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Organisation to expand with CBD site

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ROCKHAMPTON- founded disability services organisation Access Recreation is looking to expand its operations with a community care centre in Rockhampton's CBD.

A development application has been lodged for a permit to convert an existing warehouse at 259 Denison St, Rockhampton City, to a community care centre.

The application, submitted by Dale Webb of Rufus Design Group, details how Access Recreation has had rapid growth following the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and is looking to expand its operations.

The proposal includes internal renovations to the existing building.

The 809 sqm building is in a low impact industry zone and was previously used as a distribution depot for the Dream Pot cooking system company.

Access Recreation is a non-for-profit organisation that offers support to persons with disabilities aged seven to 65 years.

The organisation was



259 Denison St, Rockhampton City, sold to Access Recreation in February 2020 for \$585,000. Picture: Contributed

founded in Rockhampton in 1988 and is governed by a board of management, all of which are from the Rockhampton community.

It has grown to have a workforce of more than 120 employees working with more than 400 people with disabilities in the Rockhampton region.

One of the support services it provides is group programs, based on the educational, recreational and social needs of the clients.

Due to the growth in client numbers following the NDIS, it needs additional property to host group programs.

Access Recreation was looking for a site for about a

year before coming across the Denison St building.

The group bought the property in February 2020 for \$585,000. It was previously listed for rent at \$54,000 per annum plus outgoings.

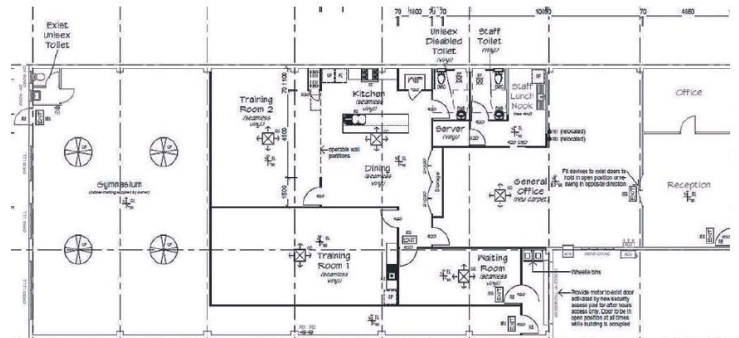
The group programs operate from 9am to 3pm on weekdays and are capped at 12 clients and four support staff.

The expansion with this building will also mean it will be able to provide further employment opportunities within the organisation and offer more services for persons with disabilities.

The application was lodged on April 6 and is being assessed by Rockhampton Regional Council planning officers.



EXPANSION: Access Recreation's Jamie Ross, Mia Lane, Craig Osborne, Kirsten Ohlsen and Keegan Maddison at the new centre. Picture: Allan Reinikka



Proposed plans for the internal changes at 259 Denison St for a community care centre.

Covid-19 challenges have shown the value of a universal wage



DOLLARS AND SENSE
DAVID FRENCH

IF, 20 years ago, you had raised with me the idea of a universal wage, I would have laughed at you. Fancy giving people money for nothing – enough money to actually live on. But right now the Government is doing just that, and I think it should continue.

I'd say about 60 per cent of people hate their jobs, cannot commit the attention required, or are at least ambivalent toward turning up each day.

Mostly this is because of a mismatch between how those employees see themselves in the bigger picture and their innate interests and abilities, or because they are simply so committed elsewhere.

We like to think govern-

ment is supporting people, but in every case it is not government, but the private sector and households that do. That's because government is funded through taxes and the only net taxpayers are businesses and households; these two sectors pick up the tab for all manner of society's failings.

A sick employee comes to work and infects other staff.

The employer is paying for time off for all on account of a selfish or ignorant decision by one person. Worse, in the era of COVID-19, an employer is denied the ability to force people to have vaccinations or even insist that the COVID-19 tracking app is downloaded.

What about family violence? No fault of the employer, which helps out with paid and unpaid leave while society pays through policing, support for shelters and other ad hoc measures that while important in the short term, can do little to empower victims.

Well, like my past two arti-

cles, you can take this as a vitriolic whinge, or you can take the point that there are a lot of unhappy people out there.

Businesses and households are bearing the burden of their unhappiness, and perhaps there is a better way.

It might take the form of a universal income for everyone between 23 and 60. A payment of \$40,000 a year (much the same as JobKeeper) for example.

I can hear the howls now, "never read such rubbish, David's gone for the brekky bong". But think about this:

- Even entry-level people could tell bad bosses to get stuffed – the fallback would be time to consider realignment and "next steps". Businesses would face immediate pressure to invest in creating happy, productive workplaces.

- People facing family violence would know they have real options, and have the wherewithal to create a future.

- Productivity would sky-

rocket because the people at work would be those that want to work. The number of time-wasting meetings and make-work projects would plummet.

- People with skills not immediately suited to a standard workplace structure would be free to test and hone their skills and pursue their goals.

- The career of home-making would be rewarded – with real money. And society would benefit from increased parental investment in families (and consequently less delinquency and the like). Each partner in a couple could take time out to study, make a career move, or spend time at home.

- Wages would increase because employers would be competing against a workforce with real options, based on personal preferences. Good employees would continue to be highly sought after and would command higher wages.

How to pay for it? Largely it would be self-funding.

Outside of the aged pen-

sion, government spending on welfare is already about \$100 billion a year. Much of this is distinctly wasteful, and delivers little real benefit. Most of these existing payments would be redirected to the universal wage, resulting in people being better off through choice.

Spending on ineffective social supports would collapse, because people facing difficulty would be able to consider their options and fund a new life. So would payments for personal and workplace-related insurance claims (and hence premiums), because all those eligible would effectively be underwritten for the first \$40,000 of income. The number of time-wasting workplace tribunal hearings would also collapse, because in many cases there would be little or no economic loss.

And the secret sauce? Disbandment (or at least drastic restructuring) of the Fair Work Commission and its various destructive offshoots, and

abandonment of individual industry awards. Why not – the default is \$40,000 a year, completely at your discretion and employers have to compete with that? All you have to do is set some basic standards of employment.

Social commentators all over bemoan "unfairness" – genuine choice makes such arguments irrelevant. The RBA and unions want wages to increase, and the Government is making noises about productivity and change – these things go hand in hand, so let's bind them with a universal wage.

If there is one lesson from the COVID-19 experience, it's that people hate being trapped, so give them the opportunity for choice. The policy has deep social roots, and the potential for amazing gain right across society. Now is the time.

The full version of this article, which was edited for length, can be read on the TMB website.

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