is to bring their local Aboriginal communities closer to DNRE and other public service staff in those various localities around the state, and that has had some interesting outcomes. A great deal of the credit must go to the individual people who are extremely strong, and I hope committee members get a chance to meet them. I assure the committee that they shall educate us all.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — I must interrupt you; you allocated 10 minutes to do your presentation, so you will have to highlight some of your points. Then there will be 35 minutes of questions.

**Mr HAMILTON** — Some outstanding work has been done in cultural heritage with some excellent examples over the state.

I turn to some of the achievements. There will be a formal launch by the Premier in about three or four weeks of the public sector indigenous employment strategy. There will be a big announcement shortly on the family violence strategy. A whole-of-government report will go to Parliament during the spring sitting this year. The Koori community fund continues to be a very powerful tool for self-determination for communities and community groups. A large effort has been made on cyclical maintenance of assets that are part of community building, and there have been some new infrastructure and upgrades.

I can give the committee more details of the *Bringing Them Home* report. We have a great partnership with the Koori Heritage Trust to deal with the stolen generation and the hurt. There have been 10 healing conferences around the state at this stage, and there are a number of heritage partnerships. It is extremely pleasing to see the cooperative efforts between, in some cases, private land-holders, government and government departments. A lot of work has been done across the whole of government on communicating. Probably the highlight of that would be the march of 400 000 people some little time ago.

I have outlined the future directions we are going in those areas. With regard to our ongoing priorities, we still maintain community infrastructure programs which are basically providing buildings for cooperatives and groups to work from. There are a large number of community hearings, investigations and teamwork going on, including members of a local community, and there are regional cultural heritage programs.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — You highlighted, and many people would be pleased to see it, the increase in the budget for Aboriginal Affairs for this year. Will you tell us if any of that funding is to go towards working with the stolen generation program?

**Mr HAMILTON** — Yes, \$700 000. The budget increase will go towards the Bringing Them Home initiative, which includes a number of aspects within the total program. We are containing it within a program and there are some programs underneath, which include family tracing and reunion services, spiritual and emotional wellbeing support, and community education focused on supporting individuals and communities so they can work through the process of reuniting, because it is stressful if you have suddenly found a mother or father or a grandmother or grandfather. We need to be able to work with those people, both from the point of view of the person who was taken from their family for whatever reason, and subsequently, almost a generation or longer, of being reunited. That is stressful, and there is some work going on in that area. We have referrals to the Koori oral history program, which is a program where we are providing expertise to assist individual people and family groups to record their oral history, and there is some specialist counselling and healing programs. I think there are 10 conducted around the state where people are invited to come in and be part of the counselling program.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — It is quite extensive?

**Mr HAMILTON** — Yes, it is broad-ranging and is extremely difficult because it is very emotional.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — I would like to ask you about the performance measures listed in this year's budget. I noted your comments earlier about the realignment of the output groups. I note that for this year the budget papers show that all the performance measures are listed as new measures at pages 239 to 241 of budget paper 3. A number have been carried forward from last year, if you compare the measures. They are identical measures as listed in last year's budget papers without the historical data included this year. Will you explain why they are listed as new measures when they are in fact carried forward?

**Mr HAMILTON** — I will give a broad answer and one of my officers will give the detail. The performance measures are a requirement for reporting to Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) on expenditure of public moneys. The difficulty we have — with due respect to all the economists in the audience — is that those performance measures in many cases do not reflect what is actually going on, and in some cases I think what happens is that we tend to try to mould what is actually being done to fit a stated and required performance measure that has to be reported to Treasury quarterly. What we have endeavoured to do within this new set of output groups is to get something that gives us a better and, I think, a more transparent view of what is happening within the department. To relate that back to the relationship between last year's budget and this year's budget outcomes, I will ask one of my staff to give you that information.

