

LAW REFORM, DRUGS AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE

**Inquiry into the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly ice,
in Victoria**

Warrnambool — 3 March 2014

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Mr P. Mellas, Warrnambool Magistrates' Court.

The CHAIR—Thank you for your time this morning, Peter. You are from the Warrnambool Magistrates' Court and you are appearing before this public hearing of this joint parliamentary committee of the Victorian Parliament which has been referenced an inquiry into the supply and use of methamphetamines in Victoria, particularly ice. My understanding is you have been provided with some background in relation to the inquiry.

Mr MELLAS—Yes, I have seen the terms of reference.

The CHAIR—In the normal course also we do invite a verbal submission, a brief introductory statement, and then we would like to ask questions of you in relation to the work that you have done. Prior to all of that though I do need to read you the conditions under which you are providing evidence. Welcome to the public hearing of the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and further subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the Defamation Act 2005 and, where applicable, the provisions of reciprocal legislation in other Australian states and territories. It is important that you note that any comments you make outside the hearing, including effective repetition of what you have said in evidence, may not be afforded such privilege. Have you received and read the guide for witnesses presenting evidence to parliamentary committees.

Mr MELLAS—Yes, I have.

The CHAIR—It is also important to note that any action which seeks to impede or hinder a witness or threaten a witness for the evidence they would give or have given may constitute and be punishable as contempt of parliament. We are recording the evidence and will provide a proof version of the *Hansard* transcript at the earliest opportunity so you can correct it as appropriate. I would now like to invite you to make a verbal submission.

Mr MELLAS—Thank you. Firstly, I would like to thank the committee for asking me to appear today. I hope to be relatively brief. I think this is the last of the hearings that has been conducted in regional Victoria. You have had the benefit of a range of people across the state make submissions, including people in my position. I have only recently come to the area. I started here in Warrnambool at the start of the year, but prior to that I have sat in Gippsland for two years and have also been at Sunshine for two years, areas where there is a problem. Particularly in Sunshine for many years it had been opiate based abuse, but amphetamine use—methamphetamine use—had started to creep in when I left, and clearly Gippsland is an area where you would be aware—I think Magistrate Alsop appeared before you and he, in his inimitable way, had a pretty vivid description of the destruction that was being wrought by ice in that community.

The experience I have had here is really the same as what I have had in the other areas. Ice is a drug which has crept up on us in the sense that if you would speak to local police, which I have, they say they were aware of the problem starting to creep in about two years ago. It became apparent that people were starting to use it, it was becoming available. It may also be that there was a lag in understanding people's pattern abuse and who was using it and the impact it was having on certain offending behaviour. For example, there would be a period of time where the community has become alarmed at street violence. We have only just become aware of the connection between not only the alcohol that has been used but the alcohol in combination with something like amphetamine which leads to I think an increase in the amount of violence in individual incidents, and probably means that people who would ordinarily go out, have too much to drink, probably make idiots of themselves in some other way, for example, maybe getting caught swearing or behaving in an inappropriate way, end up becoming involved in more violent behaviour. No doubt you have heard evidence about that in relation to other communities.

My perspective on ice is that it has an impact on all levels of society. It is not only people who are disaffected or might be marginalised, although obviously they form a group within the ice

users. It covers a range of people. I have been trying to think of why. I have often used the terms—I think a couple of times I have used the term in court—where someone has pleaded guilty to trafficking or behaviour of that kind, it is accompanied by the sort of behaviour that I can only describe as being almost like out of the TV series *Breaking Bad*. I had a young man, 23 years of age, recently, pleaded guilty, thought it was a great idea to have photos of himself holding bags of ice on his phone, holding weapons, the whole gangster idea seems to have taken hold. This is a drug which has some kind of social mystique about it. It gives you social status, social credibility in amongst the people that you are moving about, and that is a problem.

I was talking to someone today, we have had periods of time, for example, where opiate use has been extreme and that coincided when the Taliban first took over in Afghanistan. Opium production went through the roof. Heroin became cheap. It was available in much stronger doses. It was flooding the country. But there is almost a social barrier to getting involved in heroin use. You have to use a needle. There is a perception of people who are heroin users as having problems. This drug is easy to use, it is easy to buy and it does not have, at least initially, some of the side effects of other drugs and it is not seen in the same way. The Gippsland experience for me was all about the number of people who were tradesmen using it, people who were working. The only thing I could put it down to was that you can go and put in a 12-hour shift after using ice. In fact you might be able to put in a 12-hour shift because you have been using ice. You cannot do that on a slab of beer. You cannot do that on some other drugs. There is a certain attraction from that point of view. There is no barrier to using it.

