CORRECTED VERSION

RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the extent and nature of disadvantage and inequity in rural and regional Victoria

Maryborough - 11 May 2010

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Mr Graem Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, Castlemaine Health
The CHAIR --- Thank you, Graem, for attending today. All evidence given is recorded for the record and all evidence given today is protected by Parliamentary privilege, although any comments repeated outside the precinct are not covered by Parliamentary privilege.

Before we get started, can you just give us your name and address and the name of the organisation that you are representing, and then it's over to you for your presentation.

Mr KELLY --- My name is Graem Kelly, and I am Chief Executive Officer for Castlemaine Health as well as Maldon Hospital. My address is [detail removed].

The CHAIR --- Well done. Over to you, Graem.

Mr KELLY --- Just as a first note, I have come more generically, not trying to bash drums or seek dollars or anything like that. I am just bringing out from my own experiences in a previous life as CEO of Robinvale District Health Services and an instigator of the So Great Project up there, as well as coming into a community which is quite different but, with significant issues of its own.

I do have some concern that the very nature of the way you worded your committee, The Extent and Nature of Disadvantage and Inequity, rather than put a positive slant on opportunities to develop social capital and community capacity, would have probably been a better way to approach it.

Ms DARVENIZA --- I agree with you on that. It is a very, very negatively framed Terms of Reference. Funny about that.

Mr VOGELS --- It is.

Mr KELLY --- Because all you're going to get is everybody approaching you with the squeaky wheel principle, trying to drag dollars out of you.

Ms DARVENIZA - - - No, you are right on there, you are right on there, Graem.

Mr KELLY - - - I would rather say, well, if you're seeking opportunity, how are you going to build in out of this opportunity some sustainability and future progress, so that you don't have to come cap in hand to us again.

Ms DARVENIZA --- And even building on things that have already worked and how they've worked and maybe where the gaps are.

Mr KELLY --- And it was interesting to note you were discussing - - sometimes the principle - and I've worked with that - when they had the community capacity building initiative - and I'm not picking on any specific government, but I think government's intent often gets let down by the bureaucratic, structural processes that they actually put in place. Because, I was successful in putting a submission in on behalf of Robinvale with the council, and one of the outcomes there, we were the 11th back in that historical position, $300,000 to go into a community, and did didly-squat. The reason being, the reason we put in was we were a community, as you would have seen when you were at Robinvale, at disadvantage because of its cultural mix. But, it had opportunity for governmental investment to build capacity so it could achieve its optimal outcomes. The failure was that the bureaucracy actually followed it up, and followed a detailed only retentive process that
just was stifling, and achieved bugger all. So $300,000 of your and my taxpayer dollars went nowhere. And, in fact, the bureaucratic processes then went to self protection mode in terms of some of the processes they actually set up, and they would scream out success, where I would think it was ultimately mediocrity in terms of the results achieved.

So, sometimes I think as leaders in terms of governmental positions - and it doesn't matter which political loop you come from - is the actual structure of which departments take your fundamentals out there and deliver them to these communities which don't have the voice to bring the concerns past that bureaucracy, your intent gets lost and is actually stifled. So I just make that notes, because that was some of the stuff, and the flexibility you talk about, generally bureaucracies are all about cosseting some ability - - arse covering. They all worry about the senior bureaucrat above them, holding them to account, that they haven't effectively managed their dollars, which drowns out the general intent often of the political wish.

In terms of Castlemaine itself, it's a community very similar to Maryborough in terms of it's in the top ten percent of social disadvantage. And, I felt it important to bring Castlemaine up from own experience in terms of its a cafe latte lifestyle, tree change type environment, and in terms of political assessment, often gets lost in the shadow of its close cousin in terms of Bendigo, which, in some cases, is right, and in some cases it actually drowns out the need. And, I give a case in point from my own services. In terms of CADAG, which is emergency housing, in three months we achieved twelve months output totals in terms of attention to clients.

On some of these other factors, we often get as a response from government departments, not government itself, that it is too easy to say well, Bendigo is just half an hour down the road, when you fact Bendigo, as like most other service providers, actually is fairly under the pump trying to address its own needs, and to suggest that it could actually expand that is often a useful but not useful excuse in terms of putting up for communities like Castlemaine.

