

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Melbourne—Wednesday, 12 February 2020

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WITNESS

Hon. Wade Noonan, Executive Director, WoMEDA; Associate Director of Social Enterprise and Investment, RMIT University; Chair, JobsBank.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for making the time.

Mr NOONAN: That is all right. My pleasure.

The CHAIR: As you know, we are doing the Inquiry into homelessness. I need to state, but obviously you are aware, that you are protected by parliamentary privilege here. That protection does not extend outside here. We are recording and we are actually going to the World Wide Web right now, so this is all live. As you know, you will get a transcript after this. I must say, I think this is great. This follows on really nicely from the last people from HoMie.

Mr NOONAN: It does.

The CHAIR: Please feel free to start the discussion.

Mr NOONAN: Thanks, Chair. I suppose given it is an Inquiry on homelessness I think it is probably, from my point of view, worth acknowledging the struggles of people who are doing it tough, including people I passed in the street on the way here, and also the great organisations, like HoMie and so many others filled with great people of passion and commitment, at the top of my contribution today. I am very grateful to the Committee to essentially have the opportunity, after spending 11 years in Parliament myself; I suspect this will be a bit easier than the last parliamentary Committee I faced, being the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. But I would say that I was really privileged to be in Parliament for 11 years and I had three as a minister, and I understand that the work of parliamentary committees in particular can produce some really good policy outcomes. I suspect in terms of what you are gathering now you will have some very valuable insights and policy suggestions not just for the Government of the day but for future governments, so I wish you well in your work.

I have a very long title these days. It just means that I do lots of different jobs and I get to work with lots of different people, but it is probably worth explaining a couple of the jobs, which gives some context to why I think I am here today. I am very fortunate to chair a new not-for-profit called JobsBank. JobsBank's task, in a sense, is to fill the gap between having priority or disadvantaged jobseekers available, finding employers and overcoming employers' concerns about taking on priority jobseekers. We are out there talking directly with employers, getting pledges of jobs and then preparing candidates to go into jobs. As I said, we are a new entity supported by the Victorian Government. A recent success we had was we have placed 14 young people at the Australian Open, for example. We have partnered with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and we have gone into the Flemington area. What we have done is we have basically gone to the tennis and got a guarantee of jobs and gone to a community where we have been able to take job descriptions and then essentially match through a process to get, predominately, young people a taste of work. We have also got commitments for the grand prix and we have also got commitments for the food and wine festival, so we expect as we go along with some of the major events that are happening in Melbourne and Victoria that we will have an opportunity for people to be exposed to work who ultimately may not get that opportunity. That is what JobsBank is actually doing. It is early days.

Last year I also co-founded a new initiative called Out for Good. Out for Good is about breaking the cycle for young people who have been in and out of the justice system, leveraging the social procurement framework, which is a new piece of public policy which I will talk about at some length during this submission, but that is to create 50 job placements for young people who have been in and out of the justice system on major Victorian Government infrastructure projects, leveraging, essentially, the purchasing power of the Victorian Government to get some social impact.

I have also got a role at RMIT. I am the Associate Director of Social Enterprise and Investment, and that is why following HoMie is really good. I see a role for universities to help build the capability of organisations like HoMie and others through both research and applied innovation, and quite frankly, through our capacity to put

students in places where they could potentially help organisations like HoMie and others as they learn, and they can get an appreciation for the valuable work of social enterprises generally.

So that is a bit of a background in terms of what I am doing. I am doing a few other things too, but they are the most relevant to this Inquiry. I had a look at your terms of reference, and I want to sort of speak to points two and three. Point two is about investigating the many social, economic and policy factors, and point three is about identifying policies. I really want to pick on three points in terms of just my opening remarks. Firstly, it is to build on what you heard from HoMie in relation to the impact of social enterprises generally and share with you some experiences I have had and link that to the social procurement framework of the Victorian Government, which I think is a bit of a game changer, but then talk to you about risk and put a couple of recommendations to the Committee to consider, with one key one.

You have just heard from HoMie, a social enterprise. I think they are a wonderful model to tackle social and economic factors that face people who experience homelessness, for a number of reasons: they help provide an income; they provide meaning to people's lives; they can build skills, they can build confidence and give a person a sense of self-worth and empowerment; and they are a great pathway to something else—another job opportunity.

Just to be clear, social enterprises are really businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems. They do that by making a profit, but they use that profit essentially to very directly help with a number of areas, including employment, the environment and the like. Generally social enterprises, if you look at social traders who certify social enterprises, they say that enterprises that are considered social enterprises reinvest 50 per cent or more of their annual profits back into that purpose—just to be clear.

