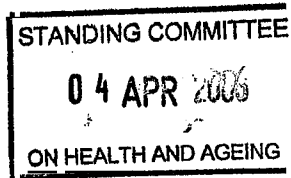


James Catchpole,
House of Representatives,
Committee on Health & Ageing,
Parliament House.
Canberra,
ACT 2601



ACT 2902.

Dear James,

I thank you for giving me the opportunity this afternoon, March 30th., to ask you some questions, and seek your advice, concerning matters relating to Health and Ageing. My submission for the consideration of the committee follows.

Firstly, I wish you to know that my thoughts on this matter are dictated by the fact that I happen to be an Australian Age Pensioner, and that I am 75 years of age. I also wish you to know that I listened intently to Kate Carnell's National Press Club Speech on March 6th., and that speech, plus some personal experiences which I have encountered, brought to the fore thoughts that I had long held concerning the parlous state of the health situation generally, in Australia. I have personally been attempting, for several years, to have those politicians who have been in a position to discuss/alter the status quo, sit down and give serious thought to some ideas which would, I believe, take us out of the doldrums where we are at present, and where we will remain, unless someone, who has the necessary intelligence and authority, actually listens to people such as myself who do not seek to tinker with ideas which have already been tried, tested and found wanting, but instead look for simple, easy to understand and direct ideas that have a good chance of succeeding. We need people in at the planning stage who don't play 'follow the leader'; people who aren't dominated by political thinking; and people who have vision. Those people would need to be more than lateral thinkers: they would need to have the ability, and the desire, to think beyond horizons !!! Such people would also have the ability to come up with ideas that would work; would be easily understood and also be cost effective. Unless we tackle the health problems of Australia, in their entirety, from the ground floor upwards, we shall always be burdened with something that is cumbersome, difficult to understand and a huge drain on our economy. I would therefore propose something along the following lines, as being the solution to our many current problems, from both cost effective and usage points of view.

1) We need to make health a NATIONAL matter, and to put it directly into the hands of the Federal Government. This will ensure that ALL Australians come under the same set of rules. It will also end the game of political football that is currently being played by Federal, State and Territory politicians. Health is an extremely serious matter, and should be treated as such.

2) We need to scrap the current health 'system', and replace it with something akin to the UK National Health Service. I do not believe for a moment that the UK system is perfect, but it is light years ahead of what we have at present. I would implement an all embracing NATIONAL INSURANCE SYSTEM. Again, modelling it's operation on the UK model. By all means, improve upon it, but phase it in as soon as possible, and phase the current 'system' out. It should cover **all aspects of Health; Age Pensions, Superannuation and Unemployment payments.** What is so good about the UK National Insurance system? Well, the idea was initially not *just* thought of because there was a need to provide a safety net for disadvantaged people. but in order to have all Brits. to (psychologically speaking) understand that should they fall from grace, however it may happen, they would receive a helping hand. This fact, again psychologically speaking, gave all Brits. the impetus, and the confidence, to get on with their lives, and be able to WORK, without much of the STRESS that is caused by worrying about their situations. And WORRY, DEPRESSION AND STRESS RELATED PROBLEMS, are the causes of a

high percentage of the troubles that beset many Australians today, interfering with their private and their working lives, costing untold man-hours in lost production, and with the flow-on effect which that has.

To really understand the health problems that we have, it first needs to be understood that health is only one part of the malaise. For although it is a huge chunk of the problem, it does go hand in hand with problems inherent in housing; in education and in the way we both perceive and behave towards age pensioners, and other badly disadvantaged groups of people in our society. It seems ludicrous in the extreme that, in a country so rich, so highly rated, and economically sound, we cannot educate properly. (We badly need a National curriculum); that we have far too many homeless people - young *and* old. (We need, of necessity a National housing policy, which encompasses both Public rental and Private purchase). And we need a National policy for old age pensioners which insures that they are not forced to give up essentials, such as Medications, visits to their doctor, and food, because of financial problems Nor should they have to cut back more than they need to on gas and electricity. All of these problems cause **stress, stress**, and yet more **stress**, which ends in Distress!! In turn, this often leads to depression: thus *more* stress! And so the 'merry-go-round' goes on and on ! All of this costs MONEY !!

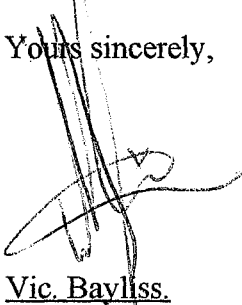
So part of my solution would be to put into effect HUGE changes in the way we deal with things of this ilk. We need a NATIONAL policy to deal with NATIONAL issues, and run by the FEDERAL Government. In particular, with Housing; Health; Ageing; Education; Employment and Energy. Lets forget the past. Lets begin again and have AUSTRALIAN answers to these problems, because wherever you live in Australia, if you have one of these problems, it will hit just as hard. One Country; one rule; one policy for all. Not the 'Pass the Buck' method we endure today, where nobody will accept responsibility for anything, and therefore frequently nothing is done !

At this stage I have one thing to add. In a word - WASTE !! As a nation we waste far too much. We waste time; we waste money. It happens in Government; it happens in business; it happens in all aspects of life these days. If we saved what we now waste, it might not pay for everything that we need, but nonetheless it would be a great help!!

I believe that what I have stated above would be both workable and most definitely economically sound. One cannot change the world in a few lines: one can only sow the seeds, and hope that they germinate.

I am of the firm belief that the ideas presented above would work. But to do so would mean involving people with high intelligence; great interest and even greater dedication. It cannot, and will not, be done unless we have people who exhibit enthusiasm, and who believe that the best way to go forward is usually the simplest. There is much more that could be said concerning these matters, and I would welcome any chance to discuss these matters further in more detail, and without a ticking clock !! My closing argument would be, that altering the health system in isolation is merely a Band-Aid solution, and like all Band-Aids, it will shortly need to be changed yet again!! We *must* have PERMANENT solutions. And I believe that those which I have briefly extrapolated above are they.

Yours sincerely,



Vic. Bayliss.

March 30th. 2006