Ms DARVENIZA --- But, there would be a lot of specialist services - -

Mr KELLY --- Don't disagree - -

Ms DARVENIZA --- That are available you know, half an hour down the road, 20 minutes, half an hour down the road from Bendigo, if you live at Castlemaine, that, you know, lots of other smaller communities that we see around rural and regional Victoria, that you know, just don't have that luxury.

Mr KELLY --- And I agree, and look, in some facets, Castlemaine is probably overserviced, and in others facets it's under serviced. I'm not trying to be politically minded in terms of the sense, just in the sense that service orientation often loses its sense. I'll get to that, where in fact, the silo mentality actually creates the problems of social disadvantage in some context.

I think one of the principal issues in terms of taking account of social disadvantage and communities that are in dire help, is that there are often, as we know from the literature and research, lacking leadership, lacking a political voice, lacking strength and often don't have the scope or capacity to raise to a level of acknowledgement past the systems themselves. Typically, one of the issues I found again, reflecting on the So Great process when the departments tried to buy in to actually understand - and you saw how isolated that community was - is that one of the simple projects I put to State Government at that time - the State Government departments - was that - - so it was dealing with the bureaucracies themselves - was for them just to identify what programs actually came in and were funding outcomes into the community.
Well, can I tell you, not one of the departments could effectively describe what funds were crossing. They could on a direct dollar, but where it was potentially sub-regionally or regionally, supposedly to have an influence into the community they were just at a loss. The mapping process was a dire disgrace, if I can put it that way. That was only because within themselves, they have silo mentalities by which they had difficulties in being able to in a short timeframe be able to communicate from one group to the next what each program was doing. So, there was a breakdown in communication just in one of the big bureaucracies in being able to understand what the other parts of that bureaucracy were doing.

That creates some real difficulty in terms of communities, and in community capacity building, of which I did a large amount of research and involvement in - of course the tenets of capacity building are built on education, health, policing, local government etc. At a local level, the experience I had, even in a small community such as Robinvale as distinct from Castlemaine, which is probably even worse, because I've only been there a short time, is that, in fact, those agencies weren't communicating even at a local level, and weren't aware of where strategically, their strategic intent was going, how they could share or potentially save from being duplicative or in fact, where they could make savings and comparatively help each other in terms of their roles in the community.

Robinvale was difficult in terms of its isolation - -

Ms DARVENIZA --- We have been to Robinvale and I have heard from Robinvale and I mean I am happy for you to spend your time talking about Robinvale, but really, we're here to talk about this neck of the woods. And, I, personally, would find it more helpful if you focused on where we are, rather than where we were.

Mr KELLY --- That's fine. Castlemaine itself has got much the same problems in terms of pulling together some of those - -

The CHAIR --- Graem, just on that, the reason why you were targeted by this committee was because of your knowledge of both Robinvale and Castlemaine, so feel free to go back and forward between the comparisons, analogies, but we need to hear an outsider's voice of that area as well.

Mr KELLY --- While I am reflecting on Robinvale, I'm actually talking about the systems processes. In fact, in terms of Castlemaine, exactly the same principles exist there.

For example, I was quite surprised in terms of the hospital having a $32 million budget, while the local council has a $22 million budget. So, any insight into that sort of capacity would suggest that there is a large amount of capacity within the organisation of a health service, which may not be available to the local council, given its size and capacity and the range of services it has. But, of course, as the systems are put in place at the moment, we develop silo mentalities in which we go upwards through the departments, and the ability to actually cross-fertilise and discuss where strategic alignment or potential savings or reduction of duplication etc could occur, is not actively supported at this point in time, because it's not been on the agenda. Often if you go to even bigger agencies - and I could compare the Bendigos etc of the world - they are significant entities of their own, and so politically carry a lot of weight and a lot of responsibility in terms of legal responsibilities.

So, from learnings, I would also suggest that local government is the right tool in which to represent that local community capacity building. What's happening is the silos are building this transient sort of lack of communication across the community level, and as we know from a lot of the research, even into community
planning in large suburbs etc, the community engagement in terms of the disadvantage etc is very difficult. None so less in terms of communities being able to put their whole of community sort of approach and look at a balanced community.

