

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

panorama

Quarterly Issue March 2020 #75Q

- We got through the bushfires... now for Covid-19 restrictions: “Good things are coming out of this.”
- Recovery stories
- Layne Beachley joins us for International Women’s Day

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About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking beside people with a lived experience of mental health issues as they progress along their recovery journeys. We passionately believe in mental health recovery, and are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement to people so they can achieve their recovery goals. We offer this help across all 64 of our services in NSW and Southern Queensland.

Contact Flourish Australia!

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flourishaustralia.org.au

About 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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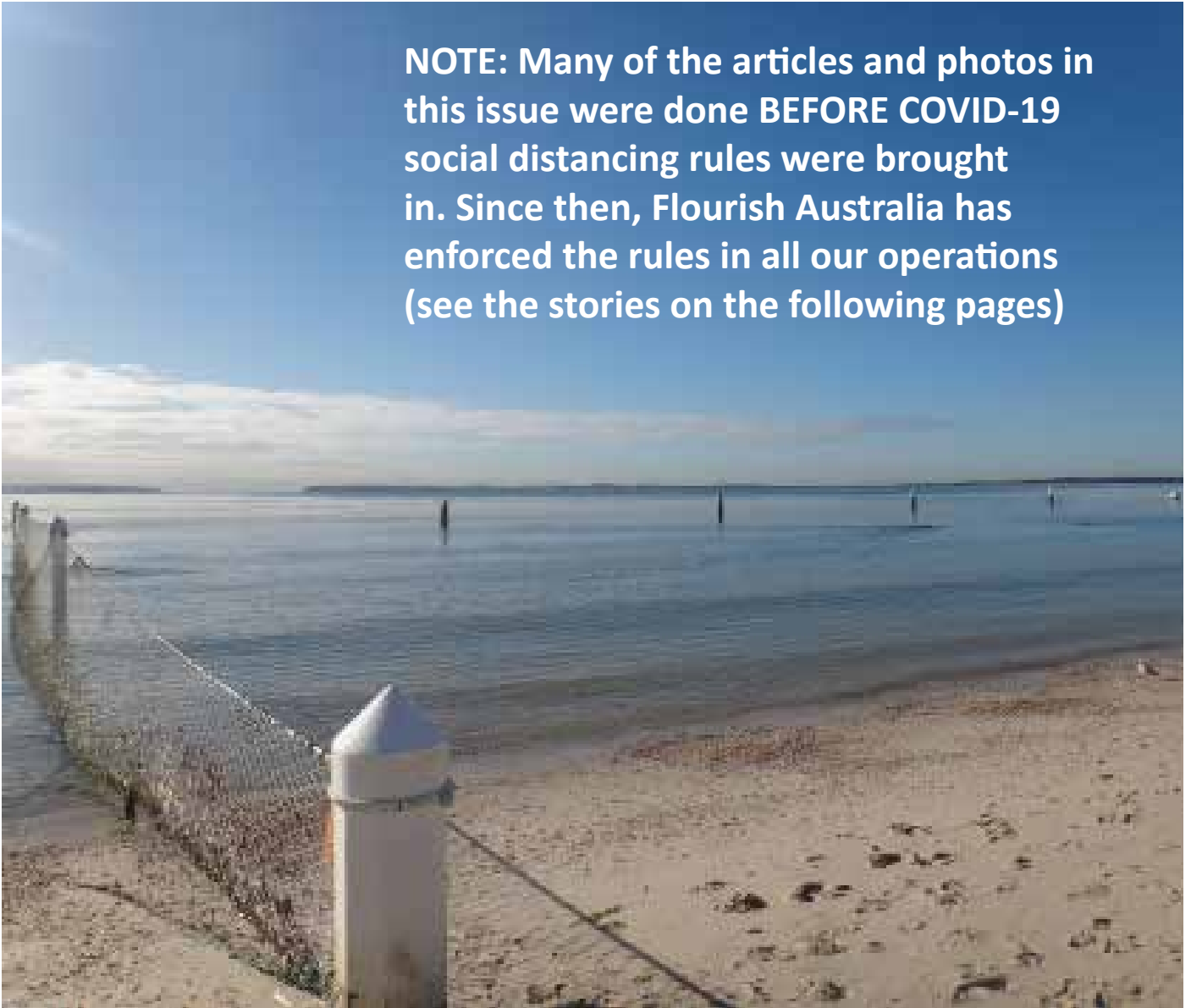
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Contributions relating to recovery from mental health and related issues are always welcome. We especially welcome material about hopes, dreams and day to day living from people with lived experience.

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Where is everybody?

NOTE: Many of the articles and photos in this issue were done BEFORE COVID-19 social distancing rules were brought in. Since then, Flourish Australia has enforced the rules in all our operations (see the stories on the following pages)



We are still here, just keeping our distance

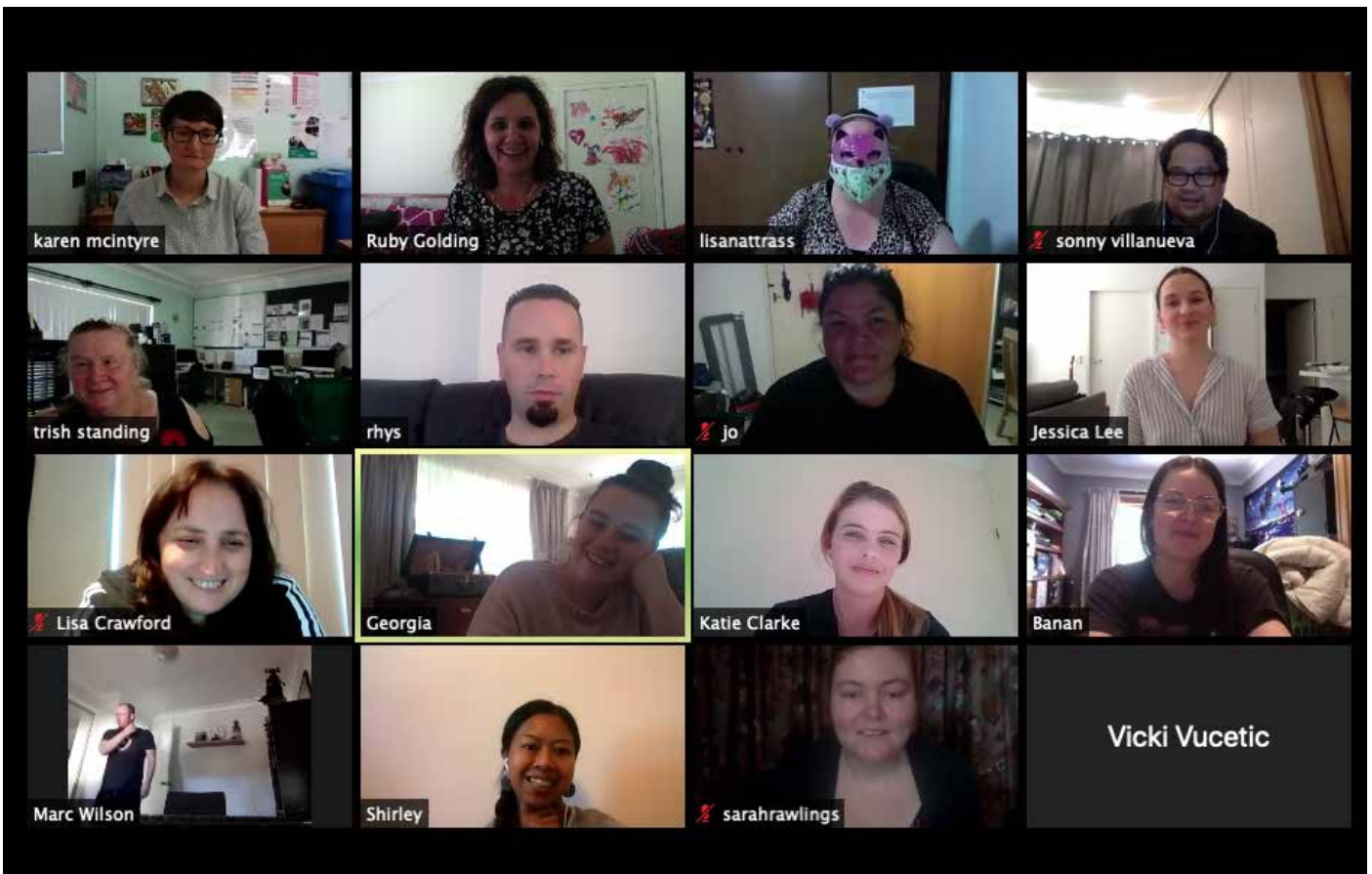
Since we began putting March Panorama together a lot has changed. We now find ourselves working from home, talking to people by phone or zoom, while the world outside is practicing social distancing.

Panorama has always been about encouraging people to go out, meet people and participate. This March edition is no different, but with the current pandemic, we might have to put some activities on hold! If you look on Flourish Australia's public web site under 'news' you will be able to see that we have begun a series of stories specially for the web that take into account the current restrictions.

<https://www.flourishaustralia.org.au/covid-19>

In the print version of Panorama, we will be reassuring readers that the message RECOVERY REALLY HAPPENS is still true even in the less than ideal circumstances of a Pandemic. There are things you can do while practicing social distancing and there are things you can plan to do for the future when we are all a bit more free to move. In the meantime, our cover features Tom and Brendan from the Sunshine Coast service at Warana QLD showing you how it is done.

Innovations from the COVID-19 restrictions



ABOVE: No, it's not a brand new series of The Brady Bunch. This is what Flourish Australia's Penrith Service looks like at the moment, with staff working by video from various isolated locations to maintain social distancing. PHOTO BY RUBY GOLDING

Adapting our services ...and getting to know you a bit better

How Flourish Australia continues to provide services during the COVID-19 restrictions

By Warren Heggarty

The current COVID-19 pandemic has been an opportunity to look at how we deliver services. We have learned many things, some big and some small, that will improve our services going into the future. We thought you might like to read about some of the great things we have been doing since social distancing restrictions began.