**Ms MUNRO** — The honourable member is correct that some of the performance measures are the same. However, as the minister has said, the outputs had been restructured and therefore, and in a technical sense, these

are all new measures because it is the collection of measures together that describe the performance of the outputs. If the committee wished, we would certainly do that reconciliation and identify the measures that have been carried over and then you would be able to see the relationship, but would caution that it is not entirely apples with apples because some of those things are being delivered in a different context with the new design of the outputs, but certainly we could do that. The technical answer is that the outputs have been newly defined, so it is a new set of performance measures, and that is why they have been reported that way in the budget papers.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Certainly it would be very helpful if we could receive that reconciliation. I am sure the minister is aware that this committee has been critical of all departments over time with respect to reporting of performance measures, and the fact that they often do not reflect on what the department is doing. Certainly if it reflects a move towards appropriate measuring of outputs then that is welcomed, but in cases where they appear to be carried forward it would be very helpful to have the comparative data from previous years.

**Mr DAVIS** — To follow up, I was interested in your comment about the fact that you felt the outputs did not actually measure what was happening on the ground. Again that is something that the committee in a bipartisan way has been concerned to address. You obviously still feel that they do not measure what is happening on the ground. What steps would you take to make sure that the measures in your output area actually measure what is happening with Aboriginal communities in terms of health and other outcomes?

**Mr HAMILTON** — The fact that we do not in this venue report on health, education, housing and all the rest of them makes it difficult because, in my mind, and this is why we will be giving a whole-of-government report to Parliament, every department's input into Aboriginal wellbeing, if I can put it as generally as that, and the new set of measures that we have adopted for this hearing, give us, the committee and the public a far better understanding of what sorts of things we can measure to better reflect what the department is doing if you look down the list on those output measures. I think we are a lot closer than we were. What concerns me is that we do not have as part of this hearing, and it is not your fault or our fault —

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — It certainly would not be our fault!

**Mr HAMILTON** — It is very complex because the Aboriginal Affairs budget this year will be nearly \$14 million, but the total state government expenditure on Aboriginal issues will be probably tens of millions of dollars when you think of Aboriginal housing, which is a significant amount of money that comes into that — some of the education programs run from Lynne Kosky's department, a couple of outstanding new programs. A lot of resources are put into them. You do not see those here.

**Mr DAVIS** — Can you show me where in the budget the outputs for the Aboriginal communities in those other areas are actually measured?

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — They are actually from the portfolio area to which they belong. They are not the minister's area of responsibility — for example, Aboriginal justice is under the Attorney-General's portfolio.

**Mr HAMILTON** — What we will do before the spring sitting is to table in Parliament a document across all departments which, with due respect, puts some requirement on other departments to collect together their data on how much, or what effect and impact it will have. I do not refer to the amount of money, from a personal point of view, but what is important is the impact it will have on changing the lives of Aboriginal people. If, for example, we can increase the number of kids staying in school to complete year 12 or going to TAFE or university, that is a good measure. If you have some way of achieving that, you are really achieving something. If you have Aboriginal people in good standard housing, with families able to have a physical environment in which the family can grow and develop, that becomes an important aspect of what the government is about, and we are not unique, but it is a matter of getting those bits together. The commitment the government has made to producing a whole-of-government report to be tabled in Parliament, so it is there for public scrutiny, will make it valuable in getting the focus of everybody on to the real things we are trying to do.

**Ms BARKER** — You referred to the ongoing development of the Victorian public sector indigenous employment strategy and said there would be an announcement shortly. Can you provide us with more detail today?

**Mr HAMILTON** — I will give you a general answer because it is a really important exercise. It has been extremely important across government for a long while that as a government and public sector employer our employment demography ought to reflect as best as possible the demography of the people who are involved across

Victoria. What we have endeavoured to do is say, 'Okay, around 1 per cent or 2 per cent of Victorians identify as Aboriginal people', although I suspect that when the statistics come from the 1999 census, or whenever it was, there will be an even greater percentage and we will get a better figure. People are becoming more confident in identifying themselves as Aboriginal people.