In my experience, in the short time I have been here, there is a similar pattern here where there are obvious groups of people who are—I put it in the range from recreational users who use it for the high it gives, use it because it does not knock them around, will use it occasionally, hopefully do not then drift into heavier, long-term use which causes all sorts of health and mental problems, particularly in relation to their ability to think—it causes brain damage basically—all the way through to those people who are mentally ill who are using it on top of or instead of prescription medication which makes them feel bad, makes them slow, clouds them, whereas with ice, all of a sudden they feel they can think more clearly and they think they are able to function day to day. There is a range of people in there.

The comment I have had from police about it is that it is an unusual drug in that people who have been using it can fall into categories of—they are at the stage where they see the harm it is causing and they are scared of it and they stop, all the way through to people who are quite happy to tell you that they are using. That is again a reflection I think of the way in which it is perceived amongst the people that are using it. They do not understand the harm.

In terms of what I do day to day, one of the things that is missing in this region is CISP, compared to Gippsland and Sunshine where they are the only two courts outside of Melbourne that have CISP. I think you are aware of the Court Integrated Services Program or Bail Support Program. Having come now to a region here where there is no service of that kind available, I am going to meet next week with WRAD, the local drug treatment service providers, trying to get other people to get at least an ad hoc system in place where we can refer people on, maybe develop that into a supervised bail type situation, because what I have found in relation to long-term alcohol, drug and other use, it has been of great experience to be working in courts of that kind where you can have people come in having committed offences, identify the cause of it and then supervise them over a period of time and then hopefully lead them out of the situation and the circumstances that has led them into that use.

I picked upon the comment you made, Mr Ramsay, in relation to rehab, those kinds of services, they are expensive to provide, they have probably come too late in some respects because there is entrenched use, there is probably a lot of damage already been done. The earlier you can at least address the issues which are leading into this type of drug use the better. Overall, I think I was alerted to it by Ms Cook, the concept of justice reinvestment. I think it is a relatively new phrase. It has come partly out of the United States but my view of that is it is a very fundamental and very simple proposition. If you can spend money

preventing a problem arising, or preventing something becoming a problem, you are going to spend less dealing with the consequences of it over time. It is a good use of economic resources, if you can identify good programs, good ways to go about it, and hopefully the committee will be able to, in its discussions and through the submissions it gets, do that in relation to this drug.

The CHAIR—Thank you, Peter. A couple of questions come to mind for me but I might defer to the deputy chair.

Mr SCHEFFER—Thank you for your presentation. I wonder in your experience—you have arrived this year—

Mr MELLAS—In this region, yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, in this region. Could you give us an account of what the stats say in courts, like, how many people present to you with ice-related difficulties, and also how that links in with other kinds of crimes. One of our interests is, for example, linked between the use of methamphetamines and violence or family violence or street fighting or whatever?

Mr MELLAS—In terms of giving you raw statistics I am not the best person to talk to about that. The court is probably not equipped to give you very good statistics about that. The court-linked system that records the offences for which people appear on, the mix of offences, I have to say, is a pretty crude way of doing it. It is an old MS-DOS based system. If you talk to the people from the Sentencing Advisory Council they would say it is difficult to extract that kind of information. I can give you my own day-to-day personal view of what happens and that is this: I have noticed an increase in the number of people appearing before the court simply on possession of ice. It would be where you might go a week without having anybody and then you would have three or four in a week in a list of this kind where, for argument's sake, here in Warrnambool there is one day of mentions which is about 30 to 40 matters on a Monday, and then you have Portland and Hamilton which are smaller lists with some other bits and pieces in them hearing this in Warrnambool at the end of the week.