The fact that there are benefits hidden in the current difficulties is shown by some of the reports from our services. Trevor Matthews tells us that since the restrictions have begun, new people have actually been introduced to our Queensland services. Ruby Golding says that since groups run from Penrith NSW have gone virtual, the numbers attending some have actually increased. Donna Shrubsole tells us that the social

distancing regime has unexpectedly led to staff getting to know some people better!

Everyone agrees that we are now looking at Information Technology differently as we seek to draw from it the maximum amount of benefit for both staff and the people who access our services.

“Showcasing the commitment of our staff to their work”

One thing is certain: events since March 2020 have showcased the commitment of Flourish Australia's staff to the important work that they do. This work, supporting people with mental health issues, is more important now than ever and our mental health workers, peer

workers, team leaders and others have risen to that challenge.

One of the first things they did in Flourish Australia's services in South Eastern Queensland was to develop a HEALTH ACTION PLAN which was based on an earlier influenza action plan.

‘We knew we needed to send a consistent message out to the people who access our services’ said Queensland Cluster Manager Trevor Matthews at a video conference of staff on Friday 24 April 2020. ‘We had to address the way social distancing would effect the very essentials in life; for example, how do you get your Webster packs filled?’

‘We asked the people who accessed our services what technology they had at home to help them and, more importantly, could they use it?’

COVID-19

‘Caring for pets was another thing. How do you arrange for your pets to be cared for if you need to go to hospital while restrictions are in force.’

The question of how to run group activities was also crucial, especially once the limit of two people per gathering came in.

“Good things are coming out of this”

- Ruby

‘Warana and Caboolture services already tended to be one-on-one in nature,’ but the peer led service at Hervey Bay ran a lot of group activities that needed a rethink.

‘Hervey Bay service responded very quickly as things evolved during March.’ said Trevor. ‘At first they explored the option of moving groups outdoors so that they had the room to incorporate social distancing; for example outdoor Yoga. They had the idea of ‘pop up’ groups that ‘popped up’ as needed rather than according to a fixed schedule. When further restrictions prevented that from happening, we began leaning more towards technology.’

‘This has prompted us all to look at how we can make better use of technology. This is proving beneficial now and it will continue to benefit our service into the future.’

Trevor told us that staff member Dean Sheridan stepped up to the plate here to offer other staff IT guidance. Staff are learning all the time.

“Tell us what you want if...”

Ruby Golding, manager at Penrith New South Wales said it was important to prepare EARLY for all the ‘what ifs’ that presented themselves at the beginning of the pandemic.

‘The people who access our service told us what they wanted to happen, how they wanted to be supported “if” something came about. Our staff teams made it happen,’ Ruby told the

conference on 24 April. ‘There has certainly been lots of creative discussion on how to provide services.’

The number of people participating remotely (in groups that were formerly in-person) has actually grown according to Ruby. ‘We split one of the groups into two because we could not accommodate so many in one video conference!’

‘This is something we can take with us when things go back to normal.’

How is the new situation affecting the people who access our services? Ruby told us about one person who originally came to the Penrith service as a safe place where he could hang out and generally did not interact much. However, since restrictions came, they

have begun to interact more!

‘Good things are coming out of this,’ says Ruby.

“Feeling a bit special” in Inner Sydney

‘We rang 127 people,’ says Donna Shrubsole, manager of Flourish Australia’s Buckingham House service, describing how staff adapted to the physical closure of our ‘drop in day centres.’

When the COVID-19 situation was first developing and gatherings of 500,

continued next page

BELOW: Yes it can be difficult to be cooped up looking at the same old scenery every day, but the staff at Flourish Australia’s services in S-E Queensland Hervey are making the best of it. PHOTO BY THOMAS SHIELDS



COVID-19

ADAPTING OUR SERVICES *continued from previous page*

then 100, were still permitted, Donna thought about running more groups in the outdoors – to allow people to keep the appropriate distance. However, this plan was overtaken by events once even groups of 3 were banned! Buck House was one of the first of our services to decide to take as much as possible online.

“One thing we cannot now neglect is technology. Without technology it would be difficult - sometimes impossible - for staff to work from home or for people to make contact with others.”

‘We still make person-to-person contact with people who require it, for example where people might have a high risk of self-harm or turn up wanting to have a meal at our restaurant, not realising that we can’t operate as usual. However, we could not run Buck House as we have always done, where people drop in as they wish. We have moved a lot of our interactions to the telephone.’

‘One of the good things that has come out of this is that we are actually getting to know some people a lot better. Where

we might previously have met them only in a group situation, if we talk to them on the telephone for an hour we are concentrating solely on them during that time. I think it makes them feel more special. 95 per cent of people are happy to get phone calls and we use other methods where appropriate.’

The issue of personal hygiene has been brought to the fore lately. ‘Some people experience difficulty with maintaining good personal hygiene at the best of times; people who are homeless for example. Now and then we meet people who don’t realise the necessity of thorough handwashing. In our naturally friendly, welcoming environment, people often want to shake hands a lot! Unfortunately at the moment it may not be safe to do so. We are considering when this current situation is over what personal hygiene ideas can we carry forward in future.’

‘I suppose it’s been necessary to become a bit more formal in some ways.’

One thing we cannot now neglect is technology. Without technology it would be difficult- sometimes impossible- for

staff to work from home or for people to make contact with others.

‘At Buckingham House we have always tried to meet people’s needs with technology but we plan to get onto this even more for the future. It is essential at the moment for dealing with the issue of loneliness.’

‘Sean is a NDIS provider for IT support, but for a long time he has been volunteering to run a Tech Club for members weekly, on Tuesdays, at Buckingham House,’ says Donna. ‘He, or another volunteer, David, supports members with their IT challenges on their phones or laptops which they bring in to get support. Sean has taken this group online and was joined by 4 people last Tuesday.’

For some people, cost can be a barrier to IT. Others just don’t know how to use it. It might be a question of confidence, education or simply that they don’t realise it is a priority. Some are too busy to learn. It is the same set of barriers to learning that EVERYONE faces! The current situation with covid19 is directly challenging us to support people to overcome these barriers.

BELOW: Paradoxically, being restricted to home has made us think more about new ways of connecting with the community: RANDOM SHOTS OF GUILDFORD, NORTH PARRAMATTA, NEWTOWN AND STANMORE NSW BY WARREN HEGGARTY
OPPOSITE: The Sunshine Coast, QLD. Is it really so bad being stuck here? PHOTO BY THOMAS SHIELDS



Broadening Horizons in Queensland

By Evan Fulton

As Manager of the Peer Operated Service in Hervey Bay, I want to pay tribute to the team for the way they willingly run with whatever has to be done, moment by moment, no matter how awkward it feels at first. Their positivity has provided vital assurance amid uncertainty and a smooth transition to a whole new way of working together.

As one of the few organisations in town offering one-to-one mental health support, with all of the planning and scheduling that entails, we anticipate growing demand from the wider community.

While continuing to meet the on-going needs of people we support, a rise in NDIS enquiries means the team is working very hard to respond to and increase supports.

At the same time, many possibilities have opened up for people who are geographically distanced since we've set up new ways of reaching them remotely, and more people are utilising our warm line than ever before.


Having to close the centre was hard on everyone because it's such a positive social hub with a really warm and accepting energy. People grew through informal interactions and structured groups. The wider community appreciated knowing the drop-in option was there for them too.

With the onset of level one restrictions, we introduced pop-up activities at outdoor locations like the Hervey Bay foreshore which proved more popular than imagined.

We noticed a real cross section of peers becoming close-knit. They were so grateful that the team made this happen for them. We'll re-visit pop-ups once restrictions ease.

Our whole approach shifted overnight from working based on the coming

Flourish Australia



“...a rise in NDIS enquiries means the team is working very hard to...increase supports.”

“...we'll re-visit 'pop up' activities once restrictions ease.”

and going of people, day to day, to scheduling online sessions and individual appointments. Understanding that it can be daunting for first timers to enter a new environment, the Peer Workers convey such warmth and acceptance via Zoom or phone that newcomers still feel welcomed and safe to connect with us in new and unfamiliar ways.

Renowned for our culture of co-reflection, the team strive for regular check-ins to keep the team vibe alive.

We hadn't anticipated how well working from home plays to some individual strengths and will consider ways that elements of that flexibility might continue once we re-open. This will free up team members and office space to be used in other ways.

Putting Heart and Soul into it

By Toni Rielly

I manage our Sunshine Coast NDIS service team. For such a small team, moving activities online has been a big job. Everyone put heart and soul into getting it done and stayed positive throughout the process.

We worked fast and hard to connect with each individual and modify their existing plan purposefully. They're pleasantly surprised to find they can still follow through with the activities and supports they want, just in new ways.

Most were open to trying Zoom or Face Time as an alternative to connecting face-to-face. Where necessary we worked with people to build their skills and confidence using digital platforms to access their sessions or NDIS plan.

Accessing a debit card to shop online for groceries has been an exciting new experience for some. Others have added daily exercise to their goals for the first time. Going online has expanded social networks for people in regional areas, giving them a greater range of activities to choose from. Our trivia group is now accessed by people across Caboolture

and Hervey Bay service areas and we expect its popularity to grow once word gets around.

For those who miss simply being able to drop in for a coffee with us, we still offer this via Zoom when they want to talk face-to-face. Because our team is also missing the opportunity to catch up spontaneously during the day, weekly check-ins ensure that no one feels they are doing it alone.