Victoria is home to many things, and proudly we are the home of social enterprises in Australia. It is probably a little-known fact, but we have about 3500 social enterprises, and they employ about 60 000 people and contribute about \$5.2 billion to the Victorian economy. That stat came from a social enterprise strategy that was released in the first term of the Andrews Government, in which I was a minister. We basically looked at trying to harness social enterprise as a way to provide opportunities to people, not just to earn an income but for the other reasons I talked about.

You have seen HoMie but there are a number of other really significant social enterprises that focus either directly or indirectly on homelessness in Victoria. The Big Issue is one that people clearly recognise out on the streets, but there are other great ones. It is probably unfair to list a few, but the Brotherhood of St Laurence have the Given the Chance program that is about labour hire and traineeships, apprenticeships and the like. There is Fruit2Work. There is Streat, who provide cafe and hospitality services. There are many that do really good work, and they are usually very small enterprises as well.

How does this relate essentially to Government? Well, I want to talk about social procurement. It was a new policy of the Victorian Government, I am pretty sure released in the first half of 2018. It was essentially a recognition that Victoria has this massive building program. At the same time we have relatively low unemployment, at least at a national level, but we still have pockets of significant disadvantage where it is entrenched and it is not moving. So the Victorian Government determined that what it would try and do is achieve some social impact through its purchasing power, and in the process redefine how value for money would be viewed by Government and everyone else—all of their partners. So value for money is not just about the cost of a product or service or the quality; it is also about social impact—and there are other components of it. What that means in a practical sense now is that any contract valued at over \$20 million in Victoria must include performance standards and contract requirements that pursue social and sustainable procurement objectives. I think this is really relevant to your terms of reference in relation to policies that matter, even though it is early days, because it is having a bearing on social enterprises. Let me expand on that.

What is happening in practice is that we are seeing contractors now set targets in relation to employing priority jobseekers—so they can be long-term unemployed, at-risk youth, migrants and refugees, retrenched workers, people with disability and Aboriginal workers as well—and setting purchasing targets which also set minimum engagement with social enterprises for the first time. So if you are thinking about what you can do with social enterprises, think about the Government's purchasing power for the first time. We are one of the few

jurisdictions in the world that now has a whole-of-government approach to setting those targets within its purchasing contracts, so it is a really, really key area of opportunity, in my view.

Late last year the Victorian Government released its first annual report on the progress of the social procurement framework. I would not expect all Committee members would have had the time to read that report, but it covered the first six months of last year, and there are a couple of statistics that I will just share with you about social enterprises. The major road and rail projects spent \$8.4 million with social enterprises in 2018–19; Victorian Government departments spent \$7.3 million with 70 certified social enterprises; Rail Projects Victoria recorded more than 15 000 employment hours for refugees; and Rail Projects Victoria and North East Link Project recorded more than 36 000 hours for long-term unemployed and more than 6000 hours for disengaged young people. They are just sort of a smattering of statistics that you could pull out. I would argue that those sorts of organisations who are providing opportunities for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk may not have got those opportunities if it was not for a policy piece like that. So again I am just trying to put it in your path to think about.

What I have also learned, though, over the last 12 months is that there is a risk matrix that applies through the social procurement framework. What do I mean by that? When those targets are set, what I am learning is that it is much easier to engage a retrenched worker or potentially a refugee who is highly motivated, has skills, does not have a criminal record and has not experienced homelessness than it might be someone who has experienced homelessness, with a vast complexity to their personality and their history, who may not have experienced any work for a long period of time and may not have the necessary skills or even the language or literacy competency to do a job. What that means is that in the early days of social procurement we are not seeing as many examples where social enterprises, for example, who may more specifically help people who are experiencing homelessness getting engaged over others, such as a social enterprise that might be a labour hire around refugee talent, for example.

But there were a couple of good examples. I pick out the example on page 13 for your secretariat in relation to the annual report, which picked up that the department of justice, for example, had procured mail-out services through the Big Issue's Women's Subscription Enterprise, and that initiative alone created job opportunities for 29 women. So there are examples there where that active policy is providing opportunities.