We asked for the secretary of each department across government to look at ways in which they could increase the number of Aboriginal people employed in, for want of a better description, mainstream roles within the departments. In the first instance it seems easy to say Aboriginal people have a close relationship with the land; they have and they understand land and land management — they can work in Parks Victoria and some of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's land management areas. It is more difficult, however, to get to the stage where the Department of Treasury and Finance, for instance, could say, 'We have to train people so they can be economists or legal persons and become part of the department's role'. We have set the challenge. The Premier will be launching this on, I think, 6 June. Each department has to say, 'Let's put in place within the department ways in which we can attract Aboriginal people to employment'.

Most of you would have gone to communities where there are many Aboriginal kids coming out of school, but there is not one employer in the local retail, local business or whatever area to give them jobs. Go to Echuca, Heywood or Shepparton — it is appalling, to be honest. These are beautiful kids and I know many of them.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — It always surprises me that so few are employed in, for example, the tourism area, perhaps working in motels. I am sure overseas visitors would enjoy the opportunity to come into contact with them in those circumstances.

**Mr HAMILTON** — The government will lead the way. We will endeavour to put in place good practice so there is good cultural awareness across the departments. The partnership liaison officers I talked about earlier is an example; that has had publicity. I was at the City of Greater Dandenong last night and a commitment was made from the four councils in that region that between them within the next 12 months they will employ 40 — an average of 10 per council — across mainstream jobs in the council, not as liaison officers or whatever.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — In the normal job stream?

**Mr HAMILTON** — Yes. The City of Latrobe, where I live, last month introduced — and we welcomed — 12 indigenous young people in the mainstream area. Some are in parks and gardens, and some are in community relations, while some are in administration in the town clerk's office. There is a whole range of them. The City of Latrobe has done it, as has the City of Port Phillip. They have a great program. There is a commitment through local government where we can see some responsibility being taken by public bodies to address unemployment, which is the biggest single issue in most Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

**Ms BARKER** — Could we ensure that that strategy or initiative which is to be announced shortly and which will tie in well with what we are doing now is directed to the committee so that we have the details?

**Mr HAMILTON** — I am sure we will be celebrating it from high on the hill. It is an important one. We talk about a triple bottom line in government — this is a single top line. It is the moral responsibility of governments all over the place to say, 'We really have to deal with the indigenous issues across the state'.

**Mr DAVIS** — I want to turn to page 17 of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's submission to the committee and talk about the reorganisation of the department and how your output groups fit within that. In doing so I refer to the number of staff and note that within an overall staff number of 3745 in 2001–02 plus 718 temporary or fixed-term staff, with an increase this year to 3776 full-time staff plus 754 fixed or fixed-term staff, totalling, according to my calculations, 4463 staff going to 4530 staff, representing an increase of 67, of which your area — Aboriginal reconciliation — goes from 44 to 54 now. Is that correct?

**Mr HAMILTON** — I accept the figures in the submission, yes.

**Mr DAVIS** — I noted with a great deal of interest the submission from the department on the reorganisation of output groups. This is one of those tables that reminds me of the Barry Jones spaghetti diagram. I found it difficult to follow through this reorganisation and there is a series of arrows going everywhere. This colour diagram may assist me.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — Mr Davis ended up with A4 sheets — that is, pages with just arrows on them.



**Mr DAVIS** — It is one of those management charts that some bright spark dreamt up. Could you relate the particular new measures that are listed in your output group and explain how they relate to the broader objectives of confident, capable and innovative communities? For example, these measures here relate to ministerial briefs within specified time lines, high priorities, cyclical building maintenance works and so forth. I am just trying to see how the output measures that you have listed here relate to the end point in this chart of so-called —

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — I am not quite sure that Chloe is looking at the same chart as you. Could you just hold it up so she can see? You have a different chart there to what you are looking at.

