The motto for the Barefoot Money Movement is "teach the kids, help the parents, change the nation". This country needs a financial revolution, and it needs to start with our kids — and your son is a shining example of what I'm trying to achieve.

Best of all, there's no chance he'll still be living in your spare room when he's 35, that's for sure.

RIP Betty

Lisa says: I'm so sorry for the loss of your beloved sheep dog Betty. Thank you for all that you do. Your writing always makes me smile.

The Barefoot Investor for Families: The Only Kids' Money Guide You'll Ever Need
HarperCollins
RRP $29.95

My husband and I have been "doing Barefoot" for more than 18 months now. We have paid off more than $18,000 of debt in less than 12 months — cleaned the slate. We appreciate your voice, and your generosity.

Thanks a million, or at the very least $18,000, and enjoy your family time off.

Barefoot responds: Thank you for the kind words, and congratulations.

Then again, I had a bloke write in and ask me what losing my faithful old sheep dog had to do with finance.

"Everything," I wrote back to him.

Some things are more important than money . . . and sometimes it's nice to be reminded of that.

Yet he was in the minority: I was amazed at the number of Barefooters who reached out and expressed their condolences.

For those who did, thank you.

Aged care homes on shaky ground

Noel Whittaker

THE aged care industry has suffered a few shocks this financial year. It is a tough time for operators, coinciding with the Royal Commission into the industry.

It's a tough time for some residents, too. The Earle Haven aged care facility on the Gold Coast has been under scrutiny due to its sudden closure. Everyone wants to know how the dispute between the owners of the village and the management caused the facility to be closed down with no notice. It's hard to imagine anything much worse than very elderly residents being evicted from their rooms with their medications and patient records confiscated as well.

In Perth, one of the most luxurious and expensive aged care groups went into voluntary administration, sending a shock wave through the industry. The group has two homes, in Subiaco and Como. The price of beds across the homes ranges from $795,000 to $1,250,000 with the operator holding about $100 million dollars in what were called "accommodation bonds", now known as RADs or "refundable accommodation deposits".

Operator Berrington Care Group says that, unlike 44 per cent of aged care operators who are operating at a loss, Berrington is profitable. They claim that the present predicament is the result of an issue with their major creditor.

So what will happen? The Administrator (KPMG) will seek to preserve the company, but if that isn't possible, Berrington may be wound up. In the meantime, the aged care facility will continue to operate, and the Group has stressed that there will be no reduction in care, services or staffing through this process.

However, wondering if they will need to relocate residents is a concern for families, along with fears that accommodation deposits may not be refunded. A Health Department spokesperson confirmed: "There are currently no concerns regarding the quality of care at the two Berrington facilities. Residents' RAD balances are guaranteed by the Commonwealth through the Accommodation Payment Guarantee Scheme. In the event that Berrington goes into liquidation and is unable to refund the RADs, the APGS will meet the payments."

Sadly, with so many aged care operators on the brink, it is a matter of when, not if, more fail. The fact that 44 per cent of aged care homes are now in the red is a cause for great concern.

Aged care homes don't go broke overnight. Before they get to the point of closing the doors they usually do all they can to improve efficiencies and cut their costs. And of course, the greatest cost is care. According to Grant Corderoy, from accounting firm Stewart Brown, "Aged care homes have to manage many factors including occupancy, getting the resident care mix right and reducing costs in order to be profitable." He says the other issue impacting operators is community expectations: "there are a number of older homes that don't enable care to be provided efficiently, and attract a lower price, meaning that the care is underfunded from the government and the consumer".

The fact accommodation deposits are guaranteed is an vital safety net for residents, although the government is considering alternatives to its ongoing role of underwriting about $27.5 billion in deposits. But aged care residents deserve more certainty than "if the operator goes broke, you'll get your money back". They need to know that they are going to be cared for now and in the future, and the system needs to enable the operator to do that without going broke. A major plank of government policy should be ensuring that aged care institutions have the cash flow to stay in business.

Noel Whittaker is the author of *Making Money Made Simple* and numerous other books on personal finance. His advice is general in nature and readers should seek their own professional advice before making any financial decisions.

ASK THE EXPERT

Send your questions to Noel Whittaker noelwhit@gmail.com or tweet @NoelWhittaker

Q If I have an investment loan of $280,000 and pay it down to $10,000 then redraw $100,000 for a share investment can I assume that all is OK as long as I strictly claim the interest on the $100,000 share investment loan against my share investment income? The reason for doing this is that the property investment interest rate is significantly below other interest rates on margin loans, for example.

A As long as the money withdrawn is used to acquire income-producing investments such as shares, there should be no problem. Issues arise when people withdraw funds from their investment loan accounts for private purposes such as paying credit card bills.

Taking a sickie might just make you feel sick

WORKPLACE MATTERS
Gary Martin

You have never really taken a sickie — a day when you phone your boss to say you are unwell, despite being fit as a fiddle in both mind and body, to get a day off work.

Now you have decided it is time. You have worked hard, you deserve a long weekend and now that you have committed to the day off, changing your mind is going to prove as difficult as pushing toothpaste back into the tube.

But here's a disturbing thought — stealing that extra day off work may end up being a bittersweet experience because your whole day of anticipated bliss will be overcome with unpleasant feelings of guilt and shame.

It will start when that longed-for sickie day sleep-in is cut short by the sobering realisation you will need to inform the boss of your no-show status.

And after contemplating whether a quick text or email will suffice, you start to feel squeamish because you rapidly reach the conclusion that neither text nor email will cut it. It will have to be a phone call.

Armed with an array of breathless sentences accompanied by a simulated hacking cough and mocked-up sneezes reminiscent of gale-force winds, you make the call.

With that bit of unpleasantness out of the way, you are free to resume your sleep-in. But as you crawl back under the covers you break into a cold sweat because your mind moves into overdrive as you overthink every detail of that awkward call to the boss.

Your boss did appear to buy it. But why did they sound as stiff and rigid as a backyard lawn chair? Was there some doubt at their end?

> "A whole day of anticipated bliss will be overcome with unpleasant feelings of guilt and shame

You decide to get a doctor's certificate to eliminate any margin for error.

As it turns out, the doctor is flat out and you have to wait.

Two hours later and after feeling somewhat guilty for telling gigantic porky pies to your GP, you are free to enjoy the rest of the day.

You consider running some errands, catching up with a friend for coffee and going to the gym for that much-needed workout.

Joy then turns to sorrow with the realisation you are not totally free to spend the day like any other holiday. You may be spotted if you venture out, and you will have to stay off social media.

As your minds turns to your under-pressure colleagues stuck in the office, you worry if your absence will pass the "pub test" when they meet for drinks at the end of the day. Or will they just blame you for adding to their workload?

So next time you want to take a sickie, remember that the lure is often far more enticing than the reality of pulling one.

Professor Gary Martin is chief executive at the Australian Institute of Management WA