

PRESS RELEASE (17.6.2018)

UBI – Unconditional/Universal Basic Income

by Carmel Macallum, The Greens candidate for Gilmore federal electorate

I, as a pharmacist and a member of The Greens, see that a Unconditional/Universal Basic Income (UBI) is imperative in our fast changing world. In order that Australia could afford to introduce one, it may be necessary to limit it by a fair means test.

There is only one way to make certain that the UBI is brought into a national discussion, and that is for you and your acquaintances to vote number 1 for The Greens, and as you will see in an article I am including here, neither Labor nor Liberal are willing to put it on the table for all sorts of reasons, but mostly because they don't have any imagination or forethought.

The preferential voting system we have means that putting only a number 1 for The Greens gives them your vote, and that, as more people do this, a strong message is being sent to both Liberal and Labor, that people want better representation. Placing a number 2 next to The Greens means that your vote has actually been given to the party where you placed number 1. (If you want more clarification on this, get in touch with me again, as it very confusing.)

In my professional life, I see far too many people on antidepressant drugs, and other stronger medications, and I wonder what else they have been able to change in their lives, to be encouraged to think about wellness instead of feeling hopeless. A good health practitioner, including GPs, should always find what is at the core of a disease or condition, and in these cases, what is causing the depression and/or anxiety.

Of course not everyone has that choice, and that is why I am giving you some links to some articles and a paper looking at the possible advantages of a UBI for those where finance and employment are the prime issues. Of course these two issues can lead to others: domestic violence, substance dependence and those you have mentioned such as anxiety, eating disorders and psychosis.

This article: <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/nearly-one-in-10-australians-take-antidepressants-are-there-other-solutions-20180116-h0jaxx.html>, is actually getting to why people feel depressed, and that it is a form of grieving, which can be helped by becoming reconnected with other people, and finding a way to make your life better. Hugh Mackay has done much

work on people being connected to their social networks and communities. A UBI can enable people to be reconnected.

Recently Dr Richard di Natale, leader of The Australian Greens, spoke at the National Press Club in Canberra:

“We need a universal basic income. We need a UBI that ensures everyone has access to an adequate level of income, as well as access to universal social services, health, education and housing.

A UBI is a bold move towards equality. It epitomises a government which looks after its citizens, in contrast to the old parties, who say ‘look out for yourselves’. It’s about an increased role for government in our rapidly changing world.

The Greens is the only party proudly arguing for a much stronger role for government. Today’s problems require government to be more active and more interventionist, not less.”

<https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2018/04/greens-call-universal-basic-income/>

The following link is to a very interesting article about grants and how they empowered people’s lives but that other structures needed to be put in place as well, to have the most positive outcomes.

<https://qz.com/1254608/universal-basic-income-and-poor-people-developing-poverty-solutions-in-south-africa/>

The following excerpts are from a paper which is looking at how people can actually become more empowered to make their own decisions about how they want their life to become with a UBI being the catalyst for that.

The lessons from studies of Basic Income models so far

- There have been several experiments that have looked at the effect of different forms of providing a basic income to individuals, such as negative income tax models, partial and full basic income models. Findings have included: improved physical and mental health and a reduction in hospital admissions; reduced stigmatisation of those on low incomes; positive impact on the social standing of women, especially those on low incomes; continued commitments to paid employment; empowerment of women; and increased life satisfaction and happiness of those in receipt of payments. Further experiments with different basic income models are currently underway in Europe, however more UBI-specific pilots are needed. Nevertheless, a picture of the potential positive impacts of UBI on well-being is emerging.

Psychological benefits of UBI

- The psychosocial benefits of UBI are potentially wide ranging. Evidence from previous Basic Income-oriented experiments indicates the potential for UBI to increase all five psychological indicators of a healthy society: agency, security, connection, meaning and trust.
- The security and flexibility of a UBI is likely to give citizens a stronger sense of agency, greater personal mastery and more control over their lives, which evidence shows would lead to an increase in life satisfaction. The population could have more time to spend with friends, family and in their communities and would experience higher levels of social support as a result, which is incredibly important for well-being. People might gain a renewed sense of purpose and meaning through activities outside of currently constructed ‘paid’ employment, leading to a weakening of the current over-importance placed on paid work as part of the “good life”. UBI is likely to lead to a general increase in social trust and a lessening of the shame, humiliation and devaluation that comes with relying on means-tested welfare benefits or being occupied in unpaid caring. In the light of all these positive social impacts of UBI, its introduction has the potential to be a hugely significant and beneficial public health intervention.

The causes of emotional distress and how it can best be alleviated are both topics that are frequently and passionately debated. However, one thing is clear: one of the most straightforward ways to reduce the incidence of mental ill-health and emotional distress would be to ensure that everyone had enough money for a basic standard of living. In the UK, studies have found that in our increasingly unequal society, relatively lower status, lower paid work is strongly associated with reduced well-being (Marmot, Davey Smith, Stansfield, et. al, 1991). Across the globe, data shows a clear link between levels of equality in particular countries and their rates of mental health problems including anxiety, depression and psychosis (Murali & Oyeboode, 2004).

<https://qz.com/.../universal-basic-income-and-poor-people-developing-poverty-solutions>

So, as you can see, I am in full agreement about our need to act to bring about greater equality for all Australians who are feeling as though they are being forgotten by governments, with global changes and moves towards more unpredictable working lives for many. The UBI is most certainly one of the best and long discussed mechanisms, since 1790, when Thomas Paine brought it up after he was introduced to

the idea during the French Revolution. In fact, Richard Nixon introduced a bill for a UBI back in the 1960's, twice, but it was voted down by the Democrats because they expected it to be reintroduced at a later date, with a higher value, but it never has been since. Imagine what a different world we would be seeing today if the UBI had been implemented in the USA! Maybe we could see that country as the greatest in the world, as they so falsely see themselves today, when about 1% of the population is in gaol and so many have very poor prospects. The USA has become a third world nation really, with such great inequality and we must make sure that such disparity, which is on the increase, is reversed in Australia.

Of course, there would need to be precautions taken to make certain that opportunistic people, banks and other businesses, didn't see a UBI as a way to make even greater profits from commodifying it and ruining our economy in the process; remember the ABC Learning (pre-schools) fiasco and all the private education providers which managed to rip off millions of taxpayer dollars.

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