**Mr HAMILTON** — I think he has got his own.

**Mr DAVIS** — No, it is the one provided to us.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — Can we just hand it across just so Chloe can see what you are talking about? Is there another page of that one? I have not got mine with me.

**Ms MUNRO** — Could I offer again a conceptual answer to this one? I think certainly from the way the diagram has been printed I can understand why it is causing such confusion. The endeavour we have been embarking on, along with other departments, is to move to a richer form of reporting which reports against outcomes as well as against the things that we actually do. There is a set of measures which are the ones in the budget papers which are specifically about what we have done and the measures are in terms of quality, quantity and timeliness, so they are, if you like, the widget measures.

The chart that you have before you, which I accept is complex, is mapping the output onto the range of outcomes at high level which the department is contributing to and these are our objectives and there are a lot of cross-linkages because a particular piece of activity may indeed contribute to confident and capable communities, but it may also contribute to, say, an economic outcome. That is why there is a bit of spaghetti on that chart.

We had considered whether to reorganise our outputs completely to align to the objectives, but you would then lose sight of the actual activities of the department. The performance measures as posed in the budget are designed to give an indication of the quantity, quality and timeliness of the activities and the objectives are designed to give a view of the impact — and of course some of that may be cumulative over a number of years — on outcomes in the community. That chart is an attempt to draw a link between them. It does not represent a reorganisation of our outputs. The reorganisation has happened within the output groups to more clearly specify what in fact we do and the minister has already discussed the limitations, if you like, to that form of reporting.

**Mr HAMILTON** — I have enough trouble looking after my two divisions without going across the whole department, but in terms of reporting, David, if you look at one of the first performance measures in community building, Aboriginal community organisations receiving grant funding for community building is 28. So that is a number and it is something that we can actually measure: how many different organisations have got grants for community building. We can measure how many Koori community fund grants we have handed out and the aim is 10. In most cases because the Koori community funding is \$50 000 maximum, a number of communities apply for a grant less than that and so in fact we will achieve better than 10; we will achieve perhaps 14 or 15. What we endeavour to do is to say, 'Well, you don't have to take the \$50 000. You can take a grant for \$10 000'. We know it will achieve at least 10. We would hope we would get better than that.

The heritage training activities — there is a measure there of eight and throughout the year we will conduct eight heritage training activities which include in many cases an archaeological dig and the training of people in how you deal with Aboriginal heritage in terms of archaeological significance. They are things we can measure and that to me seems to be far better. I can actually understand what they are saying.

**Mr DAVIS** — Just on that point of measuring and the comparability across years, do you remember in the Independents' charter that the government signed with the three Independents there was a promise to maintain parallel reporting or to parallel report where a measure is changed as you have contended it has been changed this year? Do you personally feel an obligation to that charter, to actually ensure that there is parallel reporting of these measures when they are changed from year to year?

**Mr HAMILTON** — As a minister I am concerned that we can have a measure of whether we have improved over the course of the past 12 months: what we have done, what we have achieved and whether there is an improvement on that as we go ahead. As a minister I think that is appropriate —

**Mr DAVIS** — You think parallel reporting should have been — —

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — Excuse me. Would you mind moving the microphone a little closer to you please? Thank you. We would hate to miss one of your gems of wisdom!

**Mr HAMILTON** — I think David has raised a really important point here and it goes back to, I guess, where I started: that if you are counting something that you can actually measure, that has got some real meaning, then what does it mean if you do not understand it last year and you do not still understand it this year and you do not understand it next year? If you start off from the wrong base, then your parallel reporting really has not got much meaning at all. To pick up Gordon's point, where there are — perhaps it was yours I'm sorry — —

**Mr DAVIS** — New measures.

**Mr HAMILTON** — Yes. We need to be able to reflect back what was the comparison in that area of last year's or what was the way in which there was a similar objective of the department's activities reported last year and get that through and Chloe has agreed that we will provide the department with that in response to a number of questions.