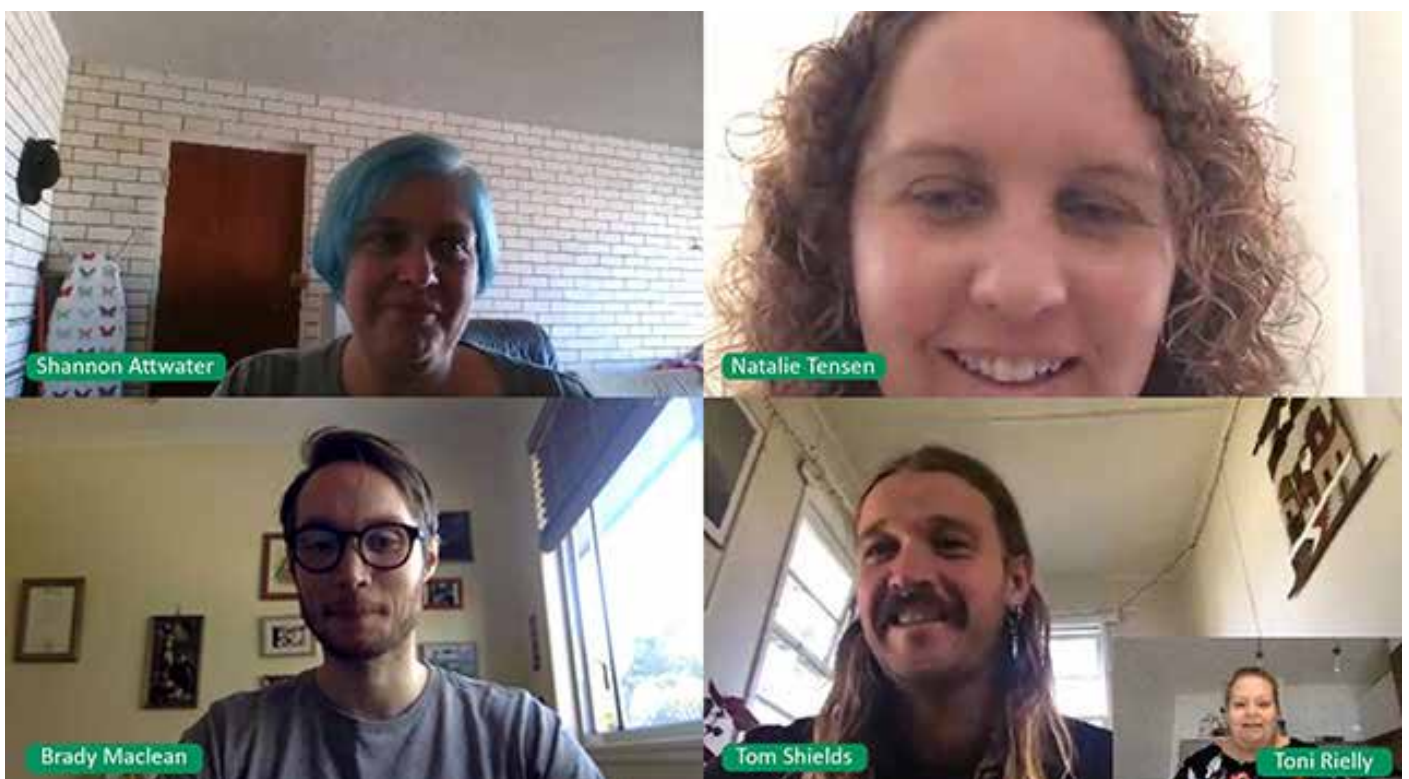
Pictures from online groups are shared as encouragement. Everyone is going above and beyond but we make time to pause, breathe and remind ourselves that we can only accomplish so much in a day.

THESE STORIES FROM QUEENSLAND ORIGINALLY APPEARED ON Chirp : Computer Home Intranet for Flourish Australia

“Accessing a debit card to shop online for groceries has been an exciting new experience for some of the people who access our service.”

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BELOW: Flourish Australia staff in Queensland are not letting a virus spoil the recovery journey PHOTO BY EVAN FULTON





Family & Carers

At Flourish Australia, we understand the important role many families and carers play in supporting someone with a lived experience of a mental health issue to stay well and part of their local community.

When someone comes to us and asks for support we discuss with them the involvement of their family and other important people in their lives, and what supports they provide. If we are able to obtain that information we will record it so our staff know who is important to the person and their recovery. We will also make contact with you to check what supports you may need to undertake your important role and discuss your involvement and communication preferences.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Sometimes families and carers want more information and other contacts. There are a range of organisations that provide specialist supports and information for carers. A list with contact details can be found on our website at: <https://www.flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers>

Mental Health Carers NSW

Ph: 1300 554 660

Arafmi Queensland

Ph: (07) 3254 1881

Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network

Ph: 1300 620 042

Mental Health Carers Australia

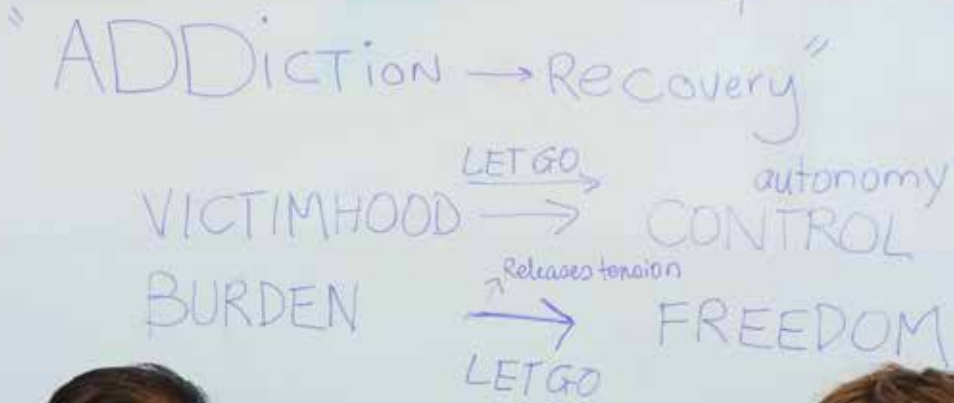
Ph: 1300 554 660

Kids Helpline

Ph: 1800 551 800

COPMI – Children of Parents with Mental Illness

www.copmi.net.au



ABOVE: The path from addiction to recovery is a matter of letting go of a burden, says Daniel Singh (left) seen here talking to peer worker Susanna Lucia at Flourish Australia’s Marrickville Office. PHOTO WARREN HEGGARTY

Letting go of the Burden

By Warren Heggarty

There are some burdens that require a lot of support from others and a lot of effort from yourself to move beyond.

Daniel Singh had endured years of trauma, hearing voices, addictive behaviours, physical health issues and hospital admissions. Other family members had also experienced “lots of ambulance trips,” so the same sorts of issues were all around him.

Daniel is very enthusiastic about his message that if you experience addictive behaviour, you can also experience

freedom from that addiction.

Daniel accesses Flourish Australia’s Marrickville service. Along with peer worker Susanna Lucia we went through Daniel’s view of what it takes to move beyond addictive behaviour to recovery.

He sees the experience of addictive behaviour as a continuous build up of tension. It is unsustainable. You keep holding onto baggage you need to let go of. Letting go empowers you to gain control of your life and can lead you to freedom.

With support from people like Susanna and many other people from several organisations, Daniel managed to turn

his life around. Now, he is enrolled in a horticulture course; he is a member of Flourish Australia’s Community Advisory Council, is working part time and has a career lined up. How did he do it?

For Daniel, the crunch came when he returned a positive result to a drug test performed by corrective services.

“My drug use had turned me into a someone that I didn’t recognise, but I couldn’t stop. The only way forward seemed to be long term rehab, for twelve months.”

Daniel says that there were too many things going on in his head. No comfort, just trauma, hurt and pain. Drugs and

Recovery/ Addiction

alcohol may have seemed to be a way out, but in reality it was a burden he could no longer carry.

“What about tomorrow?”

“The issue is that something goes wrong in your life that leads you to seek relief by using drugs. That’s what happened in my life. People in this situation just think of today, but what about tomorrow?”

The problem with Ice especially, is that you never know what’s in it. Daniel came from Wellington NSW where he says ice use is prevalent.

“You have the issue of mixing drugs too. You don’t eat well or take care of yourself. You might end up in emergency wards, in ambulances, or passed out on the footpath. Your experience a bad feeling coming off Ice. There are intergenerational addictive behaviours to consider too. The dealers know all about this. It is part of their marketing.”

“Why did you leave it so long?”

“Following my positive drug test, the Magistrate said to me with a tone of exasperation, “You knew what would happen to you. So why did you do it?” I admitted that I was not really coping. I needed to regain control of my life. “Why did you leave it so long?” the Magistrate asked me.”

Daniel describes that first week in rehab as, “a bit of a hump.”

“You hit rock bottom. When a person hits rock bottom and breaks down, they need ongoing support, whether it is AA, NA or GA (Alcoholics/Narcotics and Gamblers’ Anonymous.)”

At first he felt that there was no way he could give up drugs.

“The addictive behaviour fights you. It’s like a whole lot of heavy baggage that you carry round with you everywhere all the time. When you say you can’t carry the burden any more and put the baggage down, you feel pushed to pick it

up again!”

When you hit rock bottom you begin to shake as the weight is being lifted from you. “You have to let go of everything that bothers you. There is too much baggage. Let go of that baggage!”

The rehabilitation process often comes in two stages. The first, sometimes referred to as detox or “detoxification” concentrates on the physical aspect of the addiction. For example, some people are monitored in case they have seizures or other serious withdrawal symptoms.

The really challenging part, rehabilitation, comes next. This is where you work on the psychological and social aspects of your addictive behaviours, learning how to live a new life without drugs. How long this stage lasts varies from person to person.

You need a plan

What do you do with your life when you no longer fill it with drug use?

“You have to have a plan,” says Daniel.

Since his time in the Linden Unit at Orange NSW, and later Dooralong Transformation Centre in Newcastle, Daniel has come up with a plan. “I can say I have helped a lot of people, which I had never really done before in my life.

You end up doing head miles! Work helps you through that. It’s beneficial to do something constructive, like car detailing, which is what I did. You have to be patient while you are still cleaning out the mess inside your head.”

The same applies to other addictive behaviours.

“You think alcohol is helping you, but it is actually taking things away from you. Alcohol won’t let go of you. YOU have to let go of IT.”



“People underestimate the damage that alcohol does in our society. There is the damage of domestic violence. There is damage to people’s health. Then there are the car accidents.”

People underestimate the damage that alcohol does in our society. There is the damage of domestic violence. There is damage to people’s health. Then there are the car accidents.

Even pub meals can lead to temptation.

“They are good and cheap but the idea is to get you into the pub to drink alcohol.”