I did get a look at one particular major project in Victoria to see what targets they are setting themselves. It may come as no surprise to the Committee that whilst they have got targets around re-engaging retrenched workers, they have got no targets around engaging directly workers who have experienced homelessness or separately a social enterprise who might specialise in homelessness services, if you like. So I think we just need to take that on board. It is early days, but it probably leads me to a couple of recommendations for the Committee to consider, based on what I have been experiencing and learning over the last 12 months. It is that there is an opportunity for the Committee to recommend to the Government to consider increasing the opportunities for people experiencing homelessness or who are homeless to engage in more meaningful work and training through the social procurement framework. Again, it is early days, so I think that that is a relatively light-touch recommendation that the Committee could put to the Government to see where the impact of that particular policy is going.

My second recommendation for the consideration of the Committee is to think about the impact of legislating social procurement as something that will stand the test of time of governments coming and going so that you do not move back and forth in terms of how you define value for money as simply being the cost and quality of product. If the Parliament legislates in the same way that Parliament legislated in 2018 to set minimum local content requirements for Government in relation to, you know, sourcing steel and other services locally and supporting local businesses and providing jobs, is there not an opportunity potentially at some point in the future to start a process which might integrate social procurement into the purchasing of Government and then, beyond that, what do you do with local government, who are big purchasers as well in communities where every community, sadly, is experiencing the challenges of homelessness?

So by way of an opening submission I wanted to sort of build on what you heard from HoMie related to Government, related to the opportunities that I see and put a couple of recommendations there for you to consider as part of your deliberations as you are looking for the solutions—which are not easy to find. I will stop there.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Wade. It sounds like you are busier than ever.

Mr NOONAN: There is life after Parliament, I can assure you—and before.

The CHAIR: With some of the stories I have been hearing, particularly from some of the Aboriginal employment organisations that have been involved in some of these social procurement programs, quite often the work is limited, so they will be under contract and then they are no longer employed over the summer months. Do you think there is a way that we can ensure that in ticking those boxes, as it were, for those larger organisations, there is quality in that and there is a long-term employment approach in that, that they are not ticking those boxes with a whole bunch of casual staff, that ticks the box but then those people are back into unemployment at the end?

Mr NOONAN: Yes, look, it is a good observation to make, because what happens with head contractors is that they then engage subcontractors, and those subcontractors are engaged essentially when a level crossing is being removed and a line is shut for a period of time. There is a flex-up, if you like, of hours that are required to basically ensure that there is a limited impact on the travelling public. So by its nature there is a level of casualisation in the workforce, although I would be cautious to look at this as a tick-the-box exercise, because notwithstanding the casualised nature of some of the work that is going on, it is still a work opportunity that is being created because a government policy says it must.

Again, it is early days, so you are talking about a policy that is just a little bit over 12 months old. I actually think that there is an opportunity to better integrate training and skill development or skill attainment during the periods in which workers might be not engaged for as many hours. So rather than take on workers, even indirectly, what competencies can a worker get—because when the project is all done and they are looking for work elsewhere, if they have a certificate II, even, in a particular competency and they have work experience, their capacity, if you like, is going to be far greater and their attractiveness to other employers will be far greater. That is a way to mature a policy like that, which I think might in some way overcome essentially the scenario that you are putting.

The CHAIR: Yes. Thank you. I have got more questions, but—

Dr KIEU: It is nice to meet you for the first time.

Mr NOONAN: Yes.

Dr KIEU: I am very much interested in the priority jobseekers, particularly in the west. I must say I was a Vietnamese refugee who came here some time ago, and it is very good to hear your recommendation about the social procurement from the government at all levels. One of our ministers, Ben Carroll, has initiated trying to match the people who have just been released from custody and trying to get some of the integration back into society to some of the employment there. One question I would like to seek your insight into is: what are the barriers for such a procurement—maybe the skill matching, the long training time—and on the side of the people, is there enough motivation in some cases as to whether they would like to take up some jobs with a long training time only to be employed casually for a short while and so on? What type of barriers can you see in terms of that proposed policy you have been mentioning?

Mr NOONAN: Yes, look, there is a lot in that question. If you look at the west right now, you have got a tunnel being built—I think. You have got a hospital to be built. You have got an airport rail line coming at some point. You have got level crossings being removed. You have got a major package of road infrastructure upgrades happening. There are lots of workers required for those various projects, and each of those projects will have social procurement requirements attached to those contracts. So in a sense when you are talking to those contractors their main occupation is about delivering those projects in line with their contract requirements. They are not necessarily specialists in dealing with the social procurement side, if you like, although they are increasingly engaging people who have now got titles of inclusion manager and social procurement director—they are finding people to assist them. But the pool of organisations—employment services—is very vast, and therefore it can be bit of a maze to work their way through. The key, I think, from the outset in their contract arrangements with government is to be really clear and for government to be really

clear about whether those targets are reasonable and achievable before you even start thinking about the candidates or the businesses that you may engage to fulfil those contract arrangements.