From my perspective there has been an increase in numbers. We are not inundated but it has become noticeable. It used to be a lot of people on use, possess cannabis, or something else. Now it is ice turning up on routine intercepts. In the sense that it forms a part of the reasons for offending, I have dealt with probably two or three matters already this year, serious threat, assaults, where one of the factors that was identified in the plea was not only alcohol use but the fact that person had used ice. That of itself, when you look at their background, when you look at their history where there is no violence and there is no obvious—this is an older guy in his early 20s, solid family, no reasons to be behaving in that way and no history because you can sometimes see in someone's history there will be some drunk and disorderly, resist arrest, assault police, and then all of a sudden you have street assault. That makes more sense, from my point of view, in terms of where they are coming from, how they are thinking, but this was someone who had none of that.

Lots of people say he was someone who was calm, kind, easy to deal with, but here on this particular night behaved in a way which everybody around him was saying, 'It doesn't make sense.' The ice, I think, was the key ingredient. It is creeping into that. In terms of family violence, again very hard because the applications for intervention orders come in, there will be a narrative which will tell you that there has been difficulties in the relationship and there has been violence, but unless someone asks the question—and sometimes I have been able to and say, 'Look, is there a reason why your relationship has gone from being pretty good to all of a sudden now there's instances of violence?' The woman will usually volunteer, 'I think he's been using some ice.' You get it very much secondhand, and there is no opportunity to record it in that way, but it is out there, and if you have heard from people around Victoria you will know that is a factor and it affects people's behaviour.

Mr SCHEFFER—Incidentally, to finalise that, is there work being done on fixing up

the data-gathering system?

Mr MELLAS—You would have to speak to the people at the Magistrates' Court. They have been talking for a long time about updating it to a different type of system, maybe more sophisticated, easier to pull that kind of information, but I do not know that there is anything—

Mr SCHEFFER—You basically go on your notes and things.

Mr MELLAS—Yes, your own experience, what you see.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes, thank you.

Mr MELLAS—The people to talk to would be domestic violence services because they are talking to victims and they would probably be keeping better statistics about what the causes are, whether it is financial, whether it is drug-related, whether it is loss of employment, whether there were other issues. I would imagine that those organisations would have to as part of their funding.

Mr SCHEFFER—We have parents come to us and talk about how the courts, the police and the agencies are—I am not saying this is true but their experience is they are powerless and that people get off on all kinds of things. We know very few people read judgments and decisions and they are often not fully appreciative of the kinds of balances that a person in your position has to entertain in coming to a decision. Are there ways the courts describe how they come to a determination?

Mr MELLAS—When I hand down a decision, I mean, obviously our court is a summary court where there are a lot of matters listed every day, so you can only really give brief reasons. But I try and comment—particularly if there is an issue like ice which is an obvious one for the local community—for example, in relation to a trafficker, I will say that this type of offending harms the community. I do not want to tie myself down but there has to be a pretty good explanation to avoid a jail sentence, in my view, in those cases and I have made that pretty clear, I think. As much as you can you try and send that message out so that anybody thinking—that is a part of our role—of behaving in the same way, hopefully might think twice.

Mr SOUTHWICK—We have heard evidence that some of the dealers deliberately only keep a certain amount of the drug on them so that avoids any severe sentencing. How do you, as a magistrate, differentiate between those that are user-dealers versus those that are deliberately keeping only a certain amount on them, let's say, and what strategies do you think are potentially needed or what law reform might be needed in this particular area to circumvent the issue of those that are operating in this particular manner.

Mr MELLAS—That is a perennial question in any offending behaviour that comes before the court. We have a system which is adversarial and it relies on the parties who are making the case to put the evidence before the court. In relation to police who are presenting or prosecuting a trafficker, the responsibility is on them to put the material before the court. I might ask questions; it might be a case where I say, 'What quantities is it said that has been trafficked?' In many cases—and this is another aspect which is very interesting in relation to ice—the police are saying that people, other than high-end, are very happy to tell them what they have been doing, for some reason, because they are the most cooperative criminals going around. I do not understand it. That might change once people realise what the penalties are because I think there is this level of naivety that, 'Well, I'm not doing that much harm.'

How do I find out? It is not necessarily on the quantity that is found. The penalty is not going to be tied to that. If there is a large quantity found in terms of ounces, that suggests someone who has a lot of money and he is obviously more than just paddling in the shallow end of the pool, so to speak. Their presentation: people present in court ranging from someone who is

obviously not able to think things through well enough to be that organised. They are on a disability support pension, they are obviously a foot soldier because they are not very bright, you would not trust them with thousands of dollars of product. You would not trust them and they would not be able to deal with that.