Daniel emphasises the important role of support people and support organisations in recovery from addictive behaviours as well as mental health issues. He mentions workers not only from Linden, Dooralong and Flourish Australia but from the William Booth Centre and Trustee and Guardian.

“In general, people don’t want to hear stories about your trauma and addictive behaviour. They are dealing with their own issues. You can find yourself in a tunnel. It’s dark in there and you need to see the light. I experienced a vicious cycle of loneliness. Support workers can support you to break out of this. Prayer can also support you to understand that you are not alone.”

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ABOVE: The view from the balcony of Flourish Australia's Nowra office on the afternoon of New Years' Eve, 31st December 2019. PHOTO BY ADAM MUIR

Living Through the Bushfires

What Flourish Australia is doing to meet the challenges of a nationwide crisis

By Warren Heggarty

In a letter to staff on the 10th of January, Flourish Australia CEO Mark Orr recognised that though bushfires are a part of life, this season has been more harrowing than usual. "The news of fires can be quite distracting, and even traumatizing, at times," Mark wrote. "I know some people are choosing not to watch or listen to any news because it is just too much."

Where there is fire, there is smoke, and this season has seen dangerous levels of smoke haze, almost on a daily basis, for weeks on end. Warnings have been issued to people with breathing disorders and poor general health to remain indoors and/or don P2 masks.

On a number of occasions during January, members of Flourish Australia's senior leadership such as Mark, Aidan Conway and Andrew O'Brien met, or held conferences with, local managers to discuss our response. This included managers from Cooma, Tumut, Nowra, Bega, Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Wollongong and Blue Mountains. (see box story "Tumut at the Ready" for more info).

Mark Orr reiterated his message from the end of 2019, that Flourish Australia's primary concern was for the safety and welfare of staff, the people who access our services, and everyone's families.

Discussions looked at how Flourish Australia could use its resources to help the general community fire effort, how to deal with critical incidents, how to assist displaced people, and how best to provide trauma-informed mental health support where most needed.

There was discussion about establishing a list of people who might be available to provide some relief to Local Health District teams in the affected areas, who have been working non-stop over the last few weeks to support people in local communities.

Flourish Australia worked in partnership with Primary Health Network and Local Health Districts to ensure efficient coordination of services.

Workshops

Boris Borissov, a mental health worker from our large Community Businesses in Harris Park and Marrickville, ran some recovery workshops to support people during the crisis. "People think it is a horrible thing. They have relatives in the bushfire areas. We support them to keep in touch. People experience less anxiety when they feel supported."

Boris said that ABC reports have been run on site so that supported employees could keep people up-to-date on developments. People have also been made aware of what to do in case of bushfire, such as the importance of securing small things like ID etc.

To give just one example of how Flourish Australia staff have stepped up to help their colleagues, the O'Connell Street team at Tamworth operated our after-hours support number and covered the phones from our offices on the South Coast when those offices were closed or cut-off due to the fires. You can see from the pictures of Nowra on these pages that it really was a grim situation, yet people who called Nowra and our other South Coast offices were still able to speak with someone from the Flourish Australia team.

Andrew O'Brien, Flourish Australia's General Manager of Operations (South East) told Panorama, "We were in constant touch with the Local Health Districts and Primary Health Networks about providing additional supports. We offered to send staff from outside the bushfire affected areas to go to the regions where support was most needed. As it turned out, no additional support was requested, but the Primary Health Network and Local Health Districts were aware of our offers. The Primary Health Network also worked with us and other providers to develop supports that are needed in the short, medium and longer terms as part of the Commonwealth response to the crisis."

Air Quality

Flourish Australia staff were advised that the best way of limiting the negative impact of poor air quality is to stay

Events



ABOVE: The Rural Fire Service facing a wall of flame PHOTO BY TIM OWERS

inside with doors and windows shut. If people needed to go outside, we advised using a properly fitted P2 mask. Flourish Australia also organised for supplies of P2 masks to be available where required.

Andrew said, "The teams at our offices in Wollongong, Nowra, Ulladulla, Bateman's Bay, Bega, Goulburn, Queanbeyan and the Murrumbidgee area have done an amazing job at continuing to provide support to people during the bushfires. They checked to make sure that everyone was OK, had evacuation plans and assisted them with getting to evacuation centres if needed.

BELOW: 'It's pretty freaky when a large jet is flying so low overhead,' says Tim Owers; A Large Air Tanker dropping retardant on the bush directly behind Tumut.

PHOTO BY TIM OWERS



As part of the supports they provided, they let evacuation centres know about us. If people we support identified they were part of Flourish Australia, they would be provided extra help at these centres because the situation may have contributed to a high level of distress and anxiety for them. This was all done on top of supporting their own families and friends who have been impacted by the fires. Everyone has been directly affected by the fires and it is a testament to our staff that no-one was injured or lost their lives."

Support for Staff

CEO Mark Orr said that support staff need support themselves, and at the height of the crisis Flourish Australia service managers advised him that the staff did feel supported. Self-care is always important, so we are in a strong position to support those who need it most.

At the height of the crisis in early January, the Senior Leadership decided to pay people in the affected areas as usual, regardless of leave arrangements in relation to volunteering. They did not want people to worry about income at that time.

You never know what is around the corner but you can often be prepared. "We began talking about the novel Coronavirus problem (now known as COVID-19) in our recovery sessions in February," Boris confirmed. "People feel more supported when we discuss things that concern everybody."

Tumut at the Ready

By Tim Owers, who works at Flourish Australia's Tumut NSW service, is a member of the Rural Fire Service and has been out on the fire front.

At Tumut two of the seven people we support and two staff members were displaced by the fires at various times during the past month.

One person we support has lost their home and one staff member's home was partially burned while all of their sheds/yard was burned.

People from the Tumut service, including staff and people we support, have helped out by supporting the Rural Fire Service.



One of our staff members worked alongside many other volunteers to put together food bags for RFS volunteers (pictured above).

The people we support were also cooking and preparing food that could be used to send out in the RFS food bags.

During January we provided more group sessions in the office. The office has been made available for people we support to drop in and we provide meals for them. This was to assist those who had been displaced. We were also able to provide food to the evacuation centre for meals.

During the bushfire crisis, as local manager, I have been providing information to NSW Health. As a part of the Local Hospital Advisory Committee, I have been meeting with NSW Health regularly.



ABOVE: Joy says the 2019 Brisbane TheMHS at which she presented was a “massive deal for me.” PHOTO PROVIDED BY SARAH BAILEY

Joy’s Life with Yo-Yo Puffs, Carpet Monsters and Cats

By Warren Heggarty

“I can’t have a cat at the moment,” says Joy Laloli of her current living circumstances. This is a bit of a worry, because if you have read our “Cat” article in December Panorama you will know that Joy is very keen on cats. This includes Lion and Tiger-type cats as well as normal house cat type cats.

“If I can’t have a cat,” she muses, “Capybaras are cute and chill...”

At the 2019 TheMHS Conference in Brisbane, Joy gave a short presentation about her recovery from mental health

issues. It is so important that stories like this are shared because it demonstrates that recovery is possible. This can seem a little unrealistic to some people, so it can’t be repeated often enough.

22 years ago, Joy was working at Franklins, in a suburb of Newcastle NSW, and doing a Bachelor of Arts at university, when she experienced things like “hallucinating in lecture halls.” Her relationship disintegrated, she felt she had to drop out of university and she was hospitalised. “I escaped from hospital to be with my cat Darcy, but they came for me two weeks later and I was readmitted.”

Joy is pleased to say that she has not been back in hospital since 1998.

However, without paid, open employment, Joy experienced a loss of choice over where she lived and moved into public housing. “I took a bed-sit in Wallsend (with Darcy, fortunately) where the neighbours were difficult. Someone smashed a window with edge cutters. It was terrifying. I was fearful for my life. Thankfully I later transferred to a place in Mayfield. My neighbours are all friendly and I deeply appreciate living here.”

“I religiously take my tablets. It was my doctor who experimented with reducing the dosage - without telling me - to see how I’d go. It was only for three days, but I started hallucinating. So back to the normal dosage!”

“I know when I am becoming unwell: I see the ‘carpet monsters.’ When I see them, I talk to the doctor!” According to Joy’s description, ‘carpet monsters’ seem to appear when the shapes of ordinary things (like the pattern on carpets) are interpreted as some kind of living, moving beings, and not necessarily friendly ones.

But why would the doctor have reduced the dosage? “When I first started the medication, I gained a lot of weight. I went from size 12 to size 26. The doctor was exploring whether a lower dose would be sufficient. I also feel sleepy a lot of the time when I take my medication.”

So plan A didn’t work. What was plan B?

“I do walking and swimming for two hours every Wednesday and I use the gym for one hour every Thursday.”

“I also work on reception at Flourish Australia, Newcastle on Mondays. On Tuesdays I work in the kitchen making sandwiches. The extra money helps me out.”

Joy also has future plans for work. “I’ve done a work preparation course at WEA, I’ve studied Art, Fashion and Millinery. I have been making bags to sell at The ART BAZAAR. It’s so much fun! It is a big market for artsy people. People bring along art works to sell. There are about fifty stalls.”

In 2017 a group of people who access Flourish Australia's Newcastle service took part in a group exhibition called ARTFUL FUTURES. "That was soooo coooooo!!" says Joy.

What was Joy's contribution? "I like to save up little fabric things to use in my work. I used about a thousand yo-yo puffs, which look a bit like flowers. One of the art school teachers helped me put it up on the wall at the exhibition with blu-tack. It took from 8:30 in the morning to 5:00 at night to install it. I had so much fun. I really enjoyed myself."

Which brings us to TheMHS Conference 2019.

"This was a massive deal for me," Joy confesses. "I'm so used to living alone, although I have been to see my family in New Zealand. My Mum loves travel and she works in a hotel but I'm terrified of aeroplanes, escalators, fires, lifts... terrified of heights. I went with Peter White, who was also presenting, and Natasha Jones. Natasha always reassured me. There was hardly any turbulence on the way up, fortunately. However, we were on the 16th floor. I was so nervous that I couldn't eat!"