**Mr HOLDING** — I would like to just ask you something that you mentioned in the presentation and it is also referred to in the budget papers — that is, the family violence strategy. My recollection from your presentation is that you mentioned that there was about \$1.9 million in funding in the budget in relation to the implementation of this strategy. I am wondering if you can provide the committee with some information about some of the initiatives that might be undertaken as a result of the implementation of this strategy.

**Mr HAMILTON** — The commitment from myself as minister, from the government and certainly reflected in department operations is that we need to make sure that we have community involvement in the direction the government might take to deal with important issues such as family violence. So we set up an indigenous committee task force of indigenous people with a whole range of leaders and people who had been active in this particular social area to come up with recommendations to government on how we had best deal with family violence across the various communities in Victoria. That task force was established. It had, I think, a clear majority of women on it because women seem to be more intimately involved with dealing with family violence in whatever community, not just Aboriginal communities. But it was important that we had a balance of some males on that task force to deal with it.

Having set up that task force, it has met on a number of occasions, and it has come back to the government and this was really the reason why there was an increase in the budget this year — or next year's budget more correctly — to actually deal with family violence because if we are going to deal with it we need to go back to what are the fundamental problems. They are — and I think they are pretty common knowledge — low self-esteem; therefore if you do not feel good about yourself you tend to want to take it out on someone else and that quite often is a family member because in most cases they are available — —

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — The closest person!

**Mr HAMILTON** — Family violence is not restricted to Aboriginal communities. However, it is certainly the government's strong belief that if we are going to deal with an Aboriginal community we are to recognise the differences in family relationships and the breakdown that has occurred over the years and the importance of the elders. Traditionally in Aboriginal communities elders are highly respected people. If an elder told a younger member of the community what to do, normally it would be done. Now if they are told not to behave in such a manner or not to take drugs, or whatever else people do these days because they feel bad about themselves, that elder's influence has been lost.

The other important thing was that we needed to provide — I guess this is reflected in some of our other programs — a way of improving self-esteem for the parents, and we needed to make sure we had ways of training better parents. That is a pretty lousy, parsimonious way of describing what I am trying to say, and I mean that. We have schools programs, and there was never any part of my school curriculum or your school curriculum that says how to be a parent. Most of us will be parents — why? Because we learn from our own parents as the first instigators, which is why you get generational models of the same problems occurring in lots of families. So we need to get people to understand the responsibilities and the actual specialties required for being a parent. Being an Aboriginal parent is a bit different because you are dealing with a number of racial issues as well as just normal parenting issues, so we need to get a way of implementing that support and counselling within communities to deal with that; and these are the recommendations that came out of our task force.



The \$1.9 million is to enable us to put the resources into communities, into individual families in many cases, because you have to start off with as narrow a focus as you possibly can. We can endeavour to do a number of things in conjunction with all the other programs going on — better education, better job prospects, better job; feeling better about yourself means that you don't self-harm. They are the sorts of social nuances that are there on all occasions.

Those are the directions that we put in place, and now with this budget we will be able to put the resources in to supply the specialists to support Aboriginal community leaders — for example, we consult with Aboriginal people on a million things during the year and yet we do not ever think about how those people have to travel to Melbourne to talk or how they have to give up their time, so we need to be able to say, 'Look, we want you to be part of this; we have to provide you with resources'. Remember, most of these people are on social security of some type or another, and to pay petrol to go from Bairnsdale to Orbost for a consultation is a difficult task, so we need to recognise that there are costs involved in being part of this support program. That is the general direction. As for the details, we will have the family violence announcement on Sunday, and then we will be able to have more detail, but that is a really important part of where we are going.

**The ACTING CHAIRMAN** — Thank you very much for that. That concludes our session on Aboriginal affairs. I also thank Tony Cahir for making his time available this morning.

**Witnesses withdrew.**