

Elton Humphrey
Secretary
Community Affairs
References Committee

March 23, 2005

Dear Mr. Humphrey,

As requested by you, we provide a submission on behalf of Balya Cancer Self Help and Wellness Inc. The following issues are central to our organisation and impact on our patients to a significant degree.

1. Rebates for Balya Cancer Retreats

Balya provides educational “time out” retreats for cancer patients and their carers to teach the medical aspects of cancer as well life skills to improve their outcomes. These live-in retreats are conducted by Dr Ivy Bullen MBBs FACNEM DObstRCOG and Dr Jason Han. The former is a medical practitioner with a specialised knowledge of nutrition and has been in practice for thirty (30) years. Dr Jason Han PhD(Ed Psych) Msc (Neuro Psych) BSc (Hons) Anat MAPS has been a registered psychologist in Western Australia for thirty (30) years. We request that the Government consider making these retreats rebateable, given their health-related and educational value in onco- psychology and medicine . Granting such rebates Australia wide would no doubt assist in lightening patients’ financial burden in dealing with cancer and shorten hospital stay for those who require it. In this way, the process should also alleviate Government expenses in health care generally and ease the pressure on the demand for hospital beds specifically.

2. Rebates for Balya psychological counselling

Our psychologist comes into contact with and lectures to hundreds of cancer patients and at-risk people each year. His primary aim is to educate people in how they can maximise the quality of life through the use of psychological principles. We request that the Government consider making rebates available for psychological counselling provided by Balya’s psychologist to this group as such services, in adjunct to all other recognised treatments for cancer, assist people in their well-being and health. These services are a great contributor towards preventative measures which in the long run reduce overall Government expenditure. Balya is an incorporated charitable organisation with a philosophy and approach to cancer care and management where patients are encouraged to take control and be empowered to make appropriate, informed decisions.

The model that we subscribe to is based on the benefits provided by the psychology and nutrition for health. We therefore believe in addressing and enhancing the attitudes, nutrition and diet (among other factors), of those who are working towards optimum health and those who seek to maintain their health.

3.An Important Resource for cancer patients

It is a fact that many patients rely on some kind of complementary therapies as an adjunct to their mainstream medical treatments. This appears to be an increasing rather than a decreasing trend. Despite a wealth of evidence on the beneficial effects of antioxidants, many oncologists continue to insist that patients not use these supplements and that diet and nutrition are irrelevant to health. It appears that there is dire need for mainstream medicine to be more knowledgeable (or refer to personnel who are) rather than commenting on issues outside their expertise and ken. There is an urgent call for an integrative system for cancer patients. In this regard the Australasian College of Nutritional and Environmental Medicine has a conceivable role in the form of training they provide in teaching the principles of healthy nutrition.

Resource personnel with knowledge of both conventional treatments and complementary therapies are lacking and not easily accessible at present, but are very much needed for patients first diagnosed with cancer. It is important that these incumbents have no bias towards or vested interest in either conventional or non-conventional treatments and that the information they provide is balanced.

We trust you would view our input to this Inquiry as constructive feedback as we all work towards a more efficient and effective approach for cancer care and management in this country.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ivy Bullen Chairperson of Balya

Dr Jason Han Deputy Chairperson of Balya