You have people who present quite well and you can see that they are not using and they can think this through. It is a business. The other material that comes through is they are able to access things like text messages, phone records, emails, any written records that are available. It goes back to what has happened for years and years. You get a case where their business is that big they leave a trace, and it will be in the form of text messages which police have been able to get hold of, there will be written records because people cannot remember who owes them what and they will commit it to writing somewhere to keep track of it because the sums are so large.

If the evidence is there the police are able to get it. They seem to have the tools available to them to get that material if they need it. I do not think we need to change the law, for example, to say that in case X we make assumptions Y, because that is really moving away from the way the legal system should operate. It is evidence based.

Mr SOUTHWICK—Lastly, in terms of where you think we are at the moment in the way of ice and not only in your experience here but in the broader context. You mentioned before about the social appeal of ice and that heroin is seen as a druggie element because they are injecting it, and for all those reasons—the Breaking Bads, all the things you have indicated—are we at the beginning, the middle, or are we in a tsunami?

Mr MELLAS—I do not know about a tsunami, I think we are at an early point, and people are only now starting to see—this is the users, not people in the community. People who are using it and people who are living with and moving amongst people who use it, are only starting to see the real impacts and it is scaring people. I worked at Legal Aid as a lawyer from the 90s and there was a period probably in the late 90s where amphetamine rather than methamphetamine use reached this type of proportions, and they had a word for it. They would say that such and such is 'scattered' because they would see someone deteriorate over a period of six to 12 months to the point where their intellectual functioning, their level of aggression became frightening. That, as much as anything, started to scare people off it. I have had people now come in who say they are almost relieved that the police have picked them up because they now have an excuse, they have a reason to stop using. Are we expecting a wave? I hope not.

There have been a lot of efforts made to shut down supply. From day to day I sign search warrants. There is a lot of activity in trying to follow up leads, follow up information in trying to shut off the routes of supply. In this region, for example, it is interesting; a lot of it comes from interstate. A lot of it is coming in from Mount Gambier, apparently, and surprisingly from south-east Melbourne, the other side of Melbourne. There does not appear to be a lot of manufacturing and distribution activity based in this region.

The CHAIR—Are you able to refer, or do you refer, users to specialist courts like the drug court in Dandenong or the Koori courts?

Mr MELLAS—I will deal with the drug court first. The drug court operates in a certain postcode and we are not in it. Unless the person is able to say—and one way to do it would be to have them move, to live with someone in the postcodes that the drug court deals with, if I wanted to do that. The drug court is a good option. I understand how it works and the principles behind it. Whether you would have the resources to replicate that across the state, I do not know. I think that is really the issue. It is a good method.

Insofar as the Koori courts are concerned, it is here, Portland and Hamilton. I have been sitting in the Koori court in Gippsland, and I am sitting in the Koori court here, and quite clearly part of what we do when someone comes through the Koori court is to look at alternatives, look at

options. I would imagine you have heard from the previous group about what is being tried and what they hope to be able to do. I was picking up on the healing centre idea. Gippsland is where Wulgunggo Ngalu is based—I am assuming you have all heard of that—tried to have a couple of people, from what I have seen, go out to Wulgunggo Ngalu. I have dealt with a couple of matters in the last two to three weeks. People go out there, do not stay very long, end up coming back here. That link with family, link with their region is a very important one. It is a shame we cannot have that kind of treatment approach more accessible for people on this side of Victoria. The Koori court has been a good initiative and it also means you have the family, you have the community involved in coming up with treatment approaches.

Mr SCHEFFER—You mentioned the CISP program and also you talked about justice reinvestment and now the drug court. Starting off with the CISP program, you said you were going to meet with WRAD to talk about this. Do you put a submission together and then do you work out a budget?

Mr MELLAS—At the moment, my understanding is it is really subject to the court's funding and what they are able to have in place. The courts that have CISP workers or CISP in place are basically only the two—Sunshine and Latrobe Valley, and obviously Melbourne. There are no plans to roll that out to any of the other courts, so it is not a matter of submission. There are other courts around the state that have a credit bail worker. It is a worker who is responsible—if I was sitting at Geelong, for example, and someone comes in with a drug problem, I would get to go and speak to the credit bail worker. There is an interview, the credit bail worker will identify the services that they ought to be referred to, and a plan. They would come back for reviews once a month and I would find out what the progress is while their matter is being resolved.