"The colouring-in wall was cool, I liked that (see December 2019 Panorama). Peter and I presented on the Thursday. We spoke in a smaller room. The audience was so lovely. One person came up to me and said, 'I just want to thank you so much for sharing.' That was just so lovely. It was enlightening for us."

Coming home on the plane, there was a hiccup. The steep staircase you go up to board began to look to Joy like "the vortex of doom." The plane stewardess knew how to handle it. 'Let's go through the nose of the plane!' That did the trick.

Unfortunately there was a lot of turbulence on the way back. "Peter was so kind to me. He distracted me from my anxiety in various ways."

"I was so happy to be at home with no escalators! Can you believe my favourite book is FLATLAND? Yes, it is Flatland which is about a world with no heights because everything is two dimensional."

Despite the nervous jolts Joy says she is, "really glad I did it! Socialising was the best part of it."



ABOVE: The "jet set" is no longer an exclusive club for the rich. PHOTO BY QUINTIN SOLOVLEV, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=71173464>

Anxiety in the Air

By Warren Heggarty

Experiencing a serious fear of flying is becoming more prevalent as time goes by, because air travel is becoming a more and more common part of life.

It's not just holidays. More jobs than ever before seem to require a willingness to travel. This is ironic, given the fact that technology like ZOOM can enable interstate or international meetings to be set up instantaneously. These days, a fear of flying can lead to an increase in social isolation and a loss of employment opportunities. According to Fearless Flyers Inc, almost one in four people experience a fear of flying. There is a difference, though, between finding flying unpleasant and experiencing nightmares about it, even though you have no intention of ever getting onto a plane.

Fearless Flyers

Other people's phobias are specifically related to flying. This can be managed with knowledge and familiarisation. Some of the things that can be done include seeing how aeroplanes work by inspecting them on the ground and talking to the crew members and air traffic control people. Some courses have access to flight simulators.

Other people's phobias, however, are more complex and may even stem from

a subset of agoraphobia, the dread of a panic attack that the person feels might be triggered by flying. For these people their anxiety may not be limited to being on a plane: they might even experience anxiety about getting aboard the 420 Burwood to Eastlakes bus to get to the airport...

The Fearless Flyers course is run at major airports including Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney with facilities support from QANTAS. It costs \$950 including your graduation flight (the cost of the fare for the 420 Eastlakes express bus not included). Check it out here...

<https://fearlessflyers.com.au/home/how-we-can-help-you/i-want-to-overcome-my-fear-to-fly/>

Dog Flying Squads to Soothe the Nerves of Anxious Passengers

You may know Embark as the name of one of Flourish Australia's 71 services, but "emBark" is also a program operated by American Airlines at Sydney International Airport. They offer passengers a chance to pat a Labrador before boarding a flight. It can lighten the often stressful atmosphere of an airport check in (Ironsides, 2019). Meanwhile, Townsville Airport has a successful animal therapy program. Nodin, Tink and Alika are Alaskan malamute dogs enlisted to soothe anxious flyers before they board planes. (Ironsides, 2019).

Works Cited
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Gladesville Hospital Cemetery

After nearly two centuries, an official remembrance for the 1,200 people who are buried in the hospital grounds



ABOVE: The Joubert Singers sang “Where the waters meet.” PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

As reported in previous Panoramas, over 1229 people are buried on the grounds of Gladesville Hospital (“for the Insane”). Only five graves were marked. That there was no memorial for so many people showed the greatest disrespect. The Mental Health Commission of NSW under Commissioner Catherine Lourey worked collaboratively with a large number of stake holders to enable the restoration, acknowledgement and memorialisation of the cemetery to happen. Those stakeholders included government representatives, Ministry of Health personnel, community representatives, local governments, historical societies, local aboriginal representatives, former patients and those with lived experience of mental health issues. It all came together on the 10th December 2019.

By Warren Heggarty

The slow build up of bushfire smoke seemed to climax on this day. Drivers coming across the Ryde Bridge towards Gladesville in Sydney’s north would scarcely have been able to see the water below, let alone the other side. The temperature was climbing to yet another 40 degree day.

It seemed that every excuse nature could muster was telling people not to go to the Memorial at Gladesville Hospital Cemetery. Most of the people would be elderly, many in poor health and there had been health warnings issued.

However, not only was the marquee full of people, helpers were spilling out

of it: the Joubert choir was making last minute practice, the Phoenix string quartet was setting up on the graveyard, and Brendan Kerin was conducting the Aboriginal smoking ceremony (using specially chosen and blessed leaves) as planned. There had never been a smoke haze like this, but it wasn’t going to stand in the way of the Order of Proceedings.

And just as the smoking ceremony began, around 2:30PM, the wind suddenly rose from the South, causing the temperature to drop down and clearing away the stale smoke.

After Brendan’s Welcome to Country, Michael Appleton, a former patient at Gladesville Hospital, made an acknowledgement of lived experience,

representing those present and those no longer with us: our lost peers.

In her opening address, NSW Commissioner for Mental Health Catherine Lourey gave a personal apology to the people who had experienced inhumane treatment. “The Gladesville Hospital Cemetery Memorial is a project that is close to our heart and I thank you for attending and recognising the lives of the people who lived and died here, as well as those buried at various other institutions throughout NSW.” (MHC of NSW, 2019, p. 4)

The Hon Scott Farlow MLC then made an address in place of the Minister Hon Bronnie Taylor who was unable to attend. Then came what might have been seen as the main event: Janet Meagher’s lived experience speech.

Like Mike Appleton, Janet was once a patient in the sandstone buildings surrounding the marquee. Like all psychiatric hospitals constructed in the old days, it was built on a river because, according to some archaic law, “lunatics” as people with mental health issues were often called, were not allowed to travel on the highways.

Of the former patients who were buried here (along with some staff members) Janet said this: “They were forgotten,

Events

hidden, shunned, ignored, rejected and deprived of identity in life and death.”

While 923 names have been collected and recorded, the identity of 306 people remain “known only unto God”, as they say of unknown soldiers on a battlefield. Janet said that all people have intrinsic value and this fact is something that really matters, something not trivial. When people die, we show respect.

“Today we give them a belated dignity in death that they did not have in life.”

In the programme for the ceremony, Janet had written “... for many, this hospital is symbol of the cruelty and the victimisation of the people that were already victims... people should never be harmed by their care and treatment.” (MHC of NSW, 2019, pp. 4-5)

In her speech, Janet assured us that “life here was NOT NORMAL. It was not just us patients who were not normal. It was a separate world. It was a closed system in which we were stripped of our past achievements and credibility. You take on an institutional personality and lose independence.”

To illustrate this point, it seemed Janet the Teacher-Librarian was looking each and every one of us in the eye.

“I have endured one thousand million art lessons and I still can’t draw a straight line! And this is a worldwide phenomenon in mental hospitals.” This line only briefly relieved the serious tone of Janet’s speech. “The voiceless people in this cemetery are speaking through us. When a group of repressed people are able to get themselves organised and stand up for themselves, only then is dignity restored. It is the individuals who count. Today is about recovering the dignity of those individuals. It is about giving people their name back.”

The Joubert singers from nearby Hunters Hill then gave us a rendition of a lovely song called “Where the Waters Meet,” composed by Matthew Orlovich and based on the poem by Elizabeth McGeorge which attempts to recall the experiences of the earliest inhabitants of the area. People were then invited to walk through the cemetery listening to a string quartet as a recording of the names of the people buried there was played.



ABOVE: Michael Appleton is widely and highly respected as an advocate for people with mental health issues.



LEFT: “It is about giving people their name back.” The 923 names were printed out and displayed along the wall of the cemetery. A recording was played of the names being read out.

BELOW: NSW Mental Health Commissioner Catherine Lourey (left) talks with former Gladesville patient Janet Meagher AM while fellow activist Tim Heffernan listens. PHOTOS BY WARREN HEGGARTY





ABOVE: Paul, Debbie and Jack the Delta Dog PHOTO BY GRANT J EVERETT

Pet Therapy at BARKingham House

By Grant J Everett

Delta Therapy Dogs is a not-for-profit organisation that provides calm, friendly dogs for therapeutic purposes. Debbie from Delta Therapy Dogs visit Buckingham House once a week on a Thursday with Jack, her American Golden Retriever, and stays for an hour and a half. Debbie was happy to discuss her work, while Jack was content to hang out quietly.

How long have you been involved with Delta Therapy Dogs, Debbie?

Jack and I have been involved with Delta Therapy Dogs going on three years now.

So how did you start with Delta? How did you first connect up with them?

I actually met a Delta Therapy Dog in my local park one day. I got talking to its owner and I thought, "What a lovely idea! I can do that!" And I've never looked back. I get so much out of it, and so do both my dogs. I love interacting with the members of Buck House, and I love to see the way the dog brings out the best in them.

How did Jack become a Delta Therapy Dog?

Delta has a few days every year where people can bring their dogs to see if they have the right stuff to be a Delta Therapy Dog. They go through a few little exercises just to test the personality of the dog and the nature of the dog to see if they have what it takes. That includes being very friendly and calm, not jumping up on people, and being okay with minor stressors like sudden loud noises, being bumped into, heavy patting or rough handling. Most of all, they simply need to enjoy being around people. They also have to walk nicely on a lead, be mindful of their owner, and need to follow basic commands. Once Jack passed his training, I received my red Delta shirt and Jack got an official red bandana with "Delta Therapy Dog" on it.

Do you get to decide where you and Jack will visit?

I was given a big list of facilities that would like to have a Delta Therapy Dog come visit, though where we go is up to Jack and I. Usually we visit places within close range of where I live, as I don't want to travel too far. Many Delta Therapy Dogs visit hospitals, including the Children's Hospital, Palliative Care, Mental Health Units, and a lot

of Aged Care Facilities. I chose to visit Buckingham House regularly because I thought it would be nice to bring a little joy to a mental health centre. You can tell some of the members at Buck House have had dogs, you can tell by the way they pat Jack and talk to him and relate to him, and you can clearly see how it makes them feel. I see lots of smiles.