When you look at what I call the matrix of risk, in some respects if you look at a young person who has been in trouble with the law and may live in Melbourne's west, who might be at risk of being incarcerated, the value of finding them a better opportunity than a person who has been retrenched, who is struggling to rejoin the workforce, the impact for the state in terms of taking those two people on is significant, but the impact of taking a young person on who might be at risk of being incarcerated for a long period of time—the value, essentially, for the state, for the community and for the individual concerned—is enormous.

What present as barriers often are that some of those young people may not be able to get onto a worksite because they have a criminal record. So questions need to be asked, I think, about whether that is a bit of an artificial blocker or barrier for a young person. I am not suggesting that these things are not significant, but I think sometimes these things become standards in contracts which can lock people out. I think that there has got to be an assessment for people around their language, literacy and numeracy skills, which is a big challenge. I think that sometimes there needs to be some flexibility around the type of engagement that that person may in fact be suitable to have. So that is where the social enterprise model is a tremendous pathway potentially for someone to work on a social enterprise and then pathway into a full-time job working for a major contractor or their subcontract partners. So it is just as valuable, if you like, for a major contractor to use a social enterprise that they know targets the sort of people that the state—you as parliamentarians—want to help. But if that is contracted, if you like, it is well targeted around those areas of greatest need—and I would argue homelessness is one of those areas of greatest need in our community—that is going to make a material difference, I think, over the longer term.

The great thing about what is happening in Victoria at the moment, for many reasons—population growth in the western region of Melbourne—is that there is long-run work, so you start to join up the projects in terms of pathwaying people who have worked on one project to work on another depending on who the head contractor is. So it is a relatively long answer to a long question that you do ask because it is multifaceted, but you can see the potential that gets created essentially, that I think most people would support in terms of that purchasing power being used to try and overcome those barriers in the first instance.

Ms LOVELL: Sorry, I still did not get from that about the skills matching. Who is actually going to do the skills matching?

Mr NOONAN: I think it is left to the organisations who are either the social enterprises or the employment network or service providers. They have got to basically put the right candidates before the employers or the contractors. It is their responsibility really, as I see it.

Ms LOVELL: Just asking about the organisation that you are representing, WoMEDA, what are you actually doing in engaging with the kids who experience homelessness in the west and engaging them in opportunities?

Mr NOONAN: So the West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance was formed in 2017. It is a very small organisation. I work a day a week for WoMEDA as the Executive Director. Steve Bracks is our chair. Peter Dawkins, the vice-chancellor of Victoria University, is the deputy chair. Our task in many respects in the work that we do and the reports that we produce is about very specifically targeting economic development job opportunities for Melbourne's west. So when the government made a decision, for example, to build a new hospital in Footscray, our paper argued that the new hospital should be built alongside the university campus so that you would have university and hospital side by side—so you would create the Monash example.

Similarly with the airport rail through Sunshine, we are looking at Sunshine now through different eyes, if you like, about what are the job opportunities that should be generated. We are not as an organisation necessarily on the front line working with homeless services in the west. Our job as WoMEDA is to look at the opportunities essentially that have been created around infrastructure to try and shape policy thinkers. For example, one of the things that we have put in our Sunshine report is that we have got a concentration of prisons in Melbourne's west. Most of the department of justice corrections workforce that does not work in prisons is based here in the

city. Why is it on a fast-speed rail link, for example, out to Sunshine? Why couldn't you move and have a government business office, for example, that has some of those corrections staff who work in the city out in Sunshine, because we have not got enough professional services types of job? And that would also be a great connector for regional Victoria to bring people quickly into Sunshine who could do a commute if they wish to.

We have made some suggestions that there is an opportunity around social procurement from a WoMEDA point of view to look at those major projects and be relatively sophisticated about it. I think that government is increasingly thinking about some of those projects in the west and some of the local environmental challenges, if you like, and social challenges to try and create some legacy outcomes beyond the building of those pieces of infrastructure. So the WoMEDA role—yes, I also serve that organisation, but it is less about working more directly. That is why I sort of reference the other roles that I am doing.

Mr BARTON: Good morning, Wade.

Mr NOONAN: Good morning, Rod.

Mr BARTON: Just so I am clear, currently these targets are not legislated, so it is a voluntary target. Is that how we understand it?

