

Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding

Statement of Maddison Stewart

Name: Maddison Stewart

Occupation: Welcome Experience participant; Workforce Support Officer, Far West Local Health District

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary to give to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

My background

2. I am originally from Lismore in Northern NSW. I was encouraged to move to Broken Hill with a friend who was offered a job opportunity in town. I was extremely hesitant at first knowing how remote Broken Hill was. I applied for a position at NSW Health and was successful in being offered a contract. I saw it as an opportunity to experience living in a remote location, even if for a short period of time. I thought this was something I needed to experience, to grow as person and expand my experience, before I had family ties to a location.
3. I moved to Broken Hill in October 2023 and commenced working at Far West Local Health District (**FWLHD**) as a Workforce Support Officer. I work with the Human Resources Business Partner on the backend, administrative side of the Rural Workforce Incentive Scheme for FWLHD, and complete general Human Resource requests. My contract was initially for six months, has been extended to November 2024, and I have been advised to express my interest in staying in Broken Hill to be given the opportunity to make it a permanent role.
4. My role at FWLHD was not eligible for the Rural Workforce Incentive Scheme as it was a new position.

The Welcome Experience

5. In moving to Broken Hill and commencing this role, I was a participant in the Welcome Experience run by the NSW Government. The FWLHD recruitment team initiated my involvement in the Welcome Experience, and gave my details to the Local Connector for the program after I accepted my job offer.
6. The Welcome Experience is a service that provides support to workers in health and other government agencies to move and settle into regional communities. Workers are provided with a concierge-like service. A team member called a Local Connector will discuss any questions and help individuals connect with the right people and services to ensure their move and transition into the community is as easy as possible.
7. My Local Connector in Broken Hill was Brooke, who works for Regional Development Australia – Far West. Prior to my arrival in Broken Hill, I received emails and text messages from Brooke who asked me about myself and what made me feel at home in a place. She then sent me an email with an extensive list of what might interest me in Broken Hill.
8. When I arrived in Broken Hill, Brooke, plus my friend who I had just moved to town with, and myself met for a coffee and she gave us both a tour around town. Brooke went out

of her way extensively to ensure we had arrived safely and settled in well. She has kept in touch with me consistently since then.

9. It was very nice and supportive to have Brooke welcome me to town. Moving to Broken Hill was a culture shock because it is so remote. I was worried about placing myself within the community and how I could do that, but now I play sport with a local team and work shifts at the local pub. My FWLHD colleague from the People and Culture team with whom I work closely not only introduced me to a number of local sporting activities but also to a group of women who have made me feel so incredibly welcomed.
10. As part of the Welcome Experience, participants gathered one afternoon to play lawn bowls and meet other people in a similar situation across various industries. I have met and made friends with other people who are part of the program. There have been other events planned also and Brooke always sends out emails with upcoming events we may be interested in.
11. I was offered staff accommodation by FWLHD which was not suitable because my friend who I was moving with has a pet cat, but I was thankful to know that the option was available to me. Once I knew my start date, I was able to organise my own accommodation remotely through a real-estate agent and have found the cost of living quite reasonable.
12. Overall, Brooke and the FWLHD recruitment team were very supportive, made me feel welcome, and made my transition to Broken Hill smooth and easy.



Maddison Stewart

16/05/2024

Date



Witness name: Jacinta Barraclough

16/05/2024

Date