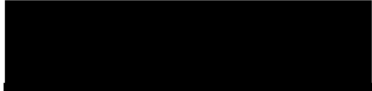


**Submission  
No 10**

## **THE PROMOTION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION OR PRACTICES**

**Name:** Mr Ron Lee  
**Date Received:** 13/12/2013



12 December 2013

Ms Leslie Williams MP  
Chair  
Committee on the Health Complaints Commission  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

By post and email to [chccc@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:chccc@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Ms Williams

Submission to Inquiry into  
The Promotion of False or Misleading Health Related-Information or Practices

I do not normally take more than a passing interest in medical issues but recently a US company called Association for Better Living and Education Inc. (ABLE) has sought the approval of my local council, Wyong Shire Council, to operate a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre on residentially zoned land close to my home. ABLE intends to achieve rehabilitation for its clients through the use of the Narconon programme. As a result I have researched the company and its promotional materials and practices. My comments below are based on material the company supplied with its development application to Wyong Council and on its websites, information obtained directly from an ex-employee of ABLE and the vast amount of independent information available on the internet.

Basically ABLE which is a US corporation wholly owned by the Church of Scientology offers a programme costing participants around \$A32,000 and lasting three to six months. The programme is not covered by Medicare and has no endorsements whatsoever from any medical authorities in Australia. There is as far as I can determine no peer reviewed research anywhere in the world that suggests the methodology has any validity nor any suggestion that the methodology has any basis in human physiology. None of the operating personnel have any qualifications other than on the job training and many are said to be ex-addicts who have completed the programme. Courts have not seen fit to utilise the Narconon programme.

The Narconon procedure in the first month effectively comprises “cold turkey” withdrawal without the assistance of any withdrawal pharmaceuticals, not even Aspirin. Instead participants undergo daily saunas for about five hours a day, exercises and overdoses of vitamins (particularly Niacin) and minerals, the stated purpose of which is to sweat the toxins out of the body. There are no medically trained personnel on site.

Following the detox procedures an education course occupies the balance of two to five months of the programme which is to provide the participant with life skills intended to reduce the risk of relapsing into addiction. There are many, many claims on the internet that the education course is virtually identical to that undertaken by recruits to the Church of Scientology which owns ABLE and that the whole undertaking is in reality all about recruiting vulnerable people into the Church.

ABLE has been offering this programme at a property at East Warburton in Victoria for more than ten years and recently has applied to the Yarra Ranges Council for approval to operate in larger premises in Warburton. ABLE is obviously intending to expand in Victoria and into NSW which is why I believe your Committee should include Narconon in its deliberations.

Inter alia your Committee may like to consider:-

whether ABLE's activities should be certified or licensed or even prohibited  
the incidence of deaths in US Narconon centres operated by ABLE  
the lack of scientific medical research anywhere verifying the practice  
the lack of any formal qualifications of the practitioners  
the obviously unscientific so called research advanced by ABLE as evidence of the effectiveness of the Narconon process  
the Narconon experience in USA generally

As a research starter I can suggest the following interesting links:-

<http://www.xenu.net/archive/disk/archive/quotes.htm> (Judges comments)

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/act/ACTSC/2002/111.html> (A medical treatment?)

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/scientology-rehab-center-fire-string-deaths-article-1.1136655>

[http://blogs.villagevoice.com/runninscared/2012/08/scientology\\_narconon\\_rena\\_weinberg.php](http://blogs.villagevoice.com/runninscared/2012/08/scientology_narconon_rena_weinberg.php) (Some history)

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Stop-Narconon/> (Numerous links including segments from A Current Affair and Today Tonight about the East Warburton property)

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/society-and-culture/scientology-cult-is-a-criminal-organisation-20091118-ikoc.html>

Yours sincerely

R.F.J. Lee

About the author

Ron Lee is a retired investment fund manager whose career involved managing investment portfolios for major insurance and superannuation funds for thirty years. He also worked as a corporate governance consultant for seven years. He has a BA and Dip Ed from Sydney University with majors in Economics and Mathematics and an MBA from Macquarie University.