Mr NOONAN: It is a good question. They are not legislated, but it is government purchasing policy. So when they put out a tender and you wish to bid for that work or build something, you must incorporate social procurement targets within your bid. Those offerings, if you like, are weighted against essentially a matrix of assessments that are made before a preferred bidder is selected. So if you do not have that in your bid, you are essentially putting in a bid that leaves out—

Mr BARTON: A weaker bid.

Mr NOONAN: Yes, essentially your bid is weakened by ignoring that. But to go to your question a little bit further, what used to happen is: content that went onto these major projects was not legislated—so where you get your steel from, where you get your raw materials from, where you get your technology from. That used to be a policy once—and expected—but in order to advance Victorian and Australian businesses the Parliament determined that that should be legislated under the Victorian Industry Participation Policy, which has been supported by all parties, in the Parliament at least.

Mr BARTON: Right. Coincidentally, I was out talking to Crown College, and they have a lot of social enterprise for disadvantaged groups doing that. Do we need to take half a step to the left, have a bigger stick and make these big companies do it?

Mr NOONAN: Look, I do not think a big-stick approach works in this situation. I think most businesses recognise that they need to be reflective of the community that they are operating in. Therefore, increasingly I think particularly young people who are socially conscious are starting to determine where they want to work, which businesses they want to buy from and which businesses they might want to invest in in the future based on whether they believe that they are good corporate citizens. I think we all recognise corporate social responsibility is a way for businesses to live and explain their values. I think what social procurement offers is something that is new that is more empowering, I think, and that is its value.

I think the challenge for government in relation to this area is: government traditionally are about providing grants and services, and we all know that there is never enough money to go into areas like this. I think government partnering with businesses now and getting them to work with government and the community to try and tackle some of the social issues is an interesting new model which is starting to play out through social procurement. If HoMie were to expand their business, for example, in the Geelong area, as I heard Ms Lovell refer to, what are the sort of government enterprises or businesses down in Geelong who may need clothing, for example? Where do they get that from? I think there are some interesting questions that start to emerge, but I do not think necessarily the big stick approach.

Mr BARTON: Maybe not a big stick, more we encourage them.

Mr NOONAN: And I think the way to do that is to try and mature an approach through your purchasing and also talk to those that do business with you as well about them taking a similar approach. I work at RMIT University; I do not believe any university in the state currently has a social procurement policy—

Mr BARTON: Really?

Mr NOONAN: even though they are enterprises with billion-dollar turnovers and they have got students coming through the door. And I think students, if they had a choice between purchasing something from an enterprise that they know is providing help to young people or homeless people over an enterprise that is not, would probably make consciously that choice. I think that is the shift that we are in, and that is why I think there is great opportunity for government to lead but also to try and have others model behaviour, which is a pretty extraordinary thing to say because it is usually the other way around.

Mr BARTON: Thanks, Wade.

The CHAIR: Just with some of your earlier comments that refugees with high skills or retrenched workers are obviously an easier cohort of workers that fit that social procurement: would you recommend in the weighting that we do in that matrix that we actually, with some of those other cohorts of people, which might be people leaving the justice system or people at risk of homelessness, as part of that procurement formula provide greater weighting to those areas?

Mr NOONAN: I like the way you think. It is one of the reasons that I went out and started this initiative called Out for Good. I wanted to try and raise the profile of young people who had been in and out of the justice system, whether they lived in country Victoria or Melbourne, simply because I recognised that young people who have been in and out of the justice system, many of them who are from an entrenched disadvantaged background and who have probably experienced or are experiencing homelessness, trying to get them into work is really challenging compared to other workers. I think it is an interesting proposition you put and it is one of the reasons why I am recommending to you that government could consider the very issue that you are talking about, because I think it is a live one and I recognise that if you were looking at delivering a project in Victoria that had 1000 workers required, and let us say your social procurement delivered 100 jobs for those workers, would it be valuable in every case to reserve some of your spend for the more difficult cohorts, the more difficult workers, either through indirect engagement through a social enterprise or directly? I think I would argue that it probably is. I think we have got to be clear, and this is where the assessment should be done, about the capability of the sector to be able to respond to that in such a way that it does not undermine the integrity of what the policy actually exists for.

The CHAIR: I think that is a very good point and I think, hearing from HoMie, that the sort of support that they were offering those young people was a really important component of it. Thinking that government is also one of the biggest employers, obviously, should we also be recommending that the government departments and government agencies also put this into their employment strategies?