Anybody that chooses to live in a suburb, a community or a town etc, looks at that great complex range of services and says generally cross a level I would expect X to be in a small country town. People are sensible in terms of what they are going to receive in a small country town. Where it becomes a problem is where the equilibrium goes out of whack, where they've probably got a good school or they've got poor policing, they've got a poor school or a poor health service, and some of those aspects then detract and actually start the downward spiral in terms of the community's capacity to move forward.

So, I think some of what comes from this inquiry should be about the question about how do we get communities to be treated as communities as a whole, because treating them in the silo mentality, disenfranchises a number of critical issues being concerned, and the capacity for the agencies not to only come so-called cap in hand to look for funds, but actually drive themselves to look at themselves about where, through their network of their own services, build up capacity within their own brief, because often they don't. Often there is duplication, and successive waste in certain areas, because the political hook of the day pumps dollars into a certain area, and opportunity can sometimes be wasted. In terms of the whole of community approach, the question is you may take an opportunity that may be, in palliative care, because the dollars are there, but is that the principle - - the highest principled thing that that community needs to address?

Now, that brings a greater complex question as to how the government then allowed communities to engage in a more bucket sort of approach. As I have already seen from health, they accounted for smaller rural hospitals not being able to work in this widget type base and case mix etc and say, all right, well, you reflect on the community's need. Let's start to reflect how you best address that. That's what I heard in the earlier discussion that you were pointing out in terms of shires etc, that some of these programs are very pointed and very directed in terms of what their opportunities are that arise. But, when you consider that is compounded against those silos that occur across all the pillars of the community into addressing a disadvantage, it's multiplied. And, so, that leaves a real dilemma in terms of how do you get that whole of community sorted and on the same page, so that the dollars you're investing don't build the best school, but behind the scene, the police station is falling down, and the hospital is falling down, and at the end of the day, your investment is wasted.

So, some of this is also, you know, about well, how do we get a bit better in measuring and sensibly adjusting it? And, as you know from the Mildura experience - I'm not sure whether you went up to Mildura in terms of a lot of social determinants, they're actually starting to develop further outcome based type things to actually see whether the string pulling, of which government funding does adjust things, is actually having an overall impact across the spectrum of social content of that community, especially out in that suburb that's there.

So, that's where I was wanting to put a - - the needs to be some questioning. And, then, it beckons the question of how effective local government is in terms of, basically, representing those tenets of education, health, and those other fields, when, in fact, they often aren't engaged in those arenas. And, one would question whether, in fact, they need to be more actively engaged in those principles.

And, then, I reflect on the Kennett years and the lack of probably vocal outrage in terms of the removal of that so-called what we all thought was a third tier of democracy in terms of this community, and yet, you actually heard a lot of commentary that was favourable of, in some quarters, the appointments that were made, and that, in fact some councils went forward. Now, I am making a generalisation in terms of that. I'm sure there was actually negative outcomes in other communities.
But, it would suggest that in this era we need to consider probably getting local government a bit more functional, and a little bit more engaged in the totality of the community, and actually start to have the principles out of the health services, the TAFEs, the schools etc, the police etc engage with local government in terms of their strategic planning processes, and possibly they become the vanguards of actually ensuring that those representations that are made through those agencies have a little bit more engagement from local government.

That brings the question about how you get local government as effective as it should be, given that we've see some real circus acts in terms of local government. And, one would suggest that maybe we need to think about that some of that - and I reflect, because I'm also a little bit more businesslike in terms of management - reflect on the non-executive and executive roles that often most commercial boards now bring on, where they actually have offices, the CFOs, the CEO's etc, actively engaged on their boards.

So, why wouldn't you bring your representatives of your schools, your police and that. on to your local council, remain the half plus one with council being democratically elected to maintain that stalwart representation, and then engage that as your forum for actually engaging, and how the whole of community planning engages.

I think there needs to be some challenging of the current principles that are setting our local government agendas, and I feel comfortable in saying that, given that there was a lack of response or terseness, given that reflection of what happened in that local government withdrawals that occurred in the Kennett years, and the fact that there were benefits gained in some quarters. It says that we, as a state, need to take some opportunity to reflect on the learnings, and both from the conservative and reform side, say that there is opportunity in a measured way to actually take some purpose out of this, and actually improve things, rather than close a blank eye, whether it was from one political ilk or the other. It really doesn't matter. There's learnings to be made. And, so, I would suggest that that's about drawing the information to address the capacity building, the social capital development, and then developing in terms of a positive outlook from rather the squeaky wheel approach of the squeaky wheel gets the dollars, say become outcome focused and say to those communities, yes, we'll help you with transition, but we want to see your strategic plan, setting the agenda, about how you're going to become sustainable.