Each visit we spend up to an hour and a half, as that's the recommended time that Delta sets. Any longer than that can take a lot out of a dog, because they have to be very patient and happy and on their best behaviour. I've noticed that when we get home Jack will go straight to sleep, and have a big nap for an hour.

Is Jack your first Delta Therapy Dog?

No, D'arcy was my first Delta Therapy Dog. D'arcy is a cross between a Golden Retriever and a Labradoodle (a mix of Poodle and Labrador, the original designer dog). I got both D'arcy and Jack through the same place: Golden Retriever Rescue.

In addition to visiting Buck House with Jack, D'arcy and I visit an aged care facility once a week that's so close to my home I can actually walk there. We will go around to the residents and pay special attention to anyone who may need some extra TLC. I love the interaction between the elderly residents and D'arcy, and the comfort that he brings them. A lot of the elderly residents have had pets themselves, and unfortunately these facilities often don't allow people to bring their pets with them when they move in. So just having a pet come and visit them, is nice for them.

I saw how everyone at Buck House lit up when they saw Jack come in. Is it a similar reaction at the Aged Care facility with D'arcy?

Yes, absolutely. Many of the aged care residents are experiencing dementia, a few of them to the point where they aren't verbal anymore, so it's amazing to see the smile that a dog can bring them. There's a connection there that you can only get with a friendly animal. Even if they're non-verbal they can still enjoy just patting the dog. Touch is very important in these cases.

What kinds of breed of dog can get accredited by Delta?

Delta Therapy Dogs can be all breeds. They can range from the size of a Chihuahua to something called a Leonberger, which is similar to the size of a lion with a huge head. But again,

Recovery

it's the temperament of the dog that matters, not the bloodline. There are certainly pluses and minuses with size – for instance, a Chihuahua would be easier to get up onto a hospital bed than a Greyhound – but it's about the individual dog rather than the breed. A bigger dog is also a benefit to those who may not be able to bend down or have a small dog on their lap or bed. There are a lot of Golden Retrievers and Labradors who are Delta Therapy Dogs, as well as King Charles Spaniels, Kelpies.

So you visit the Buck House day-to-day living centre and an aged care facility. Can Delta Therapy Dogs can be found in a lot of different places?

Delta runs something called "Paws the Pressure", which is a different program to what I'm with. Say there's an insurance company in The City that needs to help their employees feel a little bit happier and de-stress: they can ring Delta and organise for a certain amount of dogs and handlers to come around. Those teams will visit and simply walk about. You'll often see employees rolling around on the floor with the dogs with everyone smiling and happy and laughing, and you can feel an immediate shift in the atmosphere. They switch from stressed out to calm. Paws the Pressure also visits universities and schools so the students can de-stress between doing their exams, and we get a huge response from the students. They just love it. If someone requests a few dogs, off we go.

What factors will decide the length of Jack's career with Delta Therapy Dogs?

As long as Jack is happy to keep visiting Buckingham House, I'll keep bringing him. As his owner, I can tell that he's having a great time. As soon as I put on my red Delta shirt and get his bandana out, his tail starts wagging because he knows where we're going. He gets very excited!

I guess that age will play a big role in Jack's career. As dogs get older they can develop illnesses like arthritis, so I'll eventually need to keep a close eye on Jack to make sure he's walking comfortably, can still sit down easily, and is happy to be patted. At the moment my older dog, nine-year-old D'arcy, is still okay, so young Jack certainly has a few years left in him.

How can people support Delta Therapy Dogs?

I would love more people to become aware of Delta therapy dogs and what we do for the community. The best way you can do this is to learn about us on our website. It should answer any questions you might have, such as the known benefits of pet therapy, and the proven positive effects dogs can have on stress. Getting the word out about Delta Therapy Dogs to people you know would be fantastic, or better yet you could support us by arranging for one of our teams to come out and visit your office or facility.

Predominantly, Flourish Australia employs non-medical approaches to support people with mental health issues. So we greatly believe in using experiences like Delta Dogs to help people with their recovery and wellness.

After being with Delta for a while now, what do you think about the healing effects of pet therapy?

I see it all the time in my visits. Jack and I were at a corporate event in The City, and a lady came up who just lost her dog and is absolutely heartbroken. But having another dog to hug and pat made her feel a whole lot happier. There are also people who want to get a pet but can't for whatever reason, so we can provide an outlet for them to have a pat. There are just so many benefits to therapy dogs. And keep in mind that all these therapy dogs are privately owned dogs. I'm Jack's owner, but I'm not special in any way: I simply have a calm dog who likes to meet people.

Do you have any goals with pet therapy? Something you're hoping to accomplish or share?

That's an interesting question. I enjoy so much of what I do. I always look forward to visiting Buckingham House each week. I find that all of the members are different, and they each have a unique and valuable contribution to make to society. I love chatting to them, and I love the way they adore Jack. They'll tell me stories about their experiences, and it puts everything into perspective. I'm very pleased to be a part of their lives. I think that it makes me a better person.



ABOVE: Jack the Delta Therapy Dog hanging out with his mate Tony

PHOTO BY GRANT J EVERETT

Tony and Jack: A special friendship

Tony is one of the members who attend Buckingham House regularly, and he is always happy to see Jack. In fact, hanging out with Jack is one of the highlights of Tony's week, and it always makes his day. Like many people, Tony has discovered the power of pet therapy, and it's become a key part of his wellness.

"I've been coming to Buck House on Thursdays and Fridays for around three years now," Tony told us. "I like coming here, and I especially look forward to seeing Jack coming around each week. He's friendly and he's good company. I love animals, especially dogs and cats. I haven't had one as a pet, though my sister has had dogs and cats."



ABOVE: The carwashers are hard at work. Brett Zammit is closest to camera, Craig Riley is in the middle, and Darrin Givney is at the back. PHOTO BY JIM BOOTH

Tamworth's Waterless Carwash:

Scrubbing up for recovery

Grant J Everett

Flourish Australia runs Community Businesses such as packing and processing, property maintenance, landscaping and a conference centre, just to name a few. These businesses provide employment opportunities for people with mental health issues who may not have worked for some time, or never had a job at all. We have offered supported employment and disability services for more than 60 years, and we continue to grow and create new endeavours.

Jim Booth, Senior Cluster Manager of the Tamworth branch of Flourish Australia, told us all about the newest Community Business they're running in the New England and North West region: the Waterless Carwash.

"We started up the Waterless Carwash on the 4th of March," Jim said. "This Community Business is staffed entirely by people who access Flourish Australia services around Tamworth and surrounding areas. This is all very exciting for us, as we've been building towards establishing this venture and providing much-needed employment

opportunities for several years."

"Past employment issues can have a truly devastating effect upon people's lives and can easily lead them to the conclusion that they aren't capable of working. We aim to turn that around by creating new jobs across the region."

Why a Waterless Carwash?

"With Level 5 water restrictions still in place, this was an ideal time to enter the market. Our waterless system saves up to 300 litres of water per vehicle compared to a traditional carwash. It works by using spray-on chemicals to soften and lift dirt from the vehicles, followed by wiping them down with a microfibre cloth. This process doesn't damage the vehicle's finish at all. A very small amount of water is used to wash the cloths and remove heavy mud."

"Prior to opening as a commercial operation, our supported employees practiced how they would use the chemicals and industrial vacuums on-site to perfect a quality service and stay safe. The team knew what to expect when we launched. As it can take time to do a top-rate job we have a waiting room available, though people are also welcome to drop off their vehicles and pick them up later."

Meeting a need

"Our Community Businesses provide dignity for people who have experienced unemployment for a long period of time,

and gives them a reason to get out of bed in the morning. It can also provide socialisation opportunities for people who have otherwise withdrawn due to their experiences of mental health issues. This is exactly why Flourish Australia's Community Businesses exist: to argue in your favour and say yes, you are capable of maintaining a job with the right support."

The recovery pattern

"The enterprise model used by Flourish Australia is different to other systems of employment, however this is still a highly professional workplace. All the staff adhere to using Safe Work Method Statements, there's always a supervisor on site to ensure industrial requirements are met, employees fill in timesheets and are paid every fortnight. Ideally, our employees will gain the confidence and skills to transition to open employment."

"Ultimately, we hope to attract fleet owners and build our workforce of supported employees from 29 to more than 50. At this stage, we are regularly cleaning fleet vehicles for Flourish Australia, Transport NSW and West Tamworth News Agency."

"The Waterless Carwash will provide many benefits for the environment, for the local economy, and for anyone who operates a vehicle. This business is now running on a full commercial basis."

UPDATE DURING PANDEMIC

Like every small business we have been impacted by the pandemic and demand has declined. Some of our staff have chosen to take leave, so our remaining carwashing team and office cleaning teams are stretched.

We're running the Carwash on Tuesdays and Thursdays for now, and hope to come out the other side as strong as ever.

Source

<https://www.nbnnews.com.au/2020/03/04/waterless-carwash-in-tamworth-to-boost-mental-health/>

**Flourish Australia
Waterless Carwash
131 Bridge St,
Tamworth NSW
0448 474 750**



ABOVE: Darrin Givney working hard at the Tamworth Waterless Carwash PHOTO BY BHAVINKUMAR PATEL

Darrin Givney: Rising from the Ashes

Since being with Flourish Australia I've achieved many of my life goals and there's no stopping me now! I've been the Manager of their Waterless Carwash in Tamworth since it opened and although I'm studying toward a career in Mental Health Work, I hope to keep some crossover with the work I do here because I enjoy it and value the people I work with.

As Manager, I teach vital skills to all the Waterless Carwash workers, such as handling and storing different chemicals and how to correctly use them to wash the different surfaces of vehicles in the right way. I'm also responsible for ensuring that everyone is wearing their safety goggles and other WHS equipment. Whenever I start a shift I remind everyone of what is expected of them, for their own protection. I used to be a nurse so I know all about PPE gear (personal protective equipment that's worn or held to keep you safe from possible hazards). There are a number of employees who work at the Carwash, and we stagger their shifts so that everyone gets as many hours as possible.

