

Hannah Rubenach

01/03/2013

Mr. Tom Wise
Clerk of Committees
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART 7000

Dear Mr. Wise,

Please accept my submission to the Joint Select Committee Preventative Health Care Inquiry. Unfortunately, I have had to hand-write this as my computer has "died" - so it is a bit rough, and I ~~only~~ only have time to submit dot-points.

- Our environment is an important factor in maintaining health and wellbeing. The more of our environment we can keep it its natural state, the better. Unfortunately, many people do not have access to participate in the healing aspects of nature - for example, there are not enough wheel-chair-friendly, ^{bush} walking tracks, and there are many communities that have no access to wheel-chair friendly walking tracks. Also, beach access for the aged and disabled is a concern.
- As it is "trendy" to be vegetarian, many younger people in particular attempt a vegetarian diet, only to find it impacts on their health. Most do not understand the need for a balanced vegetarian diet (complementary proteins, etc). A vegetarian diet is not really supported by the health sector. For example, when I visit my GP, a corner of his computer screen has in bold lettering "Warning - Vegetarian" - whilst I understand the need for a doctor to be aware I am vegetarian and thus ensure I am eating a balanced diet, I find it insulting that a vegetarian diet is not valued/supported by health professionals. I suffer poor health

for several years, including iron deficiency. My health only improved after I became vegetarian and has remained stable for the last 5-6 years. A vegetarian diet has been one of the major factors in improving my health. I believe if a balanced vegetarian diet is promoted & encouraged by health professionals, those choosing to become vegetarian will be able to access information on balanced diets and be healthier for it. Also, a lot of food is sold in restaurants/takeaways/bakeries as "vegetarian". However, much of this does not provide an adequately balanced vegetarian diet, and thus using the term "vegetarian" is misleading (unless the food fits strict guidelines of providing a balanced meal), and can make it difficult for those who want to eat vegetarian, but do not understand the complexities of a vegetarian diet.

- My parents are full-time carers for my brother (who has acquired brain injury and epilepsy). They provide care 24 hours a day and receive little in the way of support services. Having lost all access to support services for a year (during 2010-11), they both suffered depression and anxiety - to the point that I was extremely concerned for their wellbeing, so took several months off work (without pay) to support them and to do everything possible to help them get services restored. It is well known that carers suffer depression at a significantly higher rate than the general population, however little is being done to ensure there are adequate support services so that carers can have a break and restore their health and wellbeing (my parents will wait months or years to see a doctor or allied health professional about their health problems because it is so hard to get adequate support to take time off from caring for both the appointments and for the treatment process). Whilst the proposed NDAS has the potential to mitigate these problems, it might be many years before they will be able to access this, as my brother is just two years too old to fit in the Tasmanian trial - meanwhile, he must remain on incredibly lengthy wait lists and my parents are forced to struggle on.
- There is a desperate need for supported accommodation facilities

in our local area. The closest is about 130 km away. My brother needs to be able to remain living in the area with which he is familiar and comfortable. Also, my parents need the comfort of knowing that if Tim was to be placed in a supported accommodation facility, that they will be able to continue to visit him - if he were to be placed somewhere outside the local area, they might not be able to afford to travel to visit him and as they age, they might not have the capacity to drive long distances. A small facility based at St. Marys or St. Helens is urgently needed for the many aging carers who wish to keep their loved ones close by.

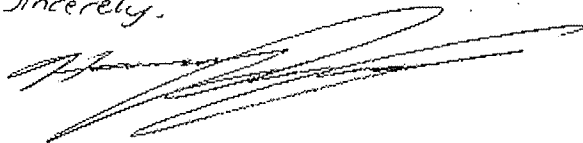
- Another factor creating anxiety is the costs to retrofit solar panels and water tanks to homes. Many people wish to use solar panels and water tanks, but simply cannot afford it. If government subsidies could be given to low-income households ~~for~~ at the same rate as which Aurora electricity is subsidised, some households might find fitting solar panels could be affordable. This has the benefits in that once a household has converted fully to solar power, they will no longer require subsidising for their electricity use. An added benefit is that these households will be able to afford heating their home adequately in winter. The same applies for water tanks. These ultimately will save the user significantly on water usage bills, and this will encourage people to retain their vegetable gardens (I know of many pensioners who say they can no longer afford to water their vegetable gardens with the rising cost of water). Additionally, if assistance could be provided to low-income households living in bushfire prone areas to fit water tanks and sprinkle systems, this will not only reduce the risk of people losing their homes, but also helps to reduce the anxiety that arises each bushfire season. This will help to create more resilient communities. The social determinants of health need to be considered when measures are taken to build resilient and prepared (for natural disasters) communities.

- I find it extremely frustrating that spectator sports receive funding, for example the extra seating at Blundstone Arena, whilst essential services such as disability support are seriously under-funded. I understand there are economic benefits by creating quality sporting facilities, but there would be even greater economic benefits if carers of people with a disability were to have the opportunity to take enough time off from their caring role to have a part-time/casual job. Also the wellbeing improvements that can arise from having adequate respite will have an economic benefit in that there will be less need to provide health care services to those suffering depression, anxiety and various other health complaints that arise from being full-time carers. Furthermore, I know of many people living with a disability who would love the opportunity to attend community events (such as sporting events), but they cannot do so because they do not receive adequate support services to take them to events. Why not put an extra few dollars ^{on} the entrance tickets to ^{all} these events so that the upgrades can fund themselves and put the millions of dollars the Blundstone arena upgrade is costing into support services - then perhaps those who are currently housebound and never have a chance to attend any event, might be able to enjoy the benefits of the upgrades - at the moment, it is only the ~~few~~ people who can afford to attend and have the means to attend who benefit, whilst those who desperately need social outings are forced to remain at home - and continue to suffer depression and anxiety and ~~don't~~ not have the chance to develop their social skills, etc.

There is much more I would like to mention, but I know others have mentioned these in their submissions, and as I mentioned at the start, this is very rushed due to my computer "dying".

If you wish to contact me to discuss anything further,
I can be contacted on or
email dreambear@rodc.com.

Sincerely,



Hannah Rubenach.