But, government also needs to take a place and actually stand up strongly and say, well, we need to be confident you're going to do that and make some hard decisions as well. Because there are going to be places, as we know, that have typically fallen over. I think there needs to be some sort of declaration in some areas, that you will be limited in the ability and the capacity to support certain types of areas in their development. You may structure it so that you can focus on where their skills and their positive opportunities lie, clearly defining where they are coming to - - appropriately banging their drum, and not waste their time in other quarters, trying to develop some arty-farty club, that at the end of the day, at the end of the rail line, is never going to get off and make a success of itself. I'm only using that as a generic sort of thing.

Ms DARVENIZA --- You're not suggesting that is happening here?

Mr KELLY --- No, no, no, no, I'm just saying that often sometimes with political will, there's a little bit of a handout, and it's like feeding a starving dog, there's a little bit of you know, food given, and at the end of the day, the dog still starves. I think we need to be sensible in those sort of approaches.

The CHAIR --- So Graem, we'll get a few questions in. I just want to be clear about where you're
coming from. I immediately think of the Regional Managers Forum where say Penny Armitage comes up from Melbourne and she sits in Loddon Mallee and they hear from the top health executive, they hear from the top educator in town, and the head of all the departments, meet with the CEO, maybe the Mayor of Local Government, and they have their Regional Managers Forum. But, what you appear to be saying is that you can take that model and bring it down another whole cog, and just at Mt Alexander Shire, involve that local government there with the top cop in Castlemaine, the top health executive in Castlemaine, the top maybe two principals out of the two schools in Castlemaine, and all of a sudden, there you have your community forum, which actually then hopefully will be taking a youth worker that may be employed by the health group, but actually put into the Education Department to - -

Mr KELLY --- If that was a priority.

The CHAIR --- If that is what you thought, but it is an opportunity at a local level to actually work across the silos, through the silos, across departments, because the people in that community, the leaders in that community, have identified a better way of doing things.

Mr KELLY - - - Yes. Look, there's lots of ability to share resources. I used to share them with the police at present with Castlemaine. KR. I'm a great believer of also crossing that other line of the bridge to engaging with the business as well. And, they come to use and use our auditorium, for example, for a lot of their presentations. They're going to use us for health screening. So, there's a private/public mix in terms of those opportunities. But, often when people are stuck in - and let's face it, it's a particularly skill in terms of that larger, strategic big picture stuff, and stepping outside the blocks of dealing with day-to-day management responsibilities of your organisation, and looking at where you can build community capacity, and partner with other agencies.

For example, we were successful as the current Labor Government supported the MAIN Project, which actually brought together the KR, which is George Weston Foods now, Flow Serve, Victoria Carpets and ourselves, in terms of an energy saving project. Now, that's been a great success. Local government had a very limited opportunity to engage in that, but we were the four largest employers. I hope to build that further and build a network group up, which I've spoken to those CEO's about doing. But, it really should be driven by local government.

Ms DARVENIZA --- How did that happen? How did that come about?

Mr KELLY --- Well, it's the community itself. The social capital itself, it's a very tree change environment and there was a lot of government policy at the time that supported the opportunities in which to arrive at it.

Ms DARVENIZA --- So was there funding for that?

Mr KELLY --- There was a mixture of limited funding. The sustainability group was supported by State Government money. The CSIRO was supported through its own funding realms of supporting that. And, for example I will be reporting to the community just in the last six months with very simple type measures we have saved 20 percent in terms of power use, just changing light bulbs etc, etc.

Ms DARVENIZA --- Fantastic.

Mr KELLY --- But it's what it's allowing KR to do, George Weston Foods, is to look at them setting up
their own electricity plant. Now, it wouldn't work for us in terms of our relationship, but it's forced us to consider where we may be able to share opportunities where it appears. We're sharing water resources - which would have been a waste product for us - down to the local pool. We're sharing as I say a lot of our facility use that we feel fit into the ilk of building community capacity.