My work week is very full. I work at

Flourish Australia

the Carwash Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, then on Thursday and Friday I work at TAI which is a cleaning service Flourish Australia provide for the local agricultural research centre. Lately, I've been taking some time off because I'm close to attaining my Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work, with only three assignments left to complete. I've already achieved a Cert II and III in Mental Health and hope to move into Peer Work once I've finished my studies. I'd like to find a way to stay involved with the work I do now though. The staff are a good bunch of people to work with and I don't want to leave that behind.

I like people. I'm a people person. My belief is that if I can help just one person, what I do is worthwhile, but if I can do it for one, I can do it for more.

“With Flourish Australia's support, I've regained what I had lost.”

I first connected with Flourish Australia in Tamworth 5 or 6 years ago after I experienced a series of strokes. I was unable to walk or talk and was pretty out of it. After I had been bedridden for a while, my wife left me which really got a burr up my behind. I thought, “Nah, this isn't it. I'm going to walk and talk again.” Somebody recommended me to Flourish Australia who reached out and said “We want to help you recover.”

As a result of the strokes, I lost 80% or 90% of my memory. I moved into the

O'Connell Street Men's Support Housing at Tamworth to undergo rehabilitation. Flourish Australia showed me how to cook and clean and manage money. They taught me exercises that would retrain my brain and muscles to work together, such as walking up and down stairs and moving different parts of my body in specific ways.

As I regained mobility, my confidence grew. With Flourish Australia and other amazing support people alongside me, I've made it back to full functioning. I can walk and talk and just need to keep practicing my speech and exercising my lips and fingers to remind my body how to operate properly.

Two years ago Flourish Australia offered me work as a cleaner, taking care of a few different sites. Once I demonstrated my abilities they asked me, “How would you like to become a supervisor?” I told them I'd give it a go and I have never looked back.

I've been kicking goals ever since. Successfully sitting for my drivers licence again was a big one and buying a brand new car is another major goal I've ticked off. The last dream on my list is to buy a house. I have the First Home Buyers' funding arranged and I've sorted all of the paperwork on my own without any trouble.

Overall, I'm doing really well. I live independently in my own flat and I'm entirely responsible for my own life. I'm planning on spending the rest of my life working for Flourish Australia in whatever form that may take.



ABOVE: Judy ready to race! Supported by Helen Waite PHOTOS BY JIM JOHNSON

Zippering to win Silver at supersonic speeds

Judy accelerates to second place at the Monaro Billy Cart Derby 2020 in Cooma

By Jim Johnson

Recently, my wife Judy and some of her family members entered the Monaro Billy Cart Derby at Cooma. This involved some really fast downhill time trials on both traditional and modern Billy Carts. The event has been held in Cooma for 5 years now and has gone from strength to strength, thanks to community support and some wonderful sponsors.

After a very nervous start to the event, which involved 4 timed runs down a 300 meter track lined with hay bales, Judy drove a modern cart named "Old Smokey" to the 2nd place medal in the over 18's category. As you can see in the photo, Old Smokey was sporting some handsome Flourish signage on its rear bumper. Judy's Peer Worker, Helen Waite, served as her Pitt Crew and the event announcer did a lovely introduction about what Flourish Australia does for the people who access their services.

Judy's silver-winning performance was a tremendous triumph over her personal fears and difficulties. It served as a testimony to the care and support provided by Helen and Flourish Australia, along with the Cooma Community Mental Health Team and Judy's doctors, nurses, and family.

Now that the Billy Cart season is over for the year in Cooma, Judy intends to focus on the Flourish Australia Community Garden. With support from her fellow gardeners, Judy will be growing beautiful crops that they can donate to local churches, enter into local shows, and of course use in some fine home cooking!

Judy has experienced mental health issues since she was 16. She is an identical twin and has shared these challenges with her sister for their entire adult lives; however she leads a busy life enjoying many varied activities, including knitting, crocheting, gardening, painting, reading, listening to classical music and using the computer.

Judy raised 3 sons and has 10 wonderful grandchildren. She also volunteers with the local Salvation Army Emergency Services Team and was part of a group that catered for Emergency Evacuation Centres during the recent bushfire crisis in South East NSW.

Thanks to Flourish Australia, Judy is having the time of her life.



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COOMA NSW 2630
(02) 9393 9140



ABOVE: Kaesha indulging her creative side at an Art Group PHOTO BY SHARNY DUDLEY

I'm currently receiving Supported Independent Living (SIL) accommodation through Victoria House where I share a home with two other tenants. The Victoria House staff support our day-to-day needs and sometimes take us on outings. I'm quite happy living there, and don't have any plans to move.

Thankfully, I'm surrounded by a great support network including friends, my spouse, family, workmates, Flourish staff, and my case manager, Kimberley. My network gives me meaning and supports me to stay on the right path.

**“Never give up!
Good things may
be right around the
corner.”**

I'm currently waiting to hear back about what NDIS support I'm eligible to receive. The process has been very slow and I still don't know what the outcome will be. I really hope that I'll receive a package that meets all of my needs and goals.

My advice to anyone who's going through tough times with mental health issues or addictive behaviours is to stay strong, be persistent, and never give up! Good things may be right around the corner.

Thanks to Sharny Dudley for her help with this article.

Strength to strength

by Kaesha

Over the last four years, my recovery journey with Flourish Australia has been going great in so many ways. The best news of all is that I've stayed sober for 14 months and counting!

I've also gained my L plates and I'm doing driving lessons each week. One of my life goals is to get my full Driver's License and buy a car, so I'm working towards that. For work, I volunteer once a week as a barista at a local library. Down the track I would like to find a paid job in a little local café that offers more hours. I'm sure all the practice I've had

at the library café will help me with that.

I've been attending Flourish Australia services at Goulburn for four years now. I visit there Monday to Thursday, every second Friday, and each Sunday, so I'm very involved. This is the only day-to-day living centre that I've accessed for support with my mental health issues. I feel very comfortable around the staff and the other members. In fact, I've come to really like their company and consider all of them good friends. I enjoy the activities and outings offered by Flourish Australia but what makes these groups so special are the awesome people who come along.

I have a few hobbies, such as art and singing, and the Goulburn service runs groups where I can do both these things with other people who come here.

Are you living with mental health issues and looking for support in managing drug or alcohol issues? We can help connect you up with services in your area. Call or email our enquiries team to find out more!

(02) 9393 9000
june.harrison@flourishaustralia.org.au

**Flourish Australia Goulburn
Shop 1, 42-44 Clinton Street
Goulburn NSW 2580
(02) 9393 9147**



ABOVE: Jedi the former pound puppy PHOTO BY KAREN

Adopting a pound puppy changed both our lives

by Karen from Queanbeyan NSW

My pup Jedi was a pound dog. He was picked up as a stray wandering the streets, and when I first met him he showed all the telltale signs of neglect and abuse. During our first meeting I took him out of his cage at the pound for a “meet and greet” session. He eagerly followed my lead with his little stubby tail wagging, straining on the rope which encircled his neck. He wanted to get as far away as possible from the caged walls which imprisoned him. He was in luck, because from the moment I met him I knew he was the dog for me.

He had the loveliest temperament, so friendly and gentle. His eyes suggested that he needed this break as life had

not been great up until this point. It was obvious he still had so much love to give.

Jedi was a mixed bag, as it happens. He had very large ears and strong muscular legs, but the body and face of a Jack Russel. Most people that met Jedi drew similarities to a pirate, because he had a black patch over his left eye. One friend even suggested I should have called him “Patchy”, but given that I’m an avid Star Wars fan he was always destined to be called “Jedi.”

Jedi’s tail, unfortunately, was a home job. Someone had attempted to lop it off when he was a puppy for reasons I cannot fathom or accept. As a result it juts out at a strange angle, giving him a bit of a comical appearance. I loved him all the more for it.

Jedi became crucial to my life 10 years ago when I was admitted to hospital due to indications of mental health issues. Prior to hospital I had become reclusive, cutting myself off from everyone and everything. The only joy in my life at that time was Jedi. He stood by me, and his loyalty never wavered. While I was in hospital Jedi came to visit me a number of times (thanks to my loving parents). We would meet up in the car park because dogs weren’t permitted on hospital grounds. We would play tug of war with a rope and play catch. Jedi was a good friend to me.

“The only joy in my life at that time was Jedi. He stood by me, and his loyalty never wavered.”

Throughout our years together, Jedi brought so much love and light to my life. He didn’t ask for much, just a bowl of food each morning and night, cuddles, and a game or two of catch. He also appreciated a walk in the afternoon. Jedi was never one to tolerate the presence of other dogs, however. He always put on a big performance if he met another furry friend on the way to our destination.

Sadly, back in December of 2019, Jedi passed away. I was right by his side when it happened. and he left the planet knowing he was a much loved dog and will never be forgotten.

