

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASHLEY, YOUTH JUSTICE AND DETENTION IN TASMANIA MET IN THE TOWN HALL, LAUNCESTON, ON WEDNESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2007.

Mr WAYNE KATA WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

Mr KATA - There are a lot of submissions about the security at Ashley, but I am not really into that. My main concern is the kids coming out of Ashley. During the last two and a half years I have worked with these kids who are coming out. I am not sure whether you know of what we do with these kids.

CHAIR - Do you work as an individual, Mr Kata, or as part of an organisation?

Mr KATA - As an individual. There might be five or six of us mentors; I don't know what he would do with his kids, she doesn't know what I do with my kids, no-one knows what is happening, and you don't see them. You might see them somewhere in the park or somewhere in the city or the town. That is why I wanted to be part of this discussion about the kids. What I have seen every time is that I go and pick these kids up from their home; sometimes he is not there and then I have to go and ring up everywhere to find out where he is. Sometimes I have to go to town and look for them. Sometimes I find them, sometimes I don't. When I speak to the parents there is not much help there. The way I see it, they don't really care.

I am going to ask this committee for a venue, a base. There are a lot of these kids out there and I am looking to get these kids into the same venue most of the time so that we can monitor them during the day and control them so they are not going just anywhere they feel like going. I know a lot of places like the Catholic Church have something like that, but these kids are different from them. They should have their own venue. If we do get a venue we would divide it into rooms. Three of these kids I have been involved with from Ashley can't spell their name, can't add. If you say to them, 'I have two dollars here and spend 70 cents, how much do I have left?', it hurts me so much that they just don't know what I am talking about. This is the reason I'm asking for this venue for these kids. It doesn't have to be serious; we have to play with them and at the same time get their mind involved. I took a lot of these kids to golf, bowling and all that sort of thing to occupy their mind but by having a venue we don't have to travel around the whole city in a car.

Last year I had a project set up for one kid, selling things on a big night - a parents night. We made a lot of money and the money goes to charity. That was good but the problem is that we had to organise it all from the back of my car. There is no venue. I am hoping that after all this we will get a venue, a place where a mentors bring their kids when they need it. It doesn't have to be all at the same time. For instance, one mentor has kids on Sundays, one on Thursdays and I see mine Tuesdays. You don't all have to be there at the same time, but you can bring your kids there, sit them at a table, grab a book, talk to him, work some addition and spelling on a little blackboard. It's nothing serious like being at school.

Mr WILKINSON - Wayne, am I right in saying you believe the best way of dealing with things would be for a spare building, whether the Government or council owns it or whoever, to be dedicated as a half-way house?

Mr KATA - Yes, but I don't like using the word 'half-way'.

Mr WILKINSON - Call it what you will, but that is what you are after.

Mr KATA - That is the idea because these young people need it. If you think, 'Why not Ashley?' that is entirely different because they know they're inside. There is a fence there. They're way of thinking in there is entirely different.

Mr WILKINSON - You are saying, aren't you, that these people could come at any time to do some woodwork in the hall or reading?

Mr KATA - Any project they set up. There is a venue to help them, instead of doing it from my car and so on.

Mr WILKINSON - An interesting project like that was the Windward Bound project where these youths at risk came and helped to build the Windward Bound boat and then went out sailing in this boat. A number of people dedicated to that job were out of trouble during the time. They were totally dedicated to the job and they were terrific workers. Is that the type of think that you are looking at?

Mr KATA - Yes, but our budget to start with is very small, so we need a venue. I can start a budget for working, teaching the kids how to fix pushbikes. But where is the venue? In my home? In my garage? I can pick up a run down bike or buy one if I have to and through the year get these kids to work on it. Once these kids start working with something and the benefit is theirs, then they love it, they enjoy it. I take them to play golf. They love it. They have never seen golf before. They enjoy it but once you take them away from there their lives are gone.

Mr MARTIN - Are there no facilities like this in Launceston?

Mr KATA - I don't think so.

Mr MARTIN - There are some in other parts of the State.

Mr KATA - I haven't seen any. I haven't heard of any. I have been looking.

Mr MARTIN - Funding has just been made available and they are just about to build one in the Uniting Church.

Mr KATA - It probably belongs to the churches. But, as I said before, this is a difficult time for theses kids. They have to have their own venue because they don't congregate with other kids like the church kids. They are entirely different kids. Some are barely educated. With one kid, if I said something wrong he would go 'bang'; that is the problem with them. So we have to deal with them and we know how to deal with them.