The other areas that I believe will build out of that is shared HR responsibilities, shared advertising, shared opportunities to market in terms of the employment opportunities that we get there.

One of the difficulties for the Castlemaine community is that because it is a tree change environment, the KR, if I take them as an example, 60 percent of their workforce don't live in the local area, so there's a large loss of local multiplying effect of that dollar staying in the local community. So, Castlemaine is, in fact, in a general sense, dearer to live in than Bendigo. But, the problem is it's got a very strong manufacturing base, so a lot of its capacity in terms of future development is about that, and it is developing, but there's lost opportunity in keeping that wealth within its boundaries. So, there needs to be a focus, and this is what I say. Often it's not just about disadvantage. We should be saying, well, where is our opportunity for our investment to actually lead to positive change. And one would consider a community like Castlemaine with all its natural attributes, its manufacturing base etc, then you would say where the deficits lie in terms of, wait a second, there's no housing in terms of the lower income. What are we going to do about that and how do we address that, given that this community has all these benefits of closeness to a railway line, effectively being able to go to Bendigo, to Melbourne, etc. It has a lot of positives, but how do we, with a little bit of stimulation, actually make this bloom even further. Because, then you know that your investment will lead to a greater multiplying effect. Success is made on its own, so a lot of that should come from that.

**Mr VOGELS ---** Have you managed to - and you might be doing it - - you're the hospital and health services. Do you work with the local council and delivered those services?

**Mr KELLY ---** We have done some projects with them, shared responses. We have just done a project of training their home care workers in delivering medications, in delivering with our podiatry services some foot care initiatives. So, it's about giving some shared learnings to where the right role is in the right place rather than just try to be the provider for all things. It overcomes a lot of the union demarcation that sometimes occurs or specialist demarcations that occur, where you can build some generalist capacity and give better service outcomes there at a reasonable rate and in the right place and in the right time. So, yes, we are working in some of those capacities as well.

**Mr VOGELS ---** If you are doing that, it also stops two people turning up at the same place at the same time, one for the health service, one from the shire, and if it was all working in together, you have one each of those sorts of services.

**Mr KELLY ---** Yes. We do that effectively now.

**Ms TIERNEY ---** It is a little bit unfair actually to go into a situation of asking questions with what you've presented. I think it really begs us to have a proper, full discussion, so questions are a little bit sort of difficult.

I suppose what comes to mind, taking up Damian's point about the Regional Management Forums, but also of course now that the RDAs have been set up that you could replicate that in terms of, say for example, a regional centre, have a community reference group to the local council, and then possibly have town reference group's as well and then you have to think that through a lot in terms of how they connect up and what is their
status, and how flexible, informal or formal etc. I think it has some legs to it in terms of trying to ensure that there is a grassroots mechanism in terms of accountability. But, at the same time I think it is important for communities to also understand there is responsibility with being involved in determining local priorities, and is not just amber, amber, amber, amber. And that's really difficult when you don't understand what the Local Government does, what the State Government does and what the Federal Government does. And, I think in so many ways all of our jobs would be so much simpler if we were taught at school the basic functions of government. I mean, they soon get our taxes and our rate money but, we really don't know what they are supposed to be doing, let alone question whether they are doing it correctly in terms of having that debate about silos, until, you know, we are at this sort of level. It is absolutely ludicrous, I think.

I think that that fosters disadvantage in so many ways because we are not educated in operating in a political or a community way at any level.

**Mr Kelly*** --- One of the dramas that I went through in terms of setting up a So Great project for learnings, was the question was asked, well, how do you come forward and say you represent the community? You're the CEO of the hospital, the principal of a school etc. There seems to be some lack of acknowledgement that they are answerable to their boards and their councils etc. And that, in fact, these people are there because they are, and in a general sense because you will always have some that fail and some that don't, but, in the main most will represent that voice, because that is what they are charged to do. You're quite right, the general man on the street - and I deal with this in terms of health - - if I asked him what's he want for help today, if he's got a sore foot he wants a podiatrist. If he's got a sore head, he wants to see a neurologist. For god's sake, he's not there to set strategic intent for a community, and that's one of the failings that government often makes. You are asking people where it is not in their vision to be looking at these sort of things. They don't have the access to the research. They often don't have the time to acknowledge the complexity of the issues that they are dealing with. But, you have a series of individuals set in stone to represent those interests in terms of a lot of those, and they have to report back to their representative bodies about what they are doing in representing those interests.

