

1 September 2009

Ms Annette Ellis
Chair of the House of Representatives Family Committee
Member for Canberra ACT

Re: Input for Homelessness Legislation

Dear Ms Ellis

I saw the magazine article in "About the HOUSE" on the inside cover about the homeless issue in this country and would like contribute and tell you of my plans.

I have learnt a lot about human nature, mental and emotional states of humans and believe that many homeless people can be rehabilitated back into society by being housed and educated in a holistic manner.

I am creating a totally new context. In my view the old model does not work anymore. We have a whole new set of issues and mentalities now. I also understand that there are levels of homelessness and some homeless people will not get back into society and be able to support themselves under any circumstances. I am addressing those who can and are willing.

I am not from the Homeless industry and have a fresh point of view. I currently personally support a homeless man who lives at the A9 bus stop in the Myer Centre in Brisbane and give him money and encourage him to seek Centerlink support. I also have an ex-homeless young person, now 28yrs old living in my home and understand the mental and emotional issues and lack of confidence he experiences. He is creating an optimistic powerful future and appreciates the rigorous empowerment immensely.

He has responded significantly well and very positively to my coaching, transformation courses I paid for and strict rules in the house. He now understands responsibility, cleanliness, and integrity to the point that he could easily support himself in society without assistance.

My Project:

I have a proposed personal project to design and have the Government build, a huge Sport and Leisure Centre and have chosen to include a Homeless Rehabilitation Accommodation Block. A Homeless Rehabilitation and Education Program will be conducted for 60 people who will be accommodated, educated and provided for. Each person will be screened and enter the Program for 3-6 months and be rehabilitated back into the community with training in working skills, social interaction, communication and emotional balance along with other useful education and awareness sessions.

This is all good..... however, since being involved with the Department of Communities in Brisbane, I have come in close contact with homelessness issues and decided to add a *Homeless Program Accommodation Block* to my project to house 60 homeless people for 3-6 month periods for rehabilitation back into the community.

The Program:

In many ways, homelessness is closely linked to hopelessness. I believe that the homelessness issue cannot be overcome with accommodation alone. A holistic approach is essential to stop the vicious cycle. It must also focus on the person, their confidence, emotional and mental state, their skills and communication ability, their personal standards and future commitment to house themselves, get jobs and earn money, integrity and social interactions and their ability to be responsible for a sustainable and adequate standard of living into the future.

With this in mind, it is proposed that the Centre (in conjunction with Dept of Communities, Health, Youth, ATSI and Education) will:

- Assess individual ability and commitment to complete the Rehabilitation Program within 3-6 months;
- Provide fully equipped single and shared unit accommodation, food, some clothing, uniforms and personal hygiene amenities (for 60 people);
- Assess their skills and ability to work and interact in the Centre;
- Provide employment and training in the Centre, as appropriate for Customer Service, maintenance or trade;
- Provide encouragement meetings and special privileges for excellent work;
- Design a physical participation program of sport or appropriate activities for health;
- Conduct mandatory training and education sessions in a selection of computer skills, basic working skills, health and nutrition, cooking and self-providing, organisation, confidence, mental and emotional balance consultation, “completing the past” seminars and creating a new possible future, social interaction, contributing to others and the homeless community, understanding authority structures, job seeker assistance and housing consultation for the future;
- Provide an opportunity to participate in group and recreational activities;
- Assist with Centrelink procedures and external training and support opportunities;
- Encourage, promote and market Program Sponsorship by the community; and
- Arrange work experience, community integration, and job opportunities for future sustainability.

There are enough homeless people on the streets that you could almost call them a Community. So let's treat them like a community and apply rules and structure and have them support and help themselves. I am committed to have the homeless people who go through the Centre Homeless Rehabilitation Program, contribute to and assist other homeless people and replace themselves in the program.

Homelessness:

Perfectly capable people can sometimes take a dive from something negatively emotional or circumstantial and become hopeless and lose the initiative to sustain their lives. This can be turned around with professional rigorous support and a commitment on their part to reclaim their ground. *Note....I am not referring to mentally ill homelessness – this is another issue.* I am talking about people who just lost their way, found themselves in a dangerous living situations or young people with childhood issues who lack the confidence to stand up for the quality of their life and who can be assisted and coached back to emotional and mental wellbeing and healthy sustainable living standards. Isolation and low self-esteem are major issues; in this Program encouragement, confidence and positive interaction will flourish.

Their Commitment:

We have demanding and compassionate standards for improvement in this fast paced Program. For these selected candidates to receive accommodation and benefits, they must work 4-5 days a week (as their health dictates) in the Centre in an appropriate capacity, attend mandatory training and education sessions 3-4 times a week, take on fitness programs and contribute their own abilities to the Centre and the Accommodation Block maintenance. A strict discipline structure will apply with a “3 strikes and you are out” policy. A drug and alcohol free environment will apply within the Centre grounds. Random checks will be conducted. Qualified professionals will conduct training and enable an environment of transformation to create possibilities for their futures in a very positive way.

This Program will be managed by the on-site Homelessness Program Managers and consultants and the Accommodation Block will be manned 24/7. It is proposed that support and awareness sessions will be provided by the Department of Communities on-site office and other government departments (within the Office Tower). On-site homelessness consultants will coordinate with Centrelink, HR consultants, rental accommodation agencies, educators and qualified professionals to produce progressive goals and KPI.

New possible futures: New contexts.....

It's a new idea... the Program duration is 3-6 months per person, depending on the support reliance of each individual. This is a rehabilitation/transition Centre not a permanent home. We will be supporting candidates in a rigorous structure of participation, learning and sustainable standards creating possibilities and opportunities to contribute and make a difference within the homeless community itself. The Program will operate with pride, integrity and compassion to regain a sustainable position in the community and be constantly updated to produce the most significant results and renewal.

Our goal is to produce at least an 80% success rate of participants who complete the program, and create a sustainable personal future and 90% housed externally. Other participants will be referred to ongoing support agencies. Perhaps, at a future date, a homelessness education program can be established for ongoing support to homeless people to gain skills and integration into the community on a casual visit basis.

Future suggestion:

There is no reason, once this smaller pilot is established and showing successful results that larger Homelessness Accommodation Activity Centres, housing up to 200 people in 6 month programs, cannot be built to focus on rehabilitation, training, education and future support of the homeless community. Sections of these Centres could also accommodate 20% long term homeless who may need longer support programs and accommodation. Having contact between the long term homeless and the short term rehabilitating homeless could have a positive affect on both parties.

I strongly feel that we should treat this homeless community as a whole and proper community and give it full and fitting attention rather than tinkering round the edges with good meaningful confusion (and I am not meaning to criticise). There is a bigger picture emerging here and we need to be coming FROM the future and not from the past. When I create a context, it holds contents of various types, and the CONTEXT is the important part.

*I ... Create a future (of possibilities and results already outstanding and complete)
I ... GO and stand in that future
I ... Speak FROM that future
And I know how to ACT.*

I am not coming or creating from the past.. it's long gone.

Attached is a draft plan and summary of the Homeless Rehabilitation Program Accommodation Block (*note this design and concept is copyright*) that I propose for the Centre. Should you wish to discuss any of my suggestions, I would be happy to do so, and I would appreciate any feedback you may have for my project.

With kind regards

Wendy Talbot
Mega Sport Management