

Political Guts

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Dr Mark Doverty
Senior Advisor - Population Health Division
Department of Health and Aging
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Dear Sir,

Thank you for your lengthy reply. However, I have to ask the question – if you are doing so much, then why is the problem so little changed or resolved, to the sincere observer in the community? Why are our doctors still working 20 hour days, because there is such a staffing shortage? Why are we still recruiting internationally and our own potential doctors are choosing trades careers? Why are our nurses still leaving the industry to take up other careers, better paid and resourced in the commercial world? Why is drug crime still on the rise? Why is drug and alcohol abuse still rising, seemingly unchecked?

Your reply talks about the number of extra medical training places, nurse scholarships and extra funding. However, these are but window dressing on the edges, merely fine tuning of a system that does not work.

When elected, the Rudd Government inherited a flawed system. No amount of fine tuning can correct a flawed system. The Rudd Government was elected with a massive mandate and therefore a massive responsibility to act and make the necessary changes in every flawed system. This is such a flawed system.

The wrong system cannot be fine tuned to success, it requires structural change. Now, after 100 plus days in government, riding a wave of unprecedented popularity, this Government has an unprecedented opportunity to make those changes and consolidate them before another election will call it to accountability. In that time, many thousands each year, not just 1,300 extra medical places, can be made in Universities if fees for the first medical degree were waived, tens of thousands of nurses could be rehired or be in training, if the structural problems that have chased them away are rectified. Drugs could be virtually eliminated with the right mix of Customs Department changes and real Coast Guard equipment and resources were provided. With a transaction tax, such as I have proposed, funding issues that now plague the health, education and every other department could be banished forever. Whilst you question compulsory detoxification of drug and alcohol addiction, at least ensure drugs are eliminated from our prisons by installing equipment to detect and eliminate 100% of them. When times comes to be called to account, let the record show this was a government that took action, and made the changes that made the difference!

These policies are and have been very well researched and it will take Political Guts, courage, determination and a true national spirit to implement them. Caving in to populist whims is not the way to move forward. This requires long term, not next term thinking. But before next term, let there be results on the board!

Sir, whilst you think you have made some progress, you must know that it is the system, not your effort within the system that is at fault. I ask you as an advisor to the Minister you work with, to present these structural changes, to become the first genuine reforms in decades, and the greatest opportunity the Australian nation has ever had to make the leap into the next century. It may be 2008, but we are persevering with systems that were flawed in 1998 – surely that is obvious to any thinking person!

I look forward to the evidence of your actions.

Yours faithfully,

Ray Jamieson
Author
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