CISP is a much more intense program. There is a worker that meets more regularly. There is a housing worker, a mental health worker. It is a team of people who are based at the court. Here in this region we do not even have credit bail, so there is no one person I can send someone to or have them speak to who can then be the liaison point between all the available services, whether it be mental health, WRAD, a GP, a housing service, a domestic violence service. The thing we are trying to create—and you are speaking to John Lesser who I will be sharing the position here with—is something on an informal basis to try and build those links because there is simply no funding for that kind of worker, I do not think.

Mr SCHEFFER—I do not want to go into policy things but specifically what you can really comment on, but when you talked about the drug court, for example, we went down to the drug court. I have forgotten the name of the magistrate.

Mr MELLAS—Tony Parsons.

Mr SCHEFFER—Yes. Tony Parsons told us when we asked him about the economics of it all that it is a saving, made a saving on the alternative. It was a cheaper way or a more effective way of using resources.

Mr MELLAS—Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER—While you cannot comment on that, are you telling us that you can do some local stuff and improvise what is within your scope.

Mr MELLAS—That is what I want to do.

Mr SCHEFFER—But there is no process where you can run up to the senior levels, the Department of Justice or to the judiciary about what is needed.

Mr MELLAS—The court on an ongoing basis always has submissions in for additional funding for these kinds of programs, and it is limited by whatever the budgetary limitations are. My hope is, in the absence of us being funded for that position, that we will

have something in place that we can rely on and we can use to address these issues at this early stage.

Mr SCHEFFER—The chair often asks witnesses whether they have any recommendations. Perhaps I will ask a leading question on that point and say do you have any recommendations you would like us to make on that?

Mr MELLAS—Having worked with CISP, at a bare minimum, I think, a credit bail worker or a position of that kind, that liaison point would be a really valuable addition to what the court has available to it to address the issues that are confronting the community here.

Mr SCHEFFER—While you are putting in bids, what about a drug court?

Mr MELLAS—I looked at the submission that Tony Parsons made. It is a great set-up but it costs a lot of money and you really have to get to the stage where—

Mr SCHEFFER—The argument is it also saves money.

Mr MELLAS—Yes, and I am not going to comment on that. If someone came to the conclusion and did the analysis—and I think the drug court's own figures say, 'Look, for every dollar you spend here you're saving \$5 elsewhere.'

Mr SCHEFFER—Exactly.

Mr MELLAS—That has been the experience, perhaps not in those raw numbers but that is the experience. New South Wales has moved away from a purely penal view of the world to supports in the community. Places like Texas, states right across the United States which were previously quite focused on locking people up, and now their own people are saying, 'This is costing us a lot of money, there has to be a better way of allocating the resources.' In some ways it is a purely economic decision. If you can spend a dollar here and save elsewhere, it is like in a business situation, you make decisions on the opportunity cost of your capital. Say I have a dollar, am I going to spend it and make two, or am I going to spend it and make three. It is the reverse of that. What is the best way to spend the money that we have in terms of outcomes. Whether you call it justice reinvestment, courts like the drug court, the mental health court, the Justice Centre in Collingwood, they can all point to the benefits of having spent money there.

In Collingwood they can point to the fact that in their local community, crime rates have dropped. They can point to lower recidivism rates amongst certain groups. If you accept that there are ways of doing it, it is not to say that you shut the jails because there will always be cases where a term of imprisonment should be imposed, should be served and is absolutely appropriate, but if there are other ways of doing it, then you are really benefiting the community on a much wider basis, I think.

Mr SOUTHWICK—I am not sure whether you saw the expose in the Herald-Sun yesterday which mentioned a number of courts and processes with ice, and there was reference made to a famous boxer's son who is heavily affected by ice, and his comment was, 'You need to be cruel to be kind,' and suggested something around mandatory drug testing or regular drug testing for those that are found guilty.

Mr MELLAS—That are found guilty?

Mr SOUTHWICK—Yes.