Mr MARTIN - There is a project called Chance on Main in Moonah, which is very similar to what you are talking about. It would be well worth getting in touch with them.

Mr KATA - There are so many projects out there for these kids because there are a lot of female mentors. They have entirely different projects, even sewing, and they can do that in the same venue. You cannot do it in the car. I know we did ours from the back of my car, cramming everything in. We sold a lot and the money went to charity. I do not know if you remember it from last year; we were in the paper and it was exciting for the kid. He is now a very well behaved kid and going to Launceston College, I believe, where before he was a very troublesome kid.

I now have a kid from Ashley and he has been out probably a month or two. I know we will get there but my little problem is that I also have another kid from another organisation. They are all in the same situation. If we have this venue we can use it for stopping or for doing a project.

Mrs JAMIESON - Wayne, how would you anticipate funding this, because you have a building so you have insurance and all these other things?

Mr KATA - If we have a building supplied by the Government, we do not have to worry about the building or the rent. The building is there. We will have to do our own fund-raising, but I am sure we can. We have a lot of people out there wishing to help raise funds. As you would know, we had a lot of fund-raising at Whitelion. The reason I brought this to this meeting is that I announced the idea to our top guys but nothing came back to me, so when I heard of this committee I decided to do something about it. It is good for the kids and that is what we need. If we cannot have it, I do not think I can afford to keep them in the car for two or three hours. Yesterday I was with the kids from Ashley from one o'clock to five o'clock in the evening but there are not a lot of places you can take them. I took them horse-riding but, apart from that, where else can you take them?

Mrs JAMIESON - So who would pay for the horse riding?

Mr KATA - Oh yes, everywhere I take the kids it costs money for the mentors. It's the help I can give the kids. If an organisation comes up and says, 'Yes, we'll pay for that', then okay, fair enough, but I am not going to ask.

Mrs JAMIESON - No.

Mr KATA - It is not only that. I drive a four-wheel drive and it costs a lot for petrol but I am not asking for that or anything. All I am hoping is that in the future, if we get this venue, we don't have to go so far out. I won't have to go horse riding because we have a venue where I can take them, with maybe a pool table or table tennis, where you can spend most of the day with these kids. At the same time I have come up with a study room as well for these kids - six chairs and two little tables. We can sit these kids down there and say, 'What's your name, spell your name; okay, I have \$100 here, if I take \$50 how much do I have left?' It is not a serious education, but I know it will help them. At the same time the people from Ashley are going to Brooks High. I rang to arrange to speak to the principal about what I intend to do, to have them once a week, say from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., which I have done before with other schools. I

arranged to meet the principal. He was happy with that, because he knows that I am going to carry on when the schools start. But we still come back to the same question of a venue to go to, and if this committee could put in a good word for us it would help.

If I can bring up another subject: I was involved also in Adult Education for two years and, as I think the mayor knows, Adult Education have a lot of buildings, a lot of rooms like this. At the time I was involved with them, when we were in this room and that room there, we were in this house and that one there was empty, and I just wondered what now, whether one of these, which is empty every time I go there, could be used.

Mr DEAN - The only problem is that they have been looking for a central place because it is known these youth won't go to areas outside the CBD, the city centres. We have just obtained a building now, the Pilgrim Uniting Church. The Federal Government has provided them with about a quarter of a million dollars to spend on it to do it up for exactly this purpose that you are talking about. I can talk to you about that later.

Mr KATA - Would that include the kids from Ashley?

Mr DEAN - Yes. It will be a centre for all youth at risk in particular.

Mr KATA - It would be nice if we were asked to get involved.

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr KATA - And I think that will do. As long as we have a venue to give these kids somewhere so they can sit down and -

Mr DEAN - Yes, I can talk to you on that, Wayne.

Mr KATA - But apart from that I don't have much to say. I leave all the security et cetera to other people that work in Ashley.

CHAIR - That is fine, Mr Kata. Thank you very much. I would congratulate you on the way that you are doing your mentoring. It is very good of you as a community citizen to do that, and the committee acknowledges that. And thank you very much for your evidence.

Mr KATA - I would like to thank the committee also for giving me the opportunity.

CHAIR - It is a pleasure.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW