

Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

panorama

People share their stories of mental health recovery in work and life

**Health and
Beauty**

No unauthorised persons
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All visitors must report
to reception.

**Recovery
stories**

**Breaking
free of the
pension**

**Upskilling
for a better
future**

A total view of growing, thriving, and living life to the full,
created by people who have a lived experience.

About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking alongside people with a lived experience of a mental health issue as they progress along their recovery journey. We passionately believe in mental health recovery. We are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement for people to achieve their recovery goals across all of our 64 services in NSW and Southern Queensland.

Flourish Australia

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CEO: **Pamela Rutledge**

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Panorama

Founded in 1996 in one of Flourish Australia's predecessor organisations (PRA), Panorama has grown to become a lifestyle magazine dedicated to informing and encouraging the recovery journey of readers. Panorama is written, designed and produced almost entirely by people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

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Disclaimer

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Professional Maintenance Services in your local community

Flourish Australia's community businesses provide quality maintenance services with a smile, including:

- ★ *Lawn mowing and grounds maintenance*
- ★ *Industrial cleaning services*
- ★ *Property maintenance services*
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By choosing Flourish Australia's community businesses you are choosing to support people on their mental health recovery journey!



Flourish Australia supports people recovering from mental health issues to access employment.

We provide comprehensive workplace training to all employees, along with the option of completing work-related TAFE qualifications onsite. This means that you with a professional service at a competitive price!

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AUSTRALIA

Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

Contact Us for a FREE quote today!

Phone: 9393 9270, 0429 317 992

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Address: Unit 2, 22 Anne St, St Marys 2760



The PreEmploy Experience

...Part 2

In September's Panorama we met MEREDITH, who was anticipating her entry into Flourish Australia's PreEmploy Institute. Here, Meredith tells us how she is progressing, mid-semester...

How has the PreEmploy experience helped me to focus on my best career options?

My work experience as a publications assistant for Panorama magazine has helped me to see that writing articles with the aim of supporting others in their recovery journey is something I really enjoy doing. Writing has become a passion of mine, and something I can really "get lost in" since the process allows me to use my creative flair to entertain as well as inform. I also enjoyed learning and using the InDesign software, which is specially made for magazines. This graphic design component of the job was also highly enjoyable since I also like doing visual design.

You can read Part One of this story, "Exploring open employment," in the Employment section of Panorama #61 September, or on Panorama Online.

The classroom training sessions confirmed that work in publication would be a suitable career option for me. I did a personality test and the results concluded that a "Writer" would suit my personality type.

Joining the workforce

During these sessions I had the opportunity to take the minutes for some of our employee meetings. I found this quite easy, and it meant I was able to use my writing skills.

During our training sessions we were also able to explore our strengths by providing an exhaustive list we could choose from. One of the attributes was "able to deal with office politics". I found this point interesting and it allowed me to ask the leader tips on how to effectively deal with office politics. His answers were very insightful. It was a good opportunity to talk about a subject that is not often discussed openly.

NDIS Options

I am also interested in singing and songwriting. I was encouraged to bring this up in my first NDIS one-to-one meeting where I could discuss possible options on how I could expand this interest of mine in a more professional way.

Two members of staff also encouraged me that I could make a good Peer Worker. Since I am fairly introverted by nature, this idea is something I found a little daunting. However, I still like to help people, so it's something I may consider in the very distant future.

What sort of work experience(s) have I been able to gain that I otherwise might not have?

As well as writing, I was also able to learn how to use the InDesign software, which is a powerful program that enables one to set up text and graphics for a newspaper or magazine. I was also able to learn how to become more familiar with using Apple computers since I mainly use a PC at home. It was also handy to learn how to use the latest model photocopier and scanner. However, the most important element that the program has given me is the opportunity to work with other people of all different backgrounds, especially those who are very different from myself.

I needed to see if I would feel comfortable in an office environment and discover if I would be happy in this type of workplace for a long-term position. I wanted to test out my people skills in the main part, since this is essential for success in many work places. The work itself has not been difficult for me and hence was not my primary

challenge.

How has doing PEI helped me in gaining confidence about applying for jobs?

The classroom training sessions were very helpful in this area. We were given detailed guidelines on what employers are looking for in resumes and how the screening process works. We were then given a template to fill out, stating our strengths and skills and were given a good block of time to type this into the computer and upload it to a career website like Seek.com. I had not previously known that I could upload my resume onto Seek.com for employers to access of their own accord.

I wanted to test out my people skills...since this is essential for success in many work places.

Another useful tip I learnt was that current volunteer work can still be viewed as credible work experience that I could put on my resume. This was encouraging since I always thought previously that if a job didn't pay you then it wasn't classified as valid work experience.

"How to hide your age on your resume" was also a highly useful technique that I discovered during these sessions. The strategy is to only mention all your work and study during the last 10 years of your life (instead of the last 30 years, which immediately allows people to calculate your age). This was a very beneficial eye opener for me.

Having actual hands-on experience in publications, naturally gave me greater confidence that I could possibly survive in an office work environment again. As a consequence, it's given me greater confidence in applying for jobs in this area as well. - By Meredith

NOTE: PreEmploy's next scheduled intake will be for July 2017. In the mean time, contact Ostara 1300 334 479

Flourish Australia's PreEmploy Institute
(02) 9393 9260
 37-41 Buckingham Street
 Surry Hills, NSW 2010



From left: Justin, Nicola, Grant and Anne

Breaking free of the pension

By Grant J Everett

Eighteen months ago I was on the Disability Support Pension, with all the positives and negatives that entails. I also worked a part-time job at Panorama magazine to keep things comfortable, but I didn't earn enough to get by without government benefits. And as much as I've always liked the idea of being financially self-reliant, I assumed that I'd be getting help from Centrelink for a long time to come.

In early 2015 I unsuccessfully applied for a job with the University of Sydney. As I was competing with people far more experienced and qualified, I wasn't surprised when I didn't get the job. The University said that they'd keep my details on file if anything came up, but I assumed the lady was just being polite and didn't expect to hear from her again. I wrote this off as a failure.

Centrelink has a safety net for people who cancel their DSP. They provide a two year "grace period" where you can get back onto the DSP without needing to do any paperwork.

Then, a couple of months later, something huge happened: Sydney University approached me with an exciting employment opportunity, and my life changed. The job was

a twelve month research contract, and the pay was (for a guy without a HSC) phenomenal. However, a big shift like this meant I really needed to figure out my financial gameplan. My first instinct was to work as much as I could while still retaining the pension. But then *another* thought occurred to me: what if I *cancelled* my DSP altogether, and became financially independent? It was a scary prospect, but something I really wanted to experience. My self-esteem ballooned just at the thought of it!

I was legally allowed to keep using my Concession card for twelve months.

Rather than allowing fear to stop me, I discussed this with both of my bosses before deciding that I'd work both jobs - three days at the magazine and two days at the University - and cancel my DSP ASAP.

Too long

Calling up to cancel my Centrelink payments was a moment of total pride. I felt like a champion when I explained to the support person how my circumstances had changed (though "bragging" might be a more accurate word than "explained"). Then, as of 10:45 am, August the 21st, 2015, I ceased to be a pensioner for the first time in my adult life.

It was jarring, to be honest. If you've been getting a pension for ages and ages like I have, then the idea of saying "no" to Centrelink support may not compute. Sure, a lot of people don't have any choice but to rely on the pension to get by, but I decided that choosing to stay on the DSP when I had a real

opportunity to get off it basically meant choosing to live in poverty.

I need to note at this point that being on a pension isn't just a question of maths. I've found that working gives me pride and purpose, it shapes my identity, and it gives me a reason to wake up in the morning. As we are defined more by what we do than by who we are, we should do all we can. Our futures are steered by where we want to go and what we're willing to do to get there.

Breaking the cycle

Like I've already mentioned, I only had a temporary contract with the Uni, and it finished in June 2016. Even though I'm not earning those big bucks anymore, I've been provided with a lot of other valuable things: I have something great to add to my resume, I've sharpened my writing skills, and I've also gained the knowledge that I can survive without the pension.

Originally, my plan was to go back to working four short days a week at Panorama magazine, as I found five full days tiring. Such a big reduction in my working hours would pretty much guarantee that I'd need to go back on a small pension to make ends meet. However, my boss at the magazine, Warren, talked me out of it by making a really good point: I'd been doing five days a week for a whole year without anything catastrophic happening, so why would I want to choose to go backwards? So many options! This all required some thought...

Soldiering

Although working full-time is exhausting and I've had some anxious feelings spring up here and there due to the extra workload, I took Warren's advice. Before I knew it I'd adjusted to doing 80 hours a fortnight without any problems.

I'm very glad I left my comfort zone, even though it was pretty nerve-wracking, and I definitely want to encourage all of our readers to do the same. After all, even if things don't work out, Flourish Australia is always there if you need supported employment. I'm sure many people let pension worries or relapse worries hold them back from attempting to build the life they want, but we can't and shouldn't let this stop us from trying for a better future.

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23-25 Station Street West,
Harris Park, NSW 2150
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Warehousing: upskilling for a better future

What is it like to be a mature age student doing an apprenticeship? Panorama asked Steven Fitzgerald and Heidi Chan of Prestige Packing at Harris Park about their on-site studies with the Academy of Workplace Learning.

The Apprentice(s)

Apprenticeships aren't just for kids: Steve and Heidi have been hard at work doing a Certificate III in Warehouse Operations, a nationally recognised qualification, since June 2015. Completing this apprenticeship will help them in the search for open employment and equip them with the skills they need.

So why did they start doing this course?

"I wanted to get a qualification," Steve said. "Accomplishing something like that appealed to me. Getting into an open employment role for higher pay would be good, too!"

"I'd like to have a qualification as well." Heidi agreed.

What does it involve?

Warehouse Operations III turns warehouse workers into managers and supervisors. While there's a fair amount of practical hands-on learning involved, the students also learn a lot about administrative duties and other paperwork tasks that any warehouse needs to keep track of in order to operate. The class runs one day a week for three hours per lesson, and is facilitated by Wayne Petersen from the

Academy of Workplace Learning. He attends in person each week.

"There's reading and writing, answering questions, watching videos, identifying hazards in the workplace, doing tests to show what we've learned, and a mixture of practical and theory work," Steve said. "We also do presentations, write speeches about warehousing, and work together for group activities."

"The course is challenging," Heidi added. "It's interesting, it's very useful, and it makes you think. It's not boring, but it isn't too strenuous, either."

If a worker needs to catch up on a lesson, they may be able to do this at home. When the entire class gets homework, though, this often involves doing some research tasks on the Internet.

Because study times count as working hours, the students are paid to study.

There are requirements you need to meet if you want to graduate. In addition to attending the class itself, the students need to work three standard days (a total of around 22 hours). This has encouraged Steve and Heidi to maintain a good attendance record, as their time at Prestige Packing is having a direct impact on their future goals.

There's still time!

Many of us have experienced interruptions to our education due to the onset of mental health issues.

However, this doesn't mean that we've permanently missed out on attaining our dream jobs. There are plenty of advantages to studying as an adult, too: mature students have a better idea of what they want from life, their priorities are more sensible, and they do a course because THEY want to do it, not because their parents make them.

Government help

Heidi and Steve said that the government paid for this course to run, so the students don't pay a cent. Also, all of the study and safety supplies the students required, including folders, textbooks, hi-visibility vests and work boots were also provided. Being a part of this class doesn't affect their pension, either.

The current class of 22 was previously run on two separate sites. Seven people from the former West Ryde class joined up with the 15 at Harris Park. Heidi reckons the class got a bit crowded after the move. After all, it more than tripled! Thankfully, Wayne can teach 22 students just as well as 7, and the class is just as good as always.

Do you like scary movies?

Steve mentioned that they had to watch some grim Work Health & Safety movies about how dangerous a warehouse environment can be. Heidi mentioned that after seeing a video about forklift accidents, she's had second thoughts about her goal of driving one for a living! Although these videos sound unpleasant, warehouses contain many hazards for the uninformed or the distracted, and it's a terrible idea to just pretend that danger doesn't exist. On that subject, you may be surprised at one of the number one risks in the workplace...

"We've learned that the most dangerous thing in the workplace is hot water," Heidi taught me.

"Coffee causes so, so many accidents." Steve agreed.

The future?

"I'd consider more study," Steve said, "but I'll cross that road when I come to it."

Has it been a positive experience? "It's been a good experience, mostly because the teacher is so nice!" Heidi said. "It feels good to hit the books again," Steve added.

Fingers are Green at Flourish Australia's Community Business in St Marys!

Fingers have gone green at our community business in St Marys. What was once a mass of weeds is now in the process of becoming a garden called "Flourishdale". The creation of this garden is not only beautifying the outdoor space at St Marys, but also giving employees the opportunity to fine-tune their horticulture skills - particularly valuable experience for those studying Cert III in horticulture onsite. Jay Irsaj - the manager at St Marys - has big plans for the Flourishdale garden, so watch this space!

Flourish Australia's Community Businesses in St Marys and Warwick Farm provide lawn and garden maintenance and commercial cleaning services, including a specialized hoarding and squalor clean-up service.

Enquiries phone Jay Irsaj on 0429 317 992 or contact us through our Flourish Australia website at

www.flourishaustralia.org.au



Flourish Australia's Community Businesses expanding to country NSW

by Clare Evans

Flourish Australia's community businesses provide employment opportunities in a supportive environment for people living with mental health issues. Within the Sydney Metro Area we currently offer packing and light assembly work at Harris Park and Marrickville, hospitality work at Figtree Conference Centre at Sydney Olympic Park, or grounds maintenance and commercial cleaning work at St Marys and

Warwick Farm. Employment at one of our community businesses means you also have access to recovery groups and one-on-one mental health support to further your recovery journey. You can even do TAFE qualifications, including Cert 3 in Warehouse Operations or Cert 3 in Horticulture, free of charge onsite.

We are now proud to announce that Flourish Australia has opened two new community businesses at Wagga Wagga and Menangle. Both businesses will be providing commercial cleaning services and our Wagga Wagga business will be offering a car washing service as well. We are currently seeking employees for our two new businesses. So if you live in or near Wagga Wagga or Menangle and are seeking a supportive workplace to further your mental health recovery journey, give us a call on (02) 9393 9000, or contact us through our Flourish Australia webpage at:

www.flourishaustralia.org.au



Recovery Story



Left: Faye Oldfield, Manager, respite services at Penrith (left) and Rebekah Taylor (right) outside Flourish Australia at Derby St Penrith.

Previously, I had been with many other services and also been refused access by some. I felt that I was being pushed from one to the other; there was no consistency in my ongoing mental health treatment. It was Flourish Australia that finally provided me with the things that I needed to continue on.

Since 2004, I have worked for Western Sydney University teaching in the Bachelor of Nursing Degree. Since the assault, I have no longer been able to do this; however I still work for them marking university essays from home in both the Undergraduate and Master's Degrees.

"This is something that I thought I would never have the courage to do..."

Today, with the ongoing assistance of the wonderful workers at Flourish, I am able to take my two small therapy dogs to a local nursing home, go shopping, and attend appointments. Lastly, I had not driven my car for four and a half years, and with the help of Lisa and Faye, I have begun to drive the short distance to practise with the SOS (Sing Out Strong) women's choir. This is something that I thought I would never have the courage to do, and little by little I have noticed the rekindling of my inner strength.

Driven from Pillar to Post

Rebekah is a nurse, a teacher, a dancer, a mother and so many other things. Her story shows why it is important that people living with mental health issues have access to the support that they actually need, not the support that the system thinks they ought to have.

Where my recovery began

by Rebekah Taylor RN

Thank you to Flourish for providing me with three workers from Respite for carer's organisation. I first met Faye [Oldfield] two years ago at a time when I was feeling particularly desperate and suicidal.

Faye was understanding, non-judgemental, and gave off a feeling

of warmth and acceptance. I gave Faye my consent to discuss my case with the cluster manager, Latha Rajan. The following visits Faye disclosed to me that Latha had told her that it was really important to work with me to provide me with a feeling of hope. This is where my recovery began.

My life has been a difficult one, filled with violence and abuse. After a particularly violent assault, I developed major suicidal tendencies which I acted on, on a number of occasions. I also developed severe agoraphobia and lived as a recluse until meeting Faye, Latha, and Lisa [Natrass] from Flourish.

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232 Derby Street
PENRITH NSW 2750
Initial Enquiries please call
1300 779 230

Services at Penrith include
D2DL Day to Day Living
(02) 9393 9799
PIR Partners in Recovery
(02) 9393 9770
HASI Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative
(02) 9393 9779
YCLSS Youth Community Support Service (02) 9393 9779

When goals are not enough

Warren Heggarty spoke to Rebekah about her surprising background

Very often, mental health issues begin to trouble us when we are young and can prevent us from going through the stages of life that others take for granted. So when people from Flourish Australia work alongside a person on their recovery journey, we often talk about setting goals for the future and 'getting back on track' as it were.

With Rebekah, however, it is a little different.

'I am very driven. When I was a girl I remember praying *Dear God please make me seventeen so that I can be a nurse!*

And so she did indeed become a nurse. 'I was working as an AIN (assistant in nursing, or aged care nurse) while going to university to qualify as a Registered Nurse. I topped my class. While I was doing that I was bringing up the first three of my five children, who were aged 5, 3 and 1. I also opened a dance studio and taught ballet, jazz, tap and contemporary dance.'

It is obvious that in the past Rebekah has always been able to find her motivation to participate in life.

'At one stage I had horses and trained them and did dressage. I also worked as a dancer on stage, and I started teaching dance at 14. I did some modelling, too.'

'When I was young, I idolised my own dance teacher and was devastated when I heard she was moving interstate.'

'I haven't had a single bit of life without trauma. I think staying really busy is something that I did to mask how I was feeling.'

In addition, her experience in the hospital system has been very negative. She is a registered nurse and university teacher but far from engendering respect, it seems to count against her. Especially when she pointed out things like errors in the medication they were giving her.

Rebekah's early home life was characterised by violence and alcoholism. When she married, at 20, she tended to idolise her husband. They had five children altogether but the marriage ended in divorce in 2001. 'He told me basically that I would not be able to cope without him.' Her ex husband remarried. Rebekah felt that in retrospect this might have been a positive thing, although it didn't seem like that at the time.

"Little by little I have noticed the rekindling of my inner strength." -Rebekah

So on the one hand, Rebekah has many proud achievements behind her already. Yet on the other, she admits that her sense of self worth was in some way connected to these achievements or to her efforts for others. In this sort of situation, any shortcoming, however small, can make a person feel totally worthless. Rebekah is aware that this is not really rational, but we humans do tend to be dominated by

Recovery Story

our feelings.

So in looking to the future, Rebekah finds it difficult to be enthusiastic. Since her divorce, she says she has become more and more isolated and this is reflected in the difficulty she has with agoraphobia.

Fortunately, Boss and Squeezie the therapy dogs do not place conditions on the people they love, as shown by their adorable faces below.

'Those dogs are what keep me going!' she says enthusiastically. Boss and Squeezie are from Nepean Therapy Dogs. Rebekah volunteers going to nursing homes where the canines are always popular with the residents. Small things like this can have a giant impact on the quality of life of nursing home residents.

Sing out Strong is a Women's Choir that Rebekah is involved in. Many of the women involved in the choir have similar backgrounds of abusive relationships. They perform at venues like Penrith RSL to raise funds for West Connect Domestic Violence Services.



Pictured: Rebekah with Boss and Squeezie



Things can be a struggle, but ultimately, all of us have

Something to Offer

By Michael

I was born in Lebanon and came to Australia with my family when I was very young in the early 70's. I did all my schooling in Australia, completing year ten. My dad was a good man but also a very strict and one day after staying out too late at the youth centre I decided that I couldn't go back home and ran away because I was scared of what my father would do to me when I got home.

I lived on the streets for the next two years, couch surfing with friends when I could. Life was hell. For the first time I was exposed to using drugs.

Eventually I decided that I couldn't live on the streets anymore: I had run out of options and moved back home with Mum and Dad.

Dad and I didn't see eye to eye especially with some of the choices that I had made. I started to go to Technical School but with what was happening at home between me and dad it didn't work out.

When I was 17 I decided to move to Melbourne with my girlfriend, living in Frankston until I was 21. I had good jobs in Melbourne doing factory work at Don Smallgoods and Nylex.

My girlfriend at the time and I split up and my parents had just moved to Bankstown after buying a small retail business so I came back to Sydney to live with my parents

again.

During this time I met my ex-partner who became the mother of my children.

In 1998 my ex-partner won \$2,000,000. This was when my life really started to fall apart. I got stuck into the drugs (Heroin) and with my share of the money my ex-partner had won I was able to support my Heroin habit for the next three or four years. Once the money ran out though, I was forced to turn to crime to fund my addiction.

I made some bad choices and when the traffic offences and other misdemeanours

started to pile up the magistrate put me in gaol.

Over the last fifteen years life has been tough. My drug habit has led to my family being torn apart by DOCS who stopped me from living in the same house as my children. The Heroin use also led me to continue a life of crime to feed my habit, lengthy periods of homelessness and further bouts in gaol. Eventually I was put on the methadone program but still used cocaine when the opportunity came up. Five or six years ago I was diagnosed with Schizophrenia and have been scheduled into Banks House many times over the years because of my behaviour.

[She] won \$2,000,000. That was when my life really started to fall apart.

Life on the street when you are homeless is very hard. Constantly looking for somewhere to sleep, something to eat, scavenging for whatever you can get, it's all about survival and sometimes survival means you may come in contact with the law.

That was until last year when my friend Sam told me about Partners in Recovery (PIR). Sam told me that PIR were helping him and that they would be able to help me. So I went and put my name down.

PIR have continued to support me through the tough times. I didn't know anything about refuges, temporary accommodation properties (TAP's) or what else was available to support me but they did. They were able to get housing to help me with motel accommodation when I needed it even though I had used my quota. They got me into a refuge at Liverpool with my own room and then into a TAP's property when my time at the refuge had run out.

PIR listened to me, to what I needed, they didn't judge me for what I had done in the past. They just wanted to help me find a house to live in and find some stability in my life.

PIR helped me learn that I had to do my part, I had to prove to people that I could maintain a property and pay my bills. I am now in a brand new unit that I plan on keeping immaculate. "It's totally mad" that I have gone from being homeless for so long to living in this place where everything is brand new.

If you ever want help from Partners In Recovery I can highly recommend it, with their support I feel I am finally in control of my life, something that I haven't felt for a very long time.

I am still working on my goals with PIR's support. My next big goal is to start seeing my kids. I am ready to be a Father, I have

a home, I have stability, I want my kids to know who their dad is. I am going to do it the right way through Legal Aid and Docs. I know it will take time but I don't want to do anything that jeopardizes my future with them. Without PIR's support I don't think I would have got to this point, to the point where I have something to offer my children.

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Wellness Walk Self Talk

The things we tell ourselves can make all the difference. Have you ever listened to your own self-talk. LARRY BILLINGTON, (who accesses our service at Surry Hills and doubles as Chairman of the Community Advisory Council) has given us this step by step account of his thoughts while participating in the Wellness Walk.

Five Kilometres, across the Harbour Bridge and back. That sounds like a long way. But I registered online yesterday...so here goes.

How will I get there? Will I last the distance? I'll need to hydrate. I'll need to drink a lot of water.

It's about recovery, but how will this ultimately help me?

Ready? Go. Keep moving one foot in front of the other. Breathe in-out, in-out. Puff, cough, wheeze. Where's my water bottle? I can hear a song coming to me:

**I need to recover, I need a walk
How can I listen, to all this talk**

**Oh for a better life, oh for a wife
How could I ever do Wellness Walk?**

I need this game, for me to re-frame.

My heel hurts already. But I'll Muddle through. "Is it this way, officer?" Take a picture. Click.

Slurp, guzzle, drip. How far to go? Four Kilometres. Past Circular Quay, lots of ferries.

Maybe I should quit now. Can I go back? But what will they say of me? Will I be ostracized . . . castigated . . . outcast? Keep going...

**I need music, I need song
Play me a tune, I may be wrong it's all a drag, oh for a fag**

**Run on Daisy, make my head hazy
I like good talk, I like wine
can't she praise me all of the time?**

Time for a selfie? Click. I so wanted to do this. But, now? Keep moving! Step up. Come on , mate!

Gee , I'm thirsty. Here is the South Pylon of the Harbour Bridge. Can I still do this? I don't know. But I promised her I would. Join us for another selfie? Click.

Phew. I'm regressing, not recovering here. Two Kilometres...

**Open your eyes, then you'll realise
I don't care, I have no share.
Of your bad talk, and my poor walk
It's plain to see, but I cannot be
Raise your eyes, my best ties
I'll complete this damned ol' feat.**

More water! Slurp, guzzle, drip. Onto the Harbour Bridge. Turn around. I can't.

I want to sit. How will I get back? "Hi Pamela. No, I'm OK. Just resting. You keep walking." She's offering to help me. No, Ill get there. I'm determined.

Now I'm seeing double. Keep going big fella. Another selfie? Click. Three Kilometres

Slurp, Guzzle. Drip. Now my knees are sore. I'm falling behind. Will I? Enough already.

Round the South Pylon big man. Keep going. More steps, down. Selfie? Click. Click.

How far now? I don't think I . . . They've all left me. I'm too slow now. Not far now? Need a drink. Slurp. Guzzle. Drip.

Almost there. Which way home? Not far now, Sir. You'll make it. Don't worry you're the last.

**Despite the hurt, and a wet shirt
Although I'm late and yet to gate
It's been a slog, I feel a fog
I may not finish, and sadly say,
I recover every day, in every way.**

I see it. 5km Hooray. I did it. We did it. I'm exhausted. I'm out of water. Can I?

No, they cleaned up before. Where is everybody? All those walkers? Oh, they all dispersed an hour ago , mate. We're just here to clean up the trash. See you next year.

Oh well, I can celebrate alone. Gee I'm dry. Gee I'm tired. Yes, that has helped me in my recovery process. Just to have done it, with others.

Now to walk on home. What a great Wellness Walk. I feel great, now.

The Wellness Walk is an annual event hosted by the Sunflower Foundation. This year, Flourish Australia raised money towards its Women and Children's Program

CAC update

By Larry Billington, Chairman

The work of the Community Advisory Council continues in framing policy and NDIS documentation, in coalition with staff. Mark Orr (staff) was heard to say that "We're very busy with NDIS right now - looking after member interests" .

The next meeting of the 24 representatives of the Community Advisory Council will be in May, 2017 and all ideas and feedback are welcome via representatives.

The Chairman of the Council, Larry Billington said " On behalf of the CAC, I wish all members, people who access the service, staff and executives compliments of the season, and may the Flourish Australia banner and new branding fly high for all in the new year".



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Service
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Seven Hills 2147
02 9393 9290**

**BodyFit Health Club
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Lalor Park 2147
02 9621 3370
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**Wetherill Park
Crossfit
Unit 3/11 Lagana Place
Wetherill Park 2164.
02 9756 1473
www.
wetherillparkcrossfit.
com.au**

ABOVE Young people getting involved. From left to right we have Justin James, James Hamilton, Scott Nabarro, Nathan De Hart and the front, Li Ern Soo (that's right, show us those muscles!) and Breanne Dyde. **BELOW:** The whole team at Body Fit. Khalil is top left and Stephen is third from the left PHOTOS COURTESY OF BODYFIT

YCLSS gets involved in some BodyFit fun

The young people from Blacktown Youth Community Living Support Service (YCLSS) took part in a promotion for a local fitness club in August 2016. This involved a weekend photoshoot with the team at BodyFit Blacktown. ELSPETH CORNELL of YCLSS fills in the details.

We have been working with BodyFit Health Club located at Lalor Park for approximately eight months, that is since February 2016. They have provided the young people with significantly discounted casual and membership rates.

The people we need to thank for this are the owner Khalil Alrichan and manager Stephen Anderson. So thanks guys!

YCLSS has had a focus on Fitness as

a means of improving mental health for sometime now. It all started over a year ago when Western Sydney University and Y-POP (Young People's Outreach Program) teamed up for a twelve week bootcamp. When it concluded we noticed the significant impact it had on the young people's self esteem and willingness to engage back into the community.

The young people reported that they felt fitter and happier. Some even reported a reduction in their feelings of depression and anxiety. We even had one young person join a Crossfit gym in their local area after a recommendation from the personal trainer hired for the 12 week program, Michael Harlow.

Michael Harlow has also volunteered his expertise for other one day

workout sessions at Grevillea Cottage and for YCLSS outings. We have also worked with Wetherill Park Crossfit who offered a free eight week program for the young people called WPCF Movement.

We are now working with BodyFit on an individual tailored fitness program for each young person wanting to use their facility. Breanne Dyde says 'the staff at BodyFit are friendly and seem to enjoy their job.' Some people don't like the idea that others might be looking at them in a gym, but Nathan De Hart says that he didn't feel that way at all. 'I like the staff,' he added.

We really appreciate the way local community businesses are working with us to promote wellbeing among the people who access Flourish Australia's services.



Each Issue covers a new CANSAS theme!

This month's theme:

Panorama ACTION

Information
on condition
and
treatment

1. Accommodation. 2. Food. 3. Looking after the home. 4. Self care. 5. Daytime activities. 6. Physical health. 7. Psychotic symptoms. 8. Information on condition and treatment. 9. Psychological distress. 10. Safety to self. 11. Safety to Others. 12. Alcohol. 13. Street Drugs. 14. Company. 15. Intimate relationships. 16. Sexual expression. 17. Childcare. 18. Basic Education. 19. Telephone. 20. Transport. 21. Money. 22. Benefits. (Plus other special topics from time to time)



Information is the fuel that runs the recovery vehicle...

Things we all need to know on our recovery journey

The recovery journey takes place on a zig-zagging road made from questions and answers. You need information to undertake the journey. Sometimes getting that information involves working up courage.

Do you feel intimidated by professionals? Do you feel too timid to ask a question in your own interest? Do you feel that someone with qualifications should not be questioned?

People seem to be especially fearful of questioning psychiatrists, nurses, occupational therapists and other people we meet in psych wards. But it applies to everyone, including Flourish Australia staff. Peer Workers, Mental Health Workers, whoever has the information that you might need.

Rather than publishing a whole lot of information, in this issue of ACTION, we are going to look at ways important information is made avail-

able. You can get information from government or NGO web sites. We will look at the National Prescribing Service who can help you with information about your medication, though we hope you have already discussed this with your doctor and or pharmacist!

Then we are going to look at a project at Flourish Australia in Caboolture to do with influenza and vaccination.

If you want in depth information, going to a forum or a training course is ideal. We are going to be looking at two courses in this edition of ACTION, one on Mental Health First Aid and another on recovery presented by two pioneering ladies from the United States who visited our shores recently.

We often cover training courses in Panorama, but the best way is to put your name down and take part in one. You will hopefully see, from the examples we have given, that people get a lot out of them! It's not like being in school. Nobody is going to put you down at courses like these!

Good luck with your information gathering.

NPS
Medicinewise
www.nps.org.au/

The National Prescribing Service is an independent, not-for-profit, government funded, evidence based service which provides information about medicines and conditions for the general public and for health professionals.

For example, you can find information about everything from antibiotics to fish oil supplements. It also contains information about medical tests (X-ray, pathology etc) and general health topics like blood pressure, pain and diabetes.

NPS has several publications, including Medicinewise Living which Panorama has consulted from time to time. There is currently an article there about how people with dementia have the right to make their own decisions about their care and treatment (as we all do!).

There are some great resources on the web site. For example, now that winter is upon us, there is an article about why antibiotics will not aid flu recovery. And there is also an article for professionals about how to deal with 'prescription drug-seeking behaviour.'

Plus consumers of health services can talk to a professional from Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm AEST. There is a triaged Medicines Line: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424), plus a line where you can report problems with medicine 1300 134 237 with a link to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

And yes, there is an app, but why don't you go to www.nps.org.au and see it all for yourself!

Panorama ACTION looks at an example of getting the health message across to the people who access our services at Caboolture

Information Influences Influenza Attitudes

We spoke to **MELISSA HAFENDEN**, Senior Mental Health Worker at Caboolture

'We started with a team discussion about what health physical health concerns there were, and as it was coming into Winter we thought Influenza would be a good topic for education.

The first thing we did was to have one to one meetings between Peer Workers and each of the people who access Caboolture service.

Sample Bags

As a bit of a gimmickry, we came up with a Flu Sample bag, because we knew that sort of thing would go down well. The sample bags included information about flu and how to manage it with good hygiene as well as lozenges and even hand sanitiser!

Flourish Australia
Caboolture
Office 1, Ground Floor
33 King Street
CABOOLTURE Qld 4510
Ph 1300 779 270

Following that we branched out into preventive mode. At our next BBQ we tried to send the message that good nutritional choices will boost your immunity and protect you from illness. What we eat and the amount of physical exercise we do are both important. We aimed to get people to go out of their comfort zones with healthy eating. To top it all off we had a walk in the sunshine.

To enable us to evaluate it we surveyed the participants' before and

December 2016

after the project to see if we had made a difference. We found that participants grew in their awareness of preventive measures such as hygiene and physical health.

We also found, more surprisingly, that there was not much increase in willingness to have a flu vaccination, even though that was part of the program. The AFTER survey showed that people still didn't want to be vaccinated for flu. Some cited 'cost' as a reason, although we explained how and where people on the DSP can get free vaccines. Another thing they were worried about was the possibility of getting sick from the vaccine.

Next Up!

All in all, though people were very keen on participating and this has led us to begin work on our next physical health project.

It is early days yet, but something we are considering is a day where we look at personal hygiene- but in a nice way. Call it a 'Makeover!'

The Flu

10% of adults get flu each year There are between 1,500 and 3,500 deaths from flu or from its complications (like pneumonia and bronchitis) each year. It is NOT the same as a COLD. (Department of Health Australia, 2016)

People at a high risk may be eligible for a free vaccine. Check with your GP. People at high risk may include the elderly, young children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and people with certain chronic illnesses including diabetes. (Department of Health Australia, 2016)

If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, the price starts at \$9 but varies. (MacIntyre & Aye, 2016)

There are various ever-changing strains of flu in circulation all the time meaning that we have to keep making new vaccines each year. There are three types, A, B and C. Influenza C does not cause major outbreaks. (Department of Health Australia, 2016)

In 2016, Trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV) protects against three strains nicknamed

California A, Hong Kong A (the worst) and Brisbane B. Quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (QIV) also protects against Phuket B.

Live flu vaccines, used in other countries, can sometimes actually cause influenza, but are not available in Australia. Only inactivated vaccines are used in Australia. Inactivated flu vaccine cannot actually give you flu. (MacIntyre & Aye, 2016)

More information about Flu and infectious diseases are on the NSW health or Immunize Australia web sites.

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Resources are Everywhere

NSW, Queensland and Commonwealth Health Departments have lots of resources available to spread information about all kinds of health issues- including mental health issues. A lot of them are targeted at very specific audiences. For example, the FLU poster below comes with different images of sneezing people. This is the aboriginal version! The information is out there and there is something for everyone.



Call Ostara
1300 334 497

Panorama

#3
2016

Employment

Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service bulletin for Ostara employment

EVENT MANAGEMENT

The hard work that goes on behind all the fun and games!

Panorama Employment looks at Flourish Australia's Annual Picnic Day from behind the scenes.



BELOW: Anna makes a speech thanking the organisers for a great event, while Organiser-in-Chief Mohammed Alkhub looks on.



ABOVE: Rosita the scorekeeper. Scorekeepers, the people who organise the balls and equipment, umpires... these are the unsung heroes of the sporting world.

Anyone who has ever organised an event will tell you that people often don't appreciate how much there is going on behind the scenes. The good thing about this is that there is always work going in Event Management. See inside for details about what sort of work is available and what sort of skills are required.

RIGHT: Phillip from PreEmploy braves a stiff breeze to disassemble one of the banners ready for packing away.





Event Management

Part 1: What it entails

Flourish Australia, like any large organization, organizes many events, but we have an added dimension to them. The events catered-to by our Figtree Conference Centre, provide valuable work experience to people living with mental health who are its employees. You may have read in a previous issue of Panorama about John Sebessy, once an employee of Figtree's predecessor Platform Ten, who later went onto management positions in hospitality.

Pride in your work

We asked Sue O'Rourke, the manager of Figtree Conference Centre whether there was any event of which she was particularly proud.

"This may sound twee," says Sue, "but I'm proud of every event we host at Figtree. Because we apply the same expectations of uncompromising quality and service to every event held here. All Figtree employees are reminded that our

first priority is to work toward the efficient, seamless provision of customer service. We also try and communicate the message that we are a social enterprise and that when people hold meetings or events at Figtree they are helping to change people's lives."

Before he came to Flourish Australia as manager of Peer Work, Peter Farrugia worked with Blacktown Council in organizing events. When we interviewed him about his work, he glowed with pride as he recalled a mediaeval themed event he organized for the council, complete with knights in shining armour, damsels in distress and period costume and music. It all came together when he met some people from the Society for Creative Anachronism... but that's another story. Peter's most vivid recollection of the event was and still is the satisfaction of seeing the looks on the children's faces!

Trade Secrets

Kim Jones says that among the many events she has organized over the years, the one that shines would have to be one for 300 people, a staff, Community, Carer and Consumer Event. 'Everyone had a great time, it ran smoothly and the end result was very successful.' But with so much that can go wrong in an event, how do you make sure you get to 'successful?'

"Planning and preparation," says Sue O'Rourke. "And then more planning and preparation! And having back-ups and contingencies in place, in case of something unforeseen. Being really attentive

and accessible in case someone needs something, but not being in the way. Their event is about them, not us! We are just there with the infrastructure, service and supports to make sure that an event goes smoothly. I also think that food at an event really makes a difference. Our menu reflects our attitude to our customers. It is modern, fresh, good quality and mostly prepared here in our kitchen by our employees (and so made with love!!). To this end, I try to keep up-to-date with food trends. Ultimately you want the people who book or attend events here to feel really valued and special. They are our customers and we want them to return."

There's a lot of value in what Sue says not just by way of advice for working in hospitality, but in everyday housekeeping and entertaining our friends, family and visitors in our homes.

It is important to promote the event and to promote it in good time, says Kim, to make sure that people are actually able to attend it! And working within budget is always essential. 'Don't overspend!' says Kim, and 'Ask lots of questions.'

Peter Farrugia agrees with the importance of planning to meet customer needs. "The secret to good event organisation is to plan well, and to plan to the needs of the audience. I work with the premise of "under-promise and over-deliver". This seems to be a winning formula. I also keep in mind the simple joys of childhood. This seems to tickle the memories of adults and surprise youngsters. Other than that, hard work and dedication, as well as trying to account for any and every possibility, including inclement weather!"

Figtree Conference Centre Linda, Sue, Sandra and Deyone





Event Management

Part 2: How to get a foot in the door

Kim says it is important when organizing an event to have people who are willing and able to do the work required in the time required but not all the work requires a degree in Neuroscience. For many tasks the most important thing is attitude.

If you are looking for work in event organizing, Peter suggests you look at volunteering for an existing event. That way you can get your foot in the door. There are so many events nowadays because it is such a popular way of marketing in the modern organization. There is an organization called Volunteering Australia where you can get tips. Local Councils, like the one Peter used to work for are always looking for event volunteers.

School fetes need people to run them! The Royal Easter Show needs reliable people to help out with the massive amount of organizing that it requires each year. Another annual event is the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. The types of work are usually fairly routine, such as filling show bags, but sometimes there is a bit more of an art to it, such as traffic control or First Aid through the St Johns Ambulance.

'With events, everyone loves the show but people are often not prepared to step up and do the work' says Peter. 'This can provide you with an entry point to employment if you ARE prepared to do that. In volunteering, motivation really can make up for a lack of Experience!'

Flourish Australia is a leading not-for-profit organisation providing community based support and employment services for people living with a mental health issue.

As a social enterprise of Flourish Australia, Figtree Conference Centre provides outstanding event facilities and delivers positive social outcomes through the provision of training and employment opportunities to break the cycle of unemployment and isolation so often experienced by people with lived experience of mental illness.

Being employed gives people a sense of purpose and goes a long way to improving their wellbeing.

Each employee is trained and mentored in events and catering management. Vocational services give employees tailored training, mentorship and direction along with access to TAFE courses.

The ability to interact with others, achieve goals and make a productive contribution provides a boost for participants' self-esteem, helping them with their recovery journey.

Located in Sydney Olympic Park, Figtree is a purpose-built conference facility, which can be tailored to suit your individual event requirements.

Our versatile, open-plan venue is flooded with natural light, has state-of-the-art, integrated IT and audio visual facilities, free on-site parking and full access for people with a disability.

Figtree is easily accessible by public transport and is located within walking distance to hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues within the Sydney Olympic Park precinct.

We have a range of delicious menu options to cater for any event or budget and a separate, open-plan art gallery for exhibitions, displays, trade shows or cocktail functions.

To discuss your event or meeting needs, please email:

figtree@flourishaustralia.org.au

or phone

0420 505 907 or 02 9393 9000



Honest talk can lead to recovery...and employment

By Alberto



When ALBERTO celebrated more than six months in a new job, he wanted to tell Panorama readers about how he was able to bounce back, with some help from Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service, Ostara (Alberto is pictured on the right with Ostara's Anthony Perera on the left)

I had a back injury doing demolition work. Because of that I was off work for eighteen months with a workers' compensation claim.

I had to attend Centrelink but I needed special help due to the pain of the injury. It definitely affected me mentally, too. I lost a lot of hope and confidence because of it.

I was sent to Ostara for extra help and there I worked mostly with employment consultants Alan and Ahamed at the Redfern office.

Now I am working again.

At first I did four months' retail work at Mont Blanc. Then two months after that fell through, I got a job at St Vincent De Paul Bondi Beach where I have been for six months now.

I am a sales person. We sort and sell donations. There is still a bit of lifting involved and sometimes I struggle. But I love mixing with the customers!

At Bondi Junction people are relaxed...I like it a lot. People there like me as well. I still have a little bit of trouble with the back but I find that exercise helps, and anti-inflammatory medicine.

I used to go to the gym to work out, but now I walk for half an hour

every day and do stretches at home and at work.

At various times I have worked on and off in sales, as a labourer and in factories and also for a demolition labour hire firm.

In the future, I would really like to do a traineeship, perhaps in management. I'd like to stay with St Vinnies, though, and see what doors open!

I find that spirituality helps me. I try to keep my morale high by praying and meditating.

I find praying to God to give me strength and guidance to help me to do the right thing is good, especially in those times when I am feeling helpless. Sometimes the world can seem complicated, competitive and stressful, but the more I pray, the less I stress.

Talking to people helped my recovery a lot, too.

Ostara staff made sure I was able to open up and talk honestly about how I felt. They always pushed that point: that if I had any problems to talk to them at once.

Past job agencies didn't believe in that. With Ostara people spend more time with the person and are genuine about helping people.

I think it is important for people to realise that while it might not always look like it, there is always something round the corner. Put in the effort to show up each day. The opportunity will come. Sometimes several opportunities will come all at once!"

Albert spoke with Warren Heggarty

Living with mental health issues? Looking for a job? Ostara can help!

1300 334 497

Our Disability Employment Service (DES) locations are as follows:

Ostara Liverpool
Suite 5, Level 2,
224 George Street
LIVERPOOL NSW 2170,
PH 9393 9360
Fax 9602 9727
liverpooledes@
flourishaustralia.org.au

Ostara Caringbah
Level 2, Suite 205
304-318 Kingsway
Caringbah NSW 2229
PH 9393 9134
Fax 9531 7612
caringbahdes@
flourishaustralia.org.au

Ostara Redfern
Suite 204, Level 2
140 Redfern St
Redfern NSW 2016
PH 9393 9220
FAX 9698 7121
redferndes@flourishaustralia.
org.au

Ostara Armidale
First Floor Office 26,
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Armidale NSW 2350
PH 0423 566 623
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flourishaustralia.org.au

Panorama Employment

Flourish Australia Employment Services General Manager: Marty Golding, Program Manager, Disability Employment Services: Julie Duong.

Panorama Employment is a regular supplement of Panorama magazine, Contact Warren.Heggarty@flourishaustralia.org.au, Grant.Everett@flourishaustralia.org.au. (02) 9393 9021, 5 Figtree Drive, Sydney Olympic Park 2127. © 2016 Flourish Australia

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from left: Anna H Gray, Fay Jackson (General Manager Inclusion), Janet Paleo

by Grant J Everett

The benefits of peer support and peer-to-peer services for people recovering from mental health issues only grows more obvious with time. Knowing this value well, Flourish Australia was the first not-for-profit organisation in the country to host the powerful **Focus for Life** seminar. Run at our Sydney Olympic Park branch over three solid days, Focus for Life allowed participants from all corners of our organisation to accept how much we can offer the world around us and to declare that no matter what we've been through or what people have said to us, we all have a high intrinsic value.

There were a lot of unfamiliar faces on day one of the group, but this simply meant that it would be a good opportunity to network face-to-face with people we wouldn't usually get a chance to meet. We broke the ice by introducing

"Focus For Life was such a practical and informative course. Anna taking off an Amygdala was definitely a highlight."

- Kim Jones (Project Officer Inclusion, Head Office)

ourselves one by one, stating where we were born, and sharing the most exotic place we'd ever been. We also mentioned what we wanted from the following three days. Some of the things our group desired were self-confidence, bravery, being better at motivating people, being more positive, having better self-care, gaining the confidence to share our innermost selves, being more grateful, having better self-

esteem, having more compassion for people with a disability, being able to debunk stigma, having greater self-awareness, getting out there more, having victory over the past, and polishing our recovery language. All worthwhile goals!

The Focus for Life group was run by its creators: Anna H Gray and Janet Paleo from Texas in the USA. Something that became crystal clear from the very start was how much our facilitators truly cared for the participants. You could just tell they believed in what they were teaching. They valued our individual wellbeing so much that it was touching, and I didn't think that anything they said was lip service. In particular, Janet and Anna taught us some very useful techniques concerning the way we perceive the world, and how we tend to tear ourselves down without even realising it. As the saying goes, we can often be "our own worst enemies." For instance, it's common for people to say that they "can't" do something. The word "can't" implies a lack of strength or ability, and it's the sort of word that takes away your power. Saying "I choose not to" makes it a matter of choice rather than a matter of ability, and this will lead to more self-belief. Our group was loaded with great revelations like this the whole time.

By the time the seminar ended on the third day, there were actually a lot of tears. It felt like we'd accomplished so much, and it was an experience that I think will have a lasting impact on everyone who attended.

Like anybody who steps into a peer support role, Janet and Anna have a history of mental health issues. Their lives were filled with depression, feeling suicidal,

hating life, engaging in destructive behaviours and spending huge chunks of time in hospital. At one point or another, both women were basically told that they'd never recover from their conditions and that they'd never live in the real world, let alone have a job or contribute to society in any way. These ladies know what it's like to have pain and hardship eat away at their hope. If you've read Panorama magazine before, it'll come as no surprise that Janet and Anna proved

"Salutogenesis" means focusing on factors that support wellness, as opposed to the things that cause unwellness (pathogenesis). It is the opposite of what's known as the "medical model".

those "experts" totally wrong!

Janet and Anna's firsthand knowledge of the mental health consumer movement in America was a great launching pad to develop the Focus for Life program. After discussing their brainchild with other consumer leaders, Janet and Anna recognised that self-direction and self-responsibility are two of the most essential components to any recovery. Keeping these core elements in mind, Focus for Life allows participants to build on their strengths and develop their resiliency by changing the way they see the world. A big part of this process is problem-solving and figuring out how to use our current resources to attain what we want from life.

All of the Focus for Life the participants would like to thank Flourish Australia for hosting the group, for actively involving us all, and for generously covering all the expenses to make sure as many people as possible could benefit from this experience.

As always, the Figtree Conference Centre staff put on a great spread, and were very professional, so a big thanks to them, too.

Want to know more about Focus for Life or the Prosumer movement? Contact Janet or Anna here:

**www.myfocus4life.com
www.ProsumersInternational.org**

Mental Health First Aid training

What is mental health first aid? '[It] is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis resolves. (Kitchener, Jorm, & Kelly, 2013, p. 12)

"Whilst people often know a lot about common physical health problems, ignorance of mental health is prevalent. Regular first aid courses are widespread, however most of these courses do not address helping with mental health problems. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training aims to fill this gap." (Mental Health First Aid International, n.d.)

Panorama took a peek at a Mental Health First Aid course presented

by Fay Jackson, Flourish Australia's General Manager of Inclusion on two days over two consecutive weeks at the Figtree Conference centre. Fay is an accredited Principal Master Trainer. That means she has had more than 30 (in Fay's case a LOT more than 30) previous presentations. There were approximately 23 people, managers, staff and employees mainly from two organisations, RichmondPRA and Physical Disability Council of NSW.

All participants were later able to do a 15 minute on-line exam following which, if successful, they were able to gain MHFA accreditation and download a certificate.

With the NDIS upon us, it is good to know as much as possible about the WHOLE disability sector.

Among the participants we were pleased to host an invited group of people from the Physical Disability Council of NSW. Sharon, Ellen, Melanie and Wilhelmina all agreed that the training would be very useful in their line of work; a helpful form of career development. The PDCN often deals with enquiries from the public- and members of the public don't fall into neat categories according to type of

disability. Many people live with combinations of physical, intellectual or psychosocial disability.

Sharon told us that this sort of training also serves to foster inclusion. With the NDIS upon us, it is good to know as much as possible about the WHOLE disability sector. Melanie pointed out that not only is it useful to incorporate new knowledge in to your own practice, but it is good to be able to draw the line at what your job is not. Knowing when to hand over to another person, and who to hand over too, is an important thing to know for people who work with people!

Sharon (see story on pages 4-5) really liked the way that lived experience was incorporated into the training. Fay used examples from her own personal story with which Sharon was able easily to identify, even though the nature of her own disability (cerebral palsy) would seem quite different from a mental health issue. She said she would recommend the course to anyone.

MHFA has a network of over 1,000 accredited Instructors across Australia. To find a course in your local area, the web site has a course calendar and a function that allows you to 'find an instructor in your area.' There are also e-learning courses available. You can find more information on their web site. WH

mhfa.com.au/cms/home



Kim, pictured with the text book, is ready to spring into action.

Q: What can we do about our unmet needs? What resources are available? Where can we get further information?

A: TAKE ACTION!

Watch out for the next issue CANSAS domain 9

Psychological distress

in the next Panorama



Flourish Australia
Flowerdale
19 Flowerdale Road,
Liverpool NSW 2170
(02) 9822 4078

From left: Maria Walters (volunteer), Kathy Molnar-Simpson (Manager), Alex Matute (Flowerdale participant), and in front is Mia Walters (Maria's daughter).

good turnout with a total of 192 people dressed in yellow all turning up to take part. Of course, having a few people walking about for a while isn't big news on its own, but the overarching goal behind World Suicide Prevention Day is to start ripples across the planet, to inspire

"We all need to learn how to cope with situations where someone is suffering,"
-CEO of Flourish Australia, Pam Rutledge

higher levels of participation in future events, and to have serious discussion on what we can do with every step that's taken in the name of suicide prevention.

We hope that the next HopeWalk on the 10th of September 2017 will be even bigger and better than the first! On that note, YOU can certainly help the cause by telling your friends and co-workers about the HopeWalk, and especially by taking part. So spread the word!

Want to know more about the future events that the International Association for Suicide Prevention have planned? Go to the EVENTS page at www.iasp.info, or whip off an email to svsgprojects@gmail.com

Sometimes We R Not OK

Early intervention is something that we need to do more work on. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the suicide rate is increasing and nearly HALF of all the people they spoke to were "unsure" about how to recognise mental health issues in their loved ones (T Hamilton, October 4th 2016).

Sources:

"Suicide rates hit 10-year high," Tricia Hamilton, Fairfield Advance, October 4, 2016

www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/media-centre/media-releases/2016-articles/suicide-toll-at-10-year-high

www.empower-yourself-with-color-psychology.com/color-yellow.html

This article contains themes that may be distressing to some readers. As always, if you are struggling please speak to your Mental Health, Wellbeing or Peer Worker, your usual supports, or call Lifeline on 13 11 14 any time, day or night.

if there's anything you can do to help.

On the subject of awareness, this year saw the local launch of an event that has come to Australia for the first time: the HopeWalk. Although this was its first instance in Australia, the HopeWalk has been an annual event in New Zealand for years. It has two defining features: it involves a long walk (as you may have guessed), and the participants all dress in yellow. Why yellow? this is because yellow is regarded as the most uplifting, illuminating and hopeful colour of the spectrum.

R U OK? Day (held each year on the 8th of September) is another event that raises public awareness about the importance of having conversations to make sure your friends and loved ones are doing alright. Just as importantly, R U OK? Day provides resources on how to have these chats..

The Sydney branch of the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG) co-ordinated the event, but they certainly weren't the only organisation there. For instance, one of Flourish Australia's Day2Day Living Centres in Liverpool - Flowerdale Cottage - was there to represent us as shown in the picture. As a new event in this country, the HopeWalk had a pretty

Hope Walk

by Grant J Everett

Like every year since 2003, Saturday the 10th of September was World Suicide Prevention Day. This is a time when organisations across the globe join together to help raise awareness about why people take their own lives, and what we can do to help prevent these tragedies from occurring. The theme for 2016 was Connect, Communicate, Care. These three words are at the very heart of suicide prevention, and they spell out how we can make a difference in the lives of people who may be struggling. For instance, you can CONNECT with friends, loved ones and workmates to make sure they aren't isolated, COMMUNICATE by just seeing how they're doing, and show that you CARE by asking them

Are you getting a black dog for Christmas?

by Grant J Everett



Here's what you can do about it

For many of us (especially kids) Christmas is the best time of the year. People are serving endless courses of food and drink, exchanging presents, laughing with friends and family, going away on holidays...what's not to like? However, for some, Christmas can be a living hell. If you're isolated, then seeing all those happy people may only serve to remind you of what you don't have.

We know that isolation is terrible for your mental health even when it isn't Christmas time, but it's dreadful for our *physical* health, too. Brigham Young University found that the physical manifestations of social isolation (eg, high blood pressure, the release of stress hormones, weaker immune system) can DOUBLE your risk of early death. This places the health risks of isolation on par with smoking, alcohol and obesity.

Isolated in a crowd!

You can have people in your life and still feel lonely. You may work with lots of colleagues have a phone full to the brim with numbers and still suffer from the effects of isolation. In fact, you could be in a room with other people and feel like you have no connection with any of them. Hence, isolated in the middle of a crowd! This is because being around

people is a matter of quality rather than quantity.

Isolation can definitely be a matter of choice, too. Some of us may prefer our own company, and there's nothing wrong with that. Another common reason that people isolate themselves is because they may have been badly mistreated by a friend, family member or a lover in the past, and in order to avoid a repeat of that trauma they've put up walls to prevent people ever getting close enough to hurt them. Whatever the reasoning, humans are generally social beings by nature, and that means we need some form of quality company on a regular basis if we want to function properly.

Time for forgiveness

So, are you estranged from a loved one who's wronged you? Great relationships can be destroyed over the most minor things. Forgiving past wrongs might be hard, but it can help you to heal and move on. Remember: forgiving somebody isn't just for their sake, as letting go of anger and hatred is good for your own wellbeing, too.

When it comes to social contact, we're sorry to say that Facebook and other forms of social media are unable to provide us with the

kind of quality time that we need. Interacting with social media means you won't get those realtime sights and sounds of in-person interaction, and this make it less rewarding than face-to-face encounters. For instance, interacting with somebody in person will release a dose of oxytocin, a delicious brain chemical, which is something that doesn't happen when you type things into a box.

Ten thousand options

No matter who you are, nobody has to eat their Christmas lunch alone. You have hundreds of options out there on the day, and they range from cheap to wallet-rippingly expensive. There are lots of hotels, restaurants, clubs, RSLs and other places that put on an awesome spread on Christmas Day, and depending on your budget this could be a big plate of roast lamb with all the trimmings, or an all-you-can eat lobster feast.

Or...hold your own party!

You may know some people who will also be alone on Christmas Day. They might be neighbours, workmates, old friends, whatever. The question is: What's stopping you from getting together with them on the day? I had a chat with Malcolm, former manager of the

Day 2 Day Living Program at Derby Street, Penrith. He told me that when he was at Embark Cottage at Blacktown, the staff members used to encourage the people who access this service to do just that.

Don't think that you have to break the bank, either. A Christmas party could be as simple as a couple of charcoal chickens, some rolls and coleslaw. However you're happy to celebrate is fine.

**There IS such a thing
as a free lunch!**

Strapped for cash? If you need somewhere to eat Christmas lunch and there's nothing in your wallet but moths, there are dozens of charities who provide a FREE lunch to whoever turns up. Here are just a few examples. They'll be happy to take your call if you need more information in advance.

The Exodus Foundation
(02) 8752 4600
www.exodusfoundation.org.au/food/christmas

John Franklin Christmas Lunch
(02) 9545 0498
St John's Anglican Church at Sutherland
www.johnfranklinchristmaslunch.com.au

Christmas at Samaritans is held in three locations:

- Newcastle Foreshore Railsheds
- Singleton Senior Citizens Centre
- Wyong Race Club

1300 656 336
www.samaritans.org.au/cms/christmas

Flourish Australia also runs fun things over the Christmas period. For example, Buckingham House at Surry Hills will be running a "cocktail party" style Christmas celebration on the 23rd of December. They'll have a talent show, music and lots of great nibbles. If you'd like to know more, call them on 1300 779 270

Sources:

"Facing Christmas alone is a health risk affecting more people," Dennis Mazalin, The Australian, December 7, 2015

www.theaustralian.com.au/life/health-wellbeing/facing-christmas-alone-is-a-health-risk-affecting-more-people/news-story/a21dcd13dc77e00e252525b9064345b4

Check up from the neck up

Peer Workers Help Promote Mental Health Awareness

Martin Place, Sydney was the venue for 'Check up from the Neck up,' an opportunity for people passing in the street to learn about mental health. The event was put on by the NSW Mental Health Commission and involved Flourish Australia Peer Workers from Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.

Peer Worker Patricia told us 'We were handing out information cards and mints, hundreds of them all up, as well as inviting people to stop for a while and have a check-up from the neck up. There were three shifts of twelve Peer Workers. Also, there were other professionals set up there who were conducting the actual check-ups and of course, the Commissioner John Feneley was there and so was Deputy Commissioner, our very own Fay Jackson. There were three shifts all together from 7am to 7pm.'

It was a chance to interact more or less randomly with people passing in the street to pass on the message of the importance of mental health. Some of the encounters were interesting. Panorama hears that one passer-by asked whether the mints had 'something in them.' Another wondered if Scientology was behind the show (no, actually they weren't). We're not sure if they were joking or not.

Patricia met a man who had been homeless at times. 'I asked him about whether he had anyone to support him and whether he needed assistance with accommodation. He said that he did in fact have a support network and was not after help with accommodation at the time. He even shared a smile.' She said.

When he found out Patricia was from Flourish Australia, formerly RichmondPRA, he asked her about what sort of programs were happening at Buckingham House.

Although they were in Sydney, people came from all over. Patricia also spoke to a man from Newcastle - where Flourish Australia has a big service centre at 627 Hunter Street. 'It was great just to be able to pass information onto people' she said.

Panorama Online Magazine is now live!

All the staff at the publications department (both of us) are very proud to announce the official launch of Panorama Online Magazine! We've cherry-picked the best lived experience recovery stories, watershed events and other seminal articles to live on in digital form. Our clean, easy-to-use, attractive website will keep our finest material in circulation for many years to come, and this is truly the start of a new era for our magazine. The issues we deal with will continue to be hot topics for the foreseeable future, and Panorama Magazine will continue to be there for all the people who access our services tomorrow, just like yesterday.

panorama
online
magazine
.com
(one word)



Wear It Purple Day

Promoting pride and acceptance among our young people

by Grant J Everett

In case you haven't heard the term before, a "rainbow person" is a term some people use who identify as being a part of the LGBTIQA spectrum. While you can't get arrested or committed for being in the spectrum in Australia (anymore), people still cop a lot of social stigma, discrimination, exclusion, bullying and even outright violence because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This can be an especially big issue for young people who are still in the process of trying to figure out who they are.

FACTS: Until the late 1970's there were actually laws banning consenting adults from certain same sex sexual relations. South Australia led the way in decriminalisation in 1975. Tasmania caught up in 1997. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) actually used to classify being homosexual as a mental illness. Times have changed.

The Wear It Purple organisation is spreading the message that every young person is unique, important and worthy of love, and that nobody should be subject to bullying,

belittlement and invalidation. They want young people to be safe, supported and empowered, and they strive for this dream by raising awareness in schools, workplaces, unis, and the general community. The way they ask us to support their work is simple: wear something purple. In addition to Wear It Purple Day, they also promote acceptance and respect through a Youth Action Council, community engagement programs, Social Media campaigns, and by screening short films based about LGBTIQA issues. The dream is that we can all live in a world where we can be allowed to thrive irrelevant of our sexuality or gender identity.

Flourish Australia was proud to support Wear it Purple Day as a part of our public commitment to diversity and inclusion. At our Olympic Park office we celebrated this occasion by having a cheesecake and macarons for morning tea and (yup) wearing purple.

Doris Kluge (our Senior Human Resources Advisor) and Michelle Cullen (Administrative Support Officer) went to a lot of trouble to organize everything. This included making little cardboard people for us to colour in various rainbow shades. You can see this happening in the picture below. We also had a lot of help from people making the cake disappear. Thanks, guys!

Many other locations across NSW and South East Queensland also celebrated in their own way. They were encouraged to take snaps for uploading onto social media.

The very first Wear it Purple Day was a social media campaign created by two students (one who was in high school, the other in university) in 2010.

Since then, Wear It Purple Day has exponentially spread to be celebrated in hundreds of schools, TAFEs, workplaces, and supported by organisations such as NSW Police, Emergency Services NSW and Telstra.

The Wear It Purple organisation identified six ways to make their dreams of inclusion come true:

EDUCATE society about the realities of sexuality and gender diversity

CELEBRATE diversity

ADVOCATE for young people by helping to make their voices heard

EMPOWER rainbow young people

CHALLENGE harmful social cultures

SUPPORT rainbow young people by ensuring they aren't facing the struggles of life alone

Bibliography

www.wearitpurple.org

www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-24/timeline:-australian-states-decriminalise-male-homosexuality/6719702

"When Homosexuality Stopped Being a Mental Disorder," Neel Burton M.D., September 18, 2015

www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-seek/201509/when-homosexuality-stopped-being-mental-disorder



(From left) Dhara, Jade and Lin

Flourish Learning Network

One of the main goals of Flourish Australia's Recovery Action Plan has been to establish a kind of 'recovery college.' We moved a step closer to this in August with the arrival of Ros Christopoulos, [pic below] Senior Manager of the Flourish Learning Network.

'I am in the initial phase of familiarising myself to get a clear understanding of how the network will fulfill Flourish Australia's vision' Ros told Panorama.

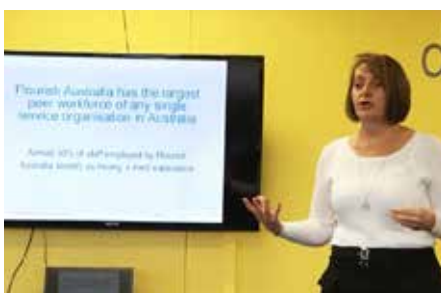
'I will be focussing on the two pilot sites, Newcastle and Wollongong' said Ros. 'I have already visited the services at both Wollongong and Newcastle to spend time meeting with staff. I have also been engaging in some of the events and partnerships currently running, including the Russian multicultural day in Wollongong.

'Another was the AIR (Arts in Recovery) program, a multi-organisation partnership with the Newcastle Community Arts Centre. This has also provided me with the opportunity to meet the people accessing our services.

'It is also exciting to report that Wollongong University has now been funded to research the needs of students who will be accessing the Flourish Learning Network.

'I will be attending the MIND Recovery College conference 'Exploring establishment of an Australasian Recovery College Community of Practice'. This will be a great opportunity to establish networks and source information'.

We are pleased to see the interest in the Flourish Learning Network and as the pilot programs evolve we will keep you updated and informed on a regular basis. Stay tuned!



Edwina's Reflective Practice at PreEmploy Institute

Edwina Keelan is a participant in the Current PreEmploy Institute program. A survivor of childhood trauma, she describes her path in terms of 'art and writing' and her methods include 'creative expression', 'reflection' and 'memories and goals.'

Reflection, or reflective practice as we call it, is one of the three vital behaviours we promote at Flourish Australia. On our recovery journeys we need to stop and think about where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going.

This feeds into the other two vital behaviours, using strengths based language (about what I CAN do not what I CAN'T do) and having recovery conversations. Edwina keeps a number of journals in which she reflects on the things happening in her current life as well as memories of her past.

Edwina is actually very well organised and you can perhaps see from the photo that she has a place for everything and everything in its place. In case you are wondering why she is wearing a big hat, the photo just happened to be taken on November 1, Melbourne Cup Day!

One of her goals is to visit a TAFE open day in November to see about enrolling in a Certificate III in design fundamentals. Some time ago, she studied part of a Fashion Certificate III course, and she hopes to get some advanced standing from that.

Edwina recently sold one of her artworks (above) that was featured in the Flourish Australia launch celebrations. It was called "Flourish, Vegetation, Sunrays" and was a photographic print laid out on canvas. 'I'd like to donate part of the takings. Part to the Australian Red Cross and part to Orphans in India.

Edwina has an interest in human

rights issues surrounding LGBTIQ, especially transgender people. She has contributed to *Polare* which is the magazine of the NSW Gender Centre. Following a visit to Nepal, she did a story on the Blue Diamond Society, the first LGBTIQ organisation in Nepal (*Polare* issue 102 of January 2015).

Edwina describes the various local people she met and the challenges of being transgender in a country which does not yet have policies to prevent discrimination against LGBTIQ people and where the law does not recognise gender diversity or marriage equality. She notes that in that country, transgender people who have transitioned can't get a citizenship card or passport and so can't travel.

Edwina tells Panorama that she is interested in helping out with our activities for the 2017 Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. **Are you? If so, call Jas on 02 9393 9036.**





Mental Health Month

Photos on page 10 By Neil Fenelon. Photos on Page 11 by Warren Heggarty

Mental Health Month Festivities

1. Picnic Day at Bicentennial Park

by Larry Billington

(Surry Hills) Chair, Community Advisory Council

The Picnic Day was terrific! The general vibe and enthusiasm that was there on the day manifests the trust implicit between this organisation and it's diverse membership... in contrast with that recently articulated for the banking institutions and some of their client base.

Graham Seaman from WestClub, Penrith said he had caught the 8.30 train from Penrith to get there early, even though it didn't start till 11 AM. "I know a lot of friends and peers here" he said.

Sean, an advocate from Campbelltown, remarked that it was even better than last year's.

Julian who facilitates community based activities at Buckingham House in Surry Hill was seen busy sharing news with people who used to access our HASI service who had come back for the picnic.

There were the usual friendly games of quoits, tug of war and volleyball. Rosita from Harris Park was playing volleyball but when she saw me coming quipped- " It can't be THAT friendly, then".

My own advice to others present was to "Keep away from that tug-o-war rope - it's murder" When Karaoke winner Sally saw me she said "Don't you line up for that karaoke. That's just embarrassing".



The best quote of the day was from Mohammed the chief organiser who said: "Nothing's a problem". Great attitude. And a thoroughly great day was had by all the community present on the day! LB

2. Flowerdale Open Day

Flourish Australia's service at 19 Flowerdale Road Liverpool had its umpteenth annual open day,



to which it not only invites all its members, but all the neighbours, friends, supporters, family members, local businesses and even the newly elected Mayor Of Liverpool, Wendy Waller. Local State MP Paul Lynch was also there, and not for the first time! Uncle Ivan was there for the smoking ceremony and welcome to country.

Group painting

Many of the visitors were welcomed into the art room by member Giorgios (middle right) whose photo recently appeared in the local **Liverpool Leader** newspaper. Giorgios invited each person to contribute to a large group painting by slapping down some paint any way they saw fit.

A spot of gardening

Have you seen keen gardeners in action? Once people are converted to gardening, it seems to take over completely, which is not a bad thing because gardening is fun, useful, interesting, socially responsible and very often *edible*. **Bunnings Warehouse** often supports good causes in the community, and Flowerdale Open day was no exception. Felicia (pictured top right) came out from Bunnings with some sample plants and pots and and some nice black soil for people to work with. Flowerdale does have a small garden plot out in the back yard that comes with its very own scarecrow, so she didn't look out of place. People could have a go at planting and transplanting the greenery for themselves. You never know when the world of gardening is going to get its next convert.

Nick

People come from all around to the Flowerdale Open Day, including from as far away as Buckingham House in Surry Hills. Nick (right, bottom) visited the Open Day as a member of the Como Social and

Mental Health Month



Leisure Centre, who are regulars at Flowerdale. He used to live and work in Surry Hills and knew a bit of the history of Buckingham House going back to the 1960s, including the supported employment service PRA used to run there in the old days. "Having a work ethic is very important. Work keeps me well," said the 72-year-old Nick. He originally came to Australia from Malta, and nowadays he makes his home in the Sutherland Shire.

Carers: help with the NDIS!

Carers can also visit during the Open Day. We met one young man who'd been caring for his mother, who has mental health issues, for a long time. This young man was visiting Flowerdale for the first time, and we understand that he had discovered a lot of helpful information just from speaking to the members and staff. One important piece of knowledge that came as a surprise was that Flourish Australia is able to help people plan for the NDIS. We trust that all carers who visited were able to find out about getting support. WH



of all, a prize wheel. Contestants competed for prizes by answering simple questions about common mental health issues. Prizes included various headspace merchandise, such as water bottles.

There was also a headspace hound... or **terrier** might be a better word. We thought Nugget was the cutest part of the whole event, and you can see her pictured below with her human mother, Sabrina.

Headspace caters for young people from 12-25 who are experiencing mental health issues. This makes it a little different from other Flourish Australia services, which are usually aimed at ages 18 plus. Senior Youth Access Clinician Fatima Eid says that bullying is a major issue among younger people.

Not far away from the barbecue, in Bankstown library, school students were studying for their HSC exams. Thankfully, study stress and exam stress are issues that headspace can help with. Fatima told Panorama that although schools have part-time counsellors, they will often refer students to headspace whenever problems go beyond what school resources can deal with.

Bankstown headspace is a partnership between Flourish Australia and several local organisations, which ensures that it can cater for the specific needs of youth in the area. Bankstown headspace is located just across the street from Bankstown Central, which incidentally is Australia's second oldest shopping mall, having opened as Bankstown Square in 1966. WH



3. Headspace Anniversary

Bankstown headspace celebrated its first year of operation with a barbecue at Bankstown Central shopping centre. Manager Tom Traae became *Chef Tom Traae* as he cooked halal and vegetarian tucker for members of the public who ventured up to the headspace stall. Meanwhile, balloon-wielding headspace staff mingled among the shoppers to publicise the event.

There was a desk full of information sheets about every imaginable mental health issue, plus fridge magnets, brochures, helpful information booklets and, best



BACK ON TRACK HEALTH Your Physical Health

brought to you by Jade Ryall, program manager, B.O.T.H.

What's happening in health and BEAUTY at the local level?
Flourish Australia at Tamworth

Renee gets a whole-istic new look

Looking Good and Feeling Great

By Deslee Matthews

Renee King accesses our HASI service in Tamworth. One day we asked her if she would like to get her hair and make-up done and she said yes!

Which is great because a bit of pampering can be good for your physical and mental health! And our self-esteem, which is how we value and perceive ourselves.

Looking after our physical health is important for us all, but it can be an extra challenge for those who live with mental health issues. This is because of things like the side effects of medication, being distracted by distressing feelings

or thoughts, smoking, not getting enough exercise and many other lifestyle factors. Unfortunately, as we are all coming to realise, our physical health problems can often get overlooked when everyone is focusing just on the mental health side.

Once she had her makeover and saw herself in the mirror, Renee was stoked!

The transformation was immediate and when I say transformation, I mean Renee literally came to life! Take a look at the before and after photos. There is a brightness in Renee's AFTER photo that was previously missing. Her confidence levels went from a four to an eight and her self-esteem was so positive that she even had a bit of *attitude!*

When I asked Renee how she felt before her makeover she said, 'not good, I just didn't feel like doing much at all.' When I asked her how she felt afterwards she said 'Like a princess! I feel like I could drive a car!'

'I could drive a car?' I'd never heard it put THAT way before. What about 'I feel like I could rule the world?'

Renee Replied laughing 'Well, I can't drive a car and I felt so great it was like I would have just gotten into



one and driven it!'

Then I got the message. When we feel good about ourselves, we begin to realise that maybe we CAN do things if we try. We feel like nothing is impossible when we feel like that.



What's happening in health at the local level?
Flourish Australia at Bega

Peak fitness

Tracy, Sarah & Dylan of Bega (top) are part of a growing fitness trend.

It is important for everybody to stay

fit and staying fit is more fun if it involves some social interaction as well. That is why Flourish Australia encourages the people who access our services to try out facilities available in the local community.

Naturally recovery involves going beyond your comfort zone now and then, but there are ways of doing this which make it less daunting and more enjoyable.

Sarah Buckle at Bega gives the example of the group which has been going along every Tuesday to play table tennis.

'Sometimes it is really hard to start doing something on your own, especially if you have never done it before.' Says Sarah.

'So if you can get a group of four or five people to go along and do

it together it makes the process a whole lot more comfortable.'

Another thing happening at Bega is the Peak Fitness Program sponsored by Grand Pacific Health. This program at Bega involves a Peer Worker and makes use of exercise physiologist Kim Bobbin.

Sarah says it is very much like having a personal trainer!

It is a twelve-week program that focuses on the personal goals of the participants – so it's not like one of those celebrity boot camps you might have seen on the television!

Sarah says that once a group gets off the ground, there is a 'flow-on' effect because other people will then want to join in.

Mediocre Fitness levels?

Aussies are lagging behind in both cardio and strength training. Nooooooo!

40 years ago Australia was in the World Cup Football final. Now, a set of studies being led by the University of South Australia show that Australia's youth do not match up to their heart-lung fitness levels of 40 years ago. (Puddy, 2016)

We know that physical fitness is important and we know that it is especially important for mental health recovery. However, Less than 20 per cent of Australian children do the 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous exercise recommended for them by experts. (Puddy, 2016) Cardiovascular (heart and lung) fitness is a good measure of general fitness. Our children's fitness levels have dropped by four or five percent per decade since the 1970s. (Puddy, 2016)

This makes you wonder what all the gyms are for. The Sydney Morning

Herald reported that there are 3,300 gyms in Australia now, up 1,100 from five years ago. (Berry, 2016). A study of 200,000 people led by Dr Jason Bennie of Victoria University's Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living' recently reported that around 90 per cent of Australians do not meet the national recommendations for twice weekly strength training. (Berry, 2016)

Strength training is not about developing muscles on your muscles *a la* Arnold Schwarzenegger, it's about putting the strength into the muscles you already have.

If you do nothing else, at least WALK. It is recommended that adults should take at least 10,000 steps every day, however the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey for 2011-12 shows that we average only about 7,400 a day. So there is room for improvement all round!

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Puddy, r. (2016, June 8). Aussie Kids also-rans in the race for fitness. The Australian



The minute Clare heard about our mediocre fitness levels, she ran straight to the park for an aerobic tree hugging session.

DANCING



Get up and Rock !

Alas, our regular canine contributor Fluffy Sam the dog passed away in 2015. He left many funny stories including this one which embodies the lively spirit of recovery... and risk! Translated from the Canine by his Master KEN HUA, who is alive and well and still the Chairman of Country Cottage

FLUFFY SAM THE DOG: Ah, Golden Boy, let me tell you something. Last night, Your Father, Our humble Master the Chairman was rocking

heavily at Smithfield R.S.L.

GOLDEN BOY: [Astonished] Really?

FLUFFY SAM: He went there not only to watch the show but also to socialize with other people. The band was 'Australia's True Blue Brothers.' and there were two female singers singing heavy music which our Master found quite entertaining. I didn't think he would enjoy such loud and heavy music, but he did. At the beginning, our Master was hesitating about whether he should go on to the dancing floor and rock through the night; then he held a deep breath and said to himself: 'Let's do it.' So the next minute he was on the dancing floor!

GOLDEN BOY: 'Tell me, Fluffy Sam, did our Master dance a LOT?'

FLUFFY SAM: Well, MODERATELY, because there was not much of a response from the OTHER members

of the audience. Believe it or not, some of the audience did not have the guts and enthusiasm to get up and rock like our Master!'

GOLDEN BOY: That's amazing, I would not have thought in my wildest dreams that our dear friendly humble Master would get up on the dance floor to do some heavy rock. Please give my compliments to him!'

FLUFFY SAM: 'Our Master told me that you don't see very many OTHER Australian Chinese people come to watch the live show.'

GOLDEN BOY: Oh, that is a pity that they do not join our Master there. Perhaps they only watch the ethnic shows! Do you think that our MASTER will be rocking at the Smithfield RSL Club in the future?'

FLUFFY SAM: 'I can't see why not. Let's rock and roll to Smithfield RSL Club!'



Ros Christophoulos, Fay Jackson and Kim Jones in New Zealand

TheMHS The Mental Health Service Conference 2016

Using peer work to keep people at the core of everything we do

Auckland, New Zealand was the host of the 2016 **TheMHS Winter Conference**. Officially known as **People: Authenticity starts in the heart**, the purpose of this theme was to focus on the wide range of people who compose our mental health system: the people who guide and shape our services, those who deliver the services, those who access the services, as well as the general community.

The four days contained a tonne of presentations on many diverse topics. Generally, any given presentation will go for about twenty minutes followed by ten minutes of discussion where the audience can ask questions or raise relevant issues. Over 250 papers were submitted this year, and there really was something for everyone. As always, Flourish Australia sent representatives from

many segments of our organisation to the conference, and the key presentation we hosted - **Why not a Peer Worker?! One Year On** - was a direct sequel to last year's **Why Not A Peer Worker?**

Like Australia, New Zealand has seen major shifts in the last twenty years when it comes to how people access mental health services and get help for addiction issues. A big component of this shift is the rise of peer work. As the public's view of mental health issues becomes less clouded by ignorance and stigma over time, every part of our system is constantly adapting and rethinking its approach. No matter what role we play in the mental health sector, we all need to act with integrity and be authentic in how we care for the people who access our services. We must also take whatever action is necessary to prevent people from falling through the cracks.

Flourish takes the stage

The long list of Flourish Australia reps who submitted papers to the conference include Peter Farrugia, Peer Workforce Program Manager, Evan Fulton, Manager, Nicolle Richards, Mental Health Worker, Mark Orr, Chief Information Officer, Glenys Mulley, Mental Health Worker, and Alicia Moran, Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Trainee. The full scope of their presentations is too wide to include here, but the core theme was to spell out the many ways that Flourish Australia services remain person-centered.

For instance, how we use a consumer-led Community Advisory Council to actively encourage the people who access our services to speak up about what's on their minds. Other channels of consumer feedback we've established includes our Communities of Practice, recovery forums and regular focus groups, as well as utilising surveys and service evaluations. These many channels make it clear that we want people to know they can talk to us, that we will listen, and that we'll continue to provide all the necessary support that communities and individuals require.

In their paper, **Why not a Peer Worker?! One Year On**, Kim Jones (Project Officer, Inclusion) and Fay Jackson (General Manager, Inclusion at Flourish Australia, and also a Deputy Commissioner with the NSW

Mental Health Commission) spoke about some of the many things that Flourish Australia offers the people who access our services: our growing Peer Workforce, the progressive way we communicate, how we recruit and train new talent, and the future direction of the organisation itself. Kim and Fay both know firsthand how people with a lived experience of mental health issues can find revealing their experiences challenging, as such disclosure can leave them open to stigma and discrimination. Kim was able to share her own experiences while she was on stage:

"Now I realise my experience has enabled me to bring heart and authenticity to the workplace...being able to openly share my experience with depression and anxiety has helped others, as well as myself. I'm able to provide practical support, which can be rewarding for all involved."

Fay spoke about the common challenges any large peer workforce will face, such as the prickly issue of professional boundaries, and the logistics of running a sizable peer workforce. She also highlighted how important it is that everyone understands what the correct definition of peer work actually is, which is why being able to clearly convey this knowledge through all levels of our organisation has become an important part of our culture.

Summing up

Our representatives demonstrated that the success of our ever-evolving strategies is illustrated by our constant growth, the increasing amount of support we are able to provide to families and carers, our reach into rural and remote communities, and our influence in advocating systemic mental health reform in this country. Flourish Australia aims to be a leader in supporting our peer workforce on many new frontiers, and our latest goals include Newcastle Hospital, various parts of the forensic system, and Family & Community Services.

Want to check out the "Why not a Peer Worker?" presentation from last year?

www.themhs.org/conference_program/44/why-not-a-peer-worker

Why Not a Peer Worker?

Charting the progress of our strategy

This is based on the presentation given by Fay Jackson (see previous article) and Kim Jones at TheMHS. When our “Why Not a Peer Worker?” strategy was first implemented, Flourish Australia only had 22 Peer Workers across the entire organisation. Today, we have 160 Peer Workers and senior Peer Workers, and they make up a fifth of our total employee pool.

This expansion has allowed us to support nearly 5,000 people across our 66 sites throughout NSW and South East Queensland. We are still actively supporting the growth of our peer workforce, and will continue to provide the tools to support people with a lived experience at all levels.



Kim Jones has over ten years' experience in the mental health sector and prior to that worked in the disability sector gaining experience involved with people who live with autism.

Since launching “Why Not a Peer Worker?”, we’ve used this ethos to help create a working environment free of stigma or discrimination. We have learned a lot in that time. Firstly, peer work is one of the most pure expressions of using a lived experience of mental health issues

to benefit other people. The two key requirements of being a Peer Worker are (1) having a personal history of mental health issues, as well as (2) having a desire to use that lived experience to support others. Beyond these core requirements, our entire peer workforce is also expected to practice the three vital behaviours: engaging in reflective practices, having recovery conversations, and using strengths-based language.

Our Peer Workers walk alongside the people who access our services, encouraging them to use their own decision-making and self-advocacy to get to where they want to be in life. One of the ways our peer workforce has added significant value to Flourish Australia’s service delivery by using their lived experiences is to inspire hope, as simply demonstrating that recovery can be achieved is priceless.

In fact, you might even say that our Peer Workers benefit from their professional roles just as much as the people they support! Taking on such a position has been shown to help our Peer Workers to further develop their identity, to gain confidence in their interpersonal skills, in feeling a sense of value from supporting other people, and they’ll also develop (and share) a lot of transferable skills that will help with future employment situations. However, we need to emphasise that peer work wasn’t created to serve the needs of Peer Workers! Though we certainly encourage all of our staff to be proud of their lived experience and the effort they’ve put into their recovery journeys. After all, dealing with somebody who has had a lived experience of mental health issues can immediately break down many barriers.

A key part of being a Peer Worker is to purposefully use their lived experience to mentor and support the people who access our services. We cannot underestimate how valuable they are in uplifting the people who access these services, but they also play a part when it comes to service design, service delivery, and keeping us focused on the reason our organisation exists.

Peer Workers are expected to fulfil all the duties that our mental health workers fulfil, but they have the added bonus of being able to use their lived experience purposefully to embue hope and to support the people who access our service. Peer Workers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner

at all times, and this means they need to keep certain boundaries in place. Professionally speaking, there is a clear line between a Peer Worker and a friend, and that line cannot be crossed. The ethos of Flourish Australia states that Peer Workers are to support people to “build themselves,” and this means that it’s best for the person to ultimately find their own friends, and not to develop a dependence on a Peer Worker. For more information on boundaries in peer work, check out our “Where are the boundaries?” article on page 31 of Panorama 61. You can also find it on the Panorama Online website.



To continue our mission of running an organisation that’s person-led and values its peer workforce, Flourish Australia will keep asking the same question: how can we best put this mission into practise? How do we keep peer work at the centre of how we operate? One good example of how we’re a peer-run organisation is evident in our recruitment processes: whenever we hire anybody, at least one person with a lived experience is required to be on the interview panel.





Learn While You Work

★ *Are you living with mental health issues?*

★ *Would you like to get back to work but feel unsure about where to start?*

If you are on a disability support pension or live in an NDIS rollout area, you may be eligible for supported employment at one of Flourish Australia's Community Businesses.

As a community business employee you will have access to vocational training and recovery groups so you can build your skills and experience, while furthering your mental health recovery journey.

**You can even do tertiary qualifications onsite, including:
Cert. 3 in Warehouse Operations and Cert. 3 in Horticulture.**

We can also support you to access other courses at TAFE and Community Colleges.

When you feel you are ready to enter the open workforce, we are here to support you with the transition.

★★★ **NEWSFLASH** ★★★

Flourish Australia is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider. We can answer your NDIS questions and support you to access our services. Contact us to find out more: 02 9393 9000



At Flourish Australia Community Businesses we currently have supported jobs available in:

Packing and Light Assembly at Marrickville or Harris Park.

Property maintenance, lawn mowing and professional and specialised cleaning services at St Marys, Warwick Farm and Marrickville.

Contact Us to find out more!

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