Mr NOONAN: Again, Chair, I think your brain is drifting into really creative areas. I think I picked out that one figure of government departments last year spending more than \$7 million with 70 certified social enterprises, so the practice is there. That does not mean that you will get the same figure or greater this year. I think that the direct engagement—there are a couple of good programs that exist to take on young people through traineeships. I may not be terming that—it is a two-year program. Those sorts of programs are really very, very valuable, and the public sector—you are right—are very large employers of people and therefore can potentially take some workers who may be working for a social enterprise, for example, into their ranks. And the great thing about that is then they get the skill attainment, which is the point that you raised a bit earlier. So yes, it should be absolutely live in their mind about how to do this. Again I think those sorts of reviews, if you like, or those sorts of recommendations that might come from this Committee might be really easy for government to take as a trigger to do them.

The CHAIR: Certainly previously we did the inquiry into spent convictions, and some of our recommendations really are about removing that historical conviction as a barrier to employment, which we certainly heard in Shepparton was considerable and in fact the main reason people were not being employed.

Mr NOONAN: And I commend you on that inquiry. I think it is a really valuable piece of work.

Dr CUMMING: Hi, Wade. My apologies for coming in late. Obviously we have very high youth unemployment in the west. My question is around the multicultural community and their difficulty at the moment—youth as well as the multicultural community—getting those opportunities for employment. Is there something in the way of the programs that you are offering or with Victoria University or RMIT that could actually help? Are there some recommendations that we could possibly put in for the multicultural young people that we have in the western suburbs?

Mr NOONAN: The organisations I work for, with the exception of JobsBank and Out for Good, which I referenced earlier in my opening remarks, we are actively looking to assist young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds to get job opportunities wherever. So you may have missed it: we have just placed a number of people at the Australian Open. We are going to place more at the grand prix. They are not jobs for life, but they are jobs and things that will help them on their way. I think the greatest opportunity in Melbourne's west right now, to be frank with you, is the infrastructure pipeline. I am aware that a number of the bidders who are looking to build the Footscray Hospital are very actively engaging with community organisations in Melbourne's west, as there is a bidding process on, who are looking to target the very needy communities around these opportunities. Again, do you put a particular weighting on one worker over the other? There are some things for us I think collectively to grapple with in that regard. But I think that the issues you raise from a government point of view are to use their purchasing power not just with major infrastructure but to actually reach into communities such as Melbourne's west, such as the ethnically diverse, such as young people—and there are plenty around places like Footscray and Sunshine and others—where with the right level of organisation and with the guaranteed jobs the only thing that really needs to be done in a meaningful way is the skill attainment and the matching.

So I think that that is a really big opportunity. If you look at airport rail—I do not know; let us set aside where the pathway for all of that will go—it will be the largest transport infrastructure project I think in the state's history. Ten, 13, 17 billion—it will provide years and years of work. If there are some fairly ambitious targets around engaging workers that you referred to, I think not only will they get work there but they will build the skills in order to work well and truly after that project has finished. So that would be what I would be thinking about in terms of how to approach that.

Dr CUMMING: The incentivisation of that in the way of businesses: that has been done in the past, but do you think that is something that should be recommended, especially with our multicultural community or our youth in the west, because I have just not seen that diversity in our coffee shops or in a lot of workplaces.

Mr NOONAN: So I think in terms of engagement of businesses, the opportunity here is about those businesses whose motivation is social impact. So the general procurement that government uses gives favourable arrangements to local businesses generally. Whether it is to the shopkeeper, that is a bit indirect as a favourable arrangement. It is more about whether you more directly provide a good or service which is used on a project. But I think the area of social procurement is where you can engage enterprises and organisations who may put some job readiness into young people. They might help them with their language and literacy. All they are looking for is a pathway essentially into what you are talking about, whether that is directly onto a project or into a contract arrangement the government provides. But that is the pathway I think that is shifting away from a model where government through its services tries to tackle this very big challenge in a way that there are never enough funds for, to actually shifting it to its purchasing power and engaging the community and businesses to assist them in that process, and there is a lot of goodwill out there. That is my experience.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Wade. I think you and the first two witnesses today have really provided some really solid preventative measures. As I said, you will get a transcript, obviously—

Mr NOONAN: Terrific.

The CHAIR: which you will enjoy reading no doubt. Thank you very much for your time and thank you for all the work you are doing in our community now.

Mr NOONAN: Thanks, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity, and good luck with your Inquiry.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.