Mr MELLAS—I do not feel comfortable answering that question. My role is to apply the law as it stands. Drug testing has crept into employment. I often say, if people say, 'I'm going to work for a transport company,' or, 'I'm going to work in the mines', 'You're going to have to be tested,' to try and get a sense of their use or what their plans are. I think you could

do it but ice has such a short half life. You could have someone using it and you could test them tomorrow or in two days time and you probably would not find evidence of it. That is one of the other attractions of it, that it is very difficult and you would have to think that through, I think. Off the cuff I do not know that it would be workable.

Mr SOUTHWICK—Any other mandatory program?

Mr MELLAS—Such as?

Mr SOUTHWICK—Forced rehab.

Mr MELLAS—The problem from a therapeutic justice point of view, what I have learnt through exposure to that idea or that concept, is if people are either prepared to change and they are prepared to put in the work to do it or they are not, there is no point forcing them through it because it will not work. The rehab in relation to ice would have been, for example, you dry them out, the underlying problems are still there if they are not prepared to deal with it. You cannot get into a therapeutic relationship with someone and address the issues unless you want to. Being forced to does not work. I would love to think that it did. May they have something in China that works. They seem to have a long history of re-educating and putting people in certain positions but I do not think that kind of approach works. You have to have a whole of society approach—they are cliches—that prevents people getting into a cycle of using, offending, moving through the system, not being dealt with and going right back to the reoffending.

Mr SOUTHWICK—How do you address the frequent flyer that keeps coming before your court with the same problem?

Mr MELLAS—How do I address them?

Mr SOUTHWICK—I am not referring to you but just in the general instance of somebody that keeps presenting with the same problem.

Mr MELLAS—From a court point of view by having a really good tool kit. Once upon a time there was a very blunt tool kit: you did something wrong, you got punished, and it was something that either hurt you financially or hurt you in terms of taking away your liberty. We moved on from that to then trying programs that addressed the reasons why you were offending, and that became probation and community corrections orders. We have now come to the conclusion that perhaps even before you do that, that whilst the person is before the court and under the court's control you try something at the bail stage and therefore you have programs like CISP, you have programs like credit bail, the therapeutic justice ideas.

The more tools we have, the more you can tailor them to a particular person's needs, and the particular person's state of life. I have had some great experiences in CISP, perhaps not with ice—well, ice was a problem because people liked using it. They were addicted and they were not about to change. They were going to keep using it. Most of those people lasted about a month and I would take them off the program. I would say, 'Right, let's go to sentencing. You really aren't in the position, you don't want to deal with the problem, you're not ready yet. We're not going to go down that track, let's move on to the next phase.'

Other people though who want to—a young guy, very simple, had a couple of kids and a partner who had been the victim of his violence, really emotional, over a period of about four to six months made some enormous changes. He stopped using, was starting to think about going to work, had probably stopped damaging his brain to the point where the people around him started to see the person who he was, and it was a really good result. An alcoholic I had who had 10 prior convictions for .05 had come in again driving, alcohol, and I gave him the option, I said, 'We can do this two ways. I'll give you jail time now. You can dry out, you will dry out, you'll come back out, you'll be back where you started, I'll put you on CISP, it will be going for about four to five months, no guarantee that you still won't do jail because I can't

give you that guarantee. It depends on how things go.' He said, 'No, I'll try CISP,' and five months later he had put on weight, he had stopped drinking, he finally got onto a GP and put himself on Campral which stopped his drinking. He was working at the local RSL doing the garden. He told them that he was only allowed to have lemonades, and he was a completely different individual by the end of that four to five months. I have not tracked back to see what has happened since but I put him on a community corrections order and saw him about another four months after that and he was still going strong. They are good stories but that is because I had the tool kit available.

The CHAIR—Thank you, Magistrate Peter Mellas. Unless you have a closing statement—

Mr MELLAS—No, I do not. I hope the information and what I have had to say will assist the committee in its deliberations. A lot of what I have said, and perhaps what the committee hears from time to time is anecdotal, but I am sure that you are in a position to be as informed as you need to be about the statistical side of the problem. I hope it has perhaps given you some food for thought.

The CHAIR—Thank you very much for your time.

Mr MELLAS—Thank you.

Witness withdrew.

Hearing suspended.