So, sometimes there is a failing to recognise what positive attributes you have already got to draw on, but pull them together, rather than sitting them in single rooms with single visions and blinkered focuses on the races they're taking. Bring them together and say, look, you do have the right to represent that single interest. Now, we want you to consider that in terms of the broader community interest, and we need to make some balanced judgements, because, sitting in Melbourne we can't get a sense of what is a balanced point of view about what to adjust against, because how can you? You don't have that on the ground representation or sensibilities to get some sense of balance in it all. The policy funding gods becomes the primary driver, and they don't necessarily make sense when they are translated from one community to the next, as we all know, and that's why. Because, there is no input from those levels to bring justice to it all.

**Ms Lovell*** --- Graem, you talked about Castlemaine's proximity to Bendigo and the problems that leads to Bendigo having its own priorities and that. We have heard at a number off the sessions we have run in Benalla, and even this morning about community programs that are delivered by a service provider that might be located in Bendigo or Shepparton or Wangaratta, something like, but they deliver their services over several local government areas and I just wonder if you can tell - -

**Mr Kelly*** --- Do you know what the fundamental problem with that is? It is because they become targetted against outcomes. Often they are underfunded against the demand they are trying to service. As a manager that represents the interests of the service, I will not go out past a boundary by which I can meet your targets and introduce more costs, if that is what you're looking for me to represent against, because that's what
happens. When I set a cross border service up in terms of when I was doing Robinvale, I made it that it was a
commitment per day for the service being represented into those communities into New South Wales, into
Ouyen etc, because focusing on targets and widgets, builds in - - you actually set the agenda for the manager
of the service to start to say I've got a cost control. I have not got built into this that the commitment is to
service the outlying communities as strongly as it should be. Yes, it's on the piece of paper and the service
agreement, but, I can meet my full quota requirement by just delivering in within the city boundaries of the
major centre I sit in. So, it builds in by its very nature, especially as government tightens its realms after its
initial flush out there as things tighten to pull things back in. So, that's the difficulty. Also, the large agencies
- and I know from the Bendigo experience - I scratch my head sometimes why they just don't cream a
percentage off the top and use existing service providers to present services out there. It is as if there is
nothing else out there in those communities. Why the hell wouldn't - - a case in point is - - I don't want to be
harsh on Bendigo, and I don't know why it evolved, but there is a community options program house right
beside Swan Hill Hospital run by Bendigo Base. What in the hell are they doing running a separate service
when they could have paid or bought that service with content, local engagement and local enmeshing in terms
of how does it all fits in there. It just does not make sense at all.

Mr NARDELLA --- You talked about Robinvale. Is competition between the agencies or
organisations a reason for the non-co-operation you are detailing in Robinvale, or was it, which I thought it
was, a lack of leadership - - ?

Mr KELLY --- You're quite right. The more disadvantaged you get, of course the harder it is to
actually attract often people into those positions. And let's face it, in terms of a lot of the public services we
put out there, it can be seen as a death knell going back out to these rural communities, even if it's in terms of -
-

Mr NARDELLA --- Especially police, there is no career development, hospital CEOs - -

Mr KELLY --- Yeah, and building and some of - - no, it depends. So, you've got to overcome some of
that sort of stuff.

The reality is also in those disadvantaged communities, you are dealing with so many complex issues that the
day-to-day management stops you having that opportunity to actually look at that bigger picture stuff, and
that's part of the problem because you actually start to withdraw because if you have any pride in your work,
psychologically you become quite scarred in terms of the achievements you are making, especially if you have
in that experience a group of children say for a headmaster bashing christ out of the kid and it ends up in the
front page of the paper. How do you feel? You become fairly wounded and fairly withdrawn because you are
struggling to see where you fit in the world. So, some of that is a real issue often overlooked in terms of bad
luck, son, you go and do it. Good luck.

The CHAIR --- You have stimulated some thought in the committee. The transcript will be available
for you in a couple of weeks. Thank you very much for giving up your time this afternoon. We appreciate it.

Witness withdrew.