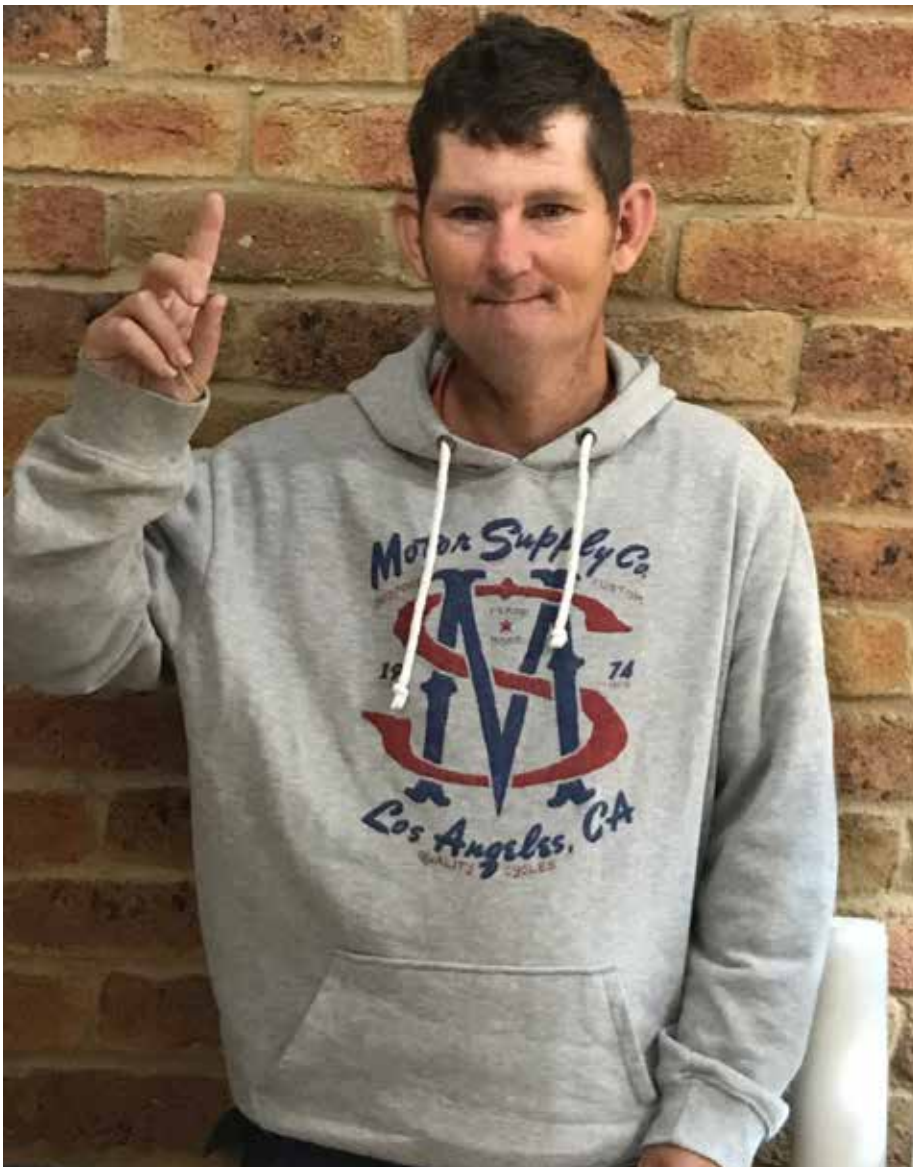
I wrote this piece to pay homage to Jedi, and to all the other dogs, at various shelters across Australia, still waiting for their forever homes. If you are considering a pet dog and you have the time, money and resources to support one, then I urge you to think about saving a pound dog.

They may just save you, too.

www.rspcansw.org.au/what-we-do/adoptions/

www.petrescue.com.au/

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ABOVE: Benny from Temora PHOTO BY LISA WARD

Benny: Getting Back in Business

With the support of Flourish Australia I look forward to getting my drivers' licence, finding a home of my own and being back in business!

By Benny

Over the years I've established businesses when I could see a need. One enterprise was cleaning windows. Out here, dust coats everything, so glass needs to be cleaned regularly. Business slowed down once a competitor came along who took his trade very seriously, and this eventually led me to close my business. I have to admit, he does a really good job!

Last year I completed a Cert II in Business at TAFE and achieved good grades. I'm currently taking further Business studies to equip me to deal with competition and run things more efficiently so that I have the skills I need to maintain a profitable business.

I'll let you know how it goes!

Keeping things interesting

I was initially connected with Flourish Australia through OCTEC Employment Services 4 or 5 years ago. Since the local Flourish branch here in Young closed down, I've been going to the one at Temora instead. Recently, they assisted me with my paperwork to secure NDIS support, so I look forward to finding out what I will receive funding for.

The Flourish Australia staff also provide all sort of activities and groups. One of their Mental Health Workers, Lisa, has taken me fishing, and we often go for a meal or get together over coffee. The

Temora service offers a regular art group for the members, and someone from Flourish Australia's Sydney team comes up once a month to run a special art group.

There's a major focus on groups that keep us physically active, like barefoot bowling. My favourite sport group was a tennis competition that brought together all of the Flourish Australia services from as far as Wagga to compete in a friendly tournament at the courts at Young. It was a great turnout of about 20 people. These courts have recently been revamped following a generous \$2 million State Government grant, so they're in great condition.

I play good tennis so this was ideal for me.

One of the obstacles I've experienced with rural living in a country town is finding good housing. I have been living at a pub and I can afford the rent, but I would prefer to have my own place. The pub is really noisy with loud music and people coming and going at all hours. I have applied to the Department of Housing and I'm waiting for an opportunity to become available.

Challenges

Transport can be an issue out here if you don't have a license. Unlike Wagga or Orange, there are no local bus services, although there is one Community Transport bus which goes to Wagga twice a week. Another goes to Canberra three days a week, leaving Young at 7am to arrive in Canberra by 9am. It drops you off near the airport, the mall and the hospitals and waits there until 4pm when it heads back to Young. Thankfully, most of the local shops are close to where I live, which makes life a little easier.

One of my goals is to get my driver's license, so Flourish Australia supported me to get my L's. I was still participating in rehab at that point, so I feel I did pretty well to get them. I have had some driving lessons, but I experience mental health issues that affect my concentration and it's important to be 100% alert when driving. Once I find a way to progress to my P's it will become a lot easier for me to get around.

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Layne on Life

Surf champ Layne Beachley talks trophies, overcoming adversity, and living a fulfilling life for International Women's Day

ABOVE: Paula Hanlon, Layne Beachley AO and Mark Orr AM all striking the "Each for Equal" pose PHOTOS BY NEIL FENELON

by Grant J Everett

International Women's Day recognises the amazing contributions made by women all around the world and pushes for true, universal gender equality. This year, the theme was "Each for Equal".

Flourish Australia's Figtree Conference Centre hosted a High Tea to celebrate this occasion and set out the best fine china and mouthwatering sandwiches, cakes, quiches and éclairs for everyone. Figtree hosted people from our Youth program and Women & Children's programs, our Board of Directors, Figtree Conference Centre customers and Sydney Olympic Park businesses, as well as many other friends of Flourish Australia. Female students from a number of local High Schools, such as Rosebank College, also attended.

The highlight was Layne Beachley's amazing keynote speech. Layne is the most successful surfer of all time, bringing home an unprecedented 7 World Championships as well as dozens of other major trophies. Layne has adored the ocean as long as she can remember and it's always been a source of solace for her.

Layne began surfing in 1976 when the sport was almost entirely dominated by men. Of the all-girls school Layne

attended, there was only one other female surfer. To say that most male surfers expressed a serious issue with Layne catching waves would be an understatement.

Layne's goal was to be the best surfer in the world, so she deliberately picked the most challenging beaches, filled with the most aggressive male surfers. She thought doing things the hard way was the key to her dream.

It seems her theory turned out to be true!



Despite her many successes, Layne has experienced some extreme low points.

"No amount of gold medals, fame or

money guarantees a smooth life, and mental health issues don't discriminate," Layne told us. She also stressed that her career was far from perfect. "Of the 225 competitions I took part in, I brought home the gold 29 times. Being the greatest doesn't mean having a flawless career, it means getting back on the board no matter how badly the wave dumps you. Your obstacles and failures do not define you."

After experiencing being socially excluded by people she considered to be her friends, Layne tormented herself with headmiles; *Did I do something wrong? I mustn't have been friends with them in the first place. I never belonged.* Her husband, Kirk Pengilly from legendary Aussie band INXS, played a crucial role in supporting Layne through this tough time by always being there to listen without judgement.

"When Kirk asked if I was okay, this made me realise I wasn't. My own thought patterns were the issue. I actually ended up joining the RUOK? movement specifically to encourage people to ask their loved ones this vital question."

Striving to be number one above everything else can be unhealthy, of course. For instance, after an accident in the water severed 80% of Layne's

Events

spinal cord, she simply ignored it and kept competing for another 5 years before taking time off to seek treatment. Inevitably, this caught up with her.

“The body whispers before it screams. Listen to it.” Layne cautioned.

Following her recovery, the joy and love of being in the water is what brought Layne back to competition, rather than her drive to be the best. By her 7th (and final) World Title, Layne had done a lot of work on herself and was now seeing the world in a different way. She competed with ease, grace and gratitude, taking in the beauty of the waves and the beach rather than letting her drive to win overshadow everything else.

She actually enjoyed winning this one!

“I had always been my own worst critic. I had zero compassion for my rivals or for myself. Over the years I’ve had to learn empathy and compassion. Being able to share that I have experienced mental health issues has benefited a lot of people who are struggling in similar ways. Mental health issues are indiscriminate, so read the signals early and tune into what’s going on in your head.”

Layne has also learned how to live a healthier, happier life.

“The three key things I do to keep myself going are surfing for fun, napping and yoga. Breathing exercises, journaling, and connecting with nature are important too. We all need to connect with the ones we love. Surround yourself with your dream team; with people who will help you, support you, encourage you to be your best and bring joy to your life.”



Layne's tips for happiness

“If you want others to value you, you must learn to value yourself.”

“Get enough quality rest by not falling asleep to devices that use blue light, including televisions, computers and phones.”

“We tend to place self-imposed limits on ourselves and this sets the tone for every relationship we have.”

“If you are unsure about something, ask yourself: is what I'm doing sustainable?”

“Look within. Know who you are, be who you are, because only YOU can give yourself permission to be happy.”

International Women's Day campaign theme for 2020 is #EachforEqual. It's about collective individualism, how our actions, conversations, behaviors and mindsets each have an impact on larger society. Collectively, we can each help to create a gender equal world...so let's make it happen!

The 2020 #EachforEqual campaign runs all year long.

www.internationalwomensday.com





ABOVE: Three proud representatives of Macarthur Girls High School PHOTO BY NEIL FENELON

How is Australia going regarding gender equality?

Flourish Australia recently held a high tea in Figtree Conference Centre to celebrate International Women's Day 2020. We circulated the room and asked people the big question; "how is Australia going with achieving true gender equality?"

Gwen

"I think with Mark Orr AM as your CEO, Flourish Australia is doing very well but the wider society, perhaps not so much. Statistically, one woman a week is killed by men while 46 policemen in Queensland have been 'counselled' for domestic violence, so I don't feel the issue is taken very seriously."

"A couple of men killed by coward punches prompted changes to laws around violence so why do we not see the same outrage when it's women who are affected?"

"There's still pay inequity. Often there's no support if you decide to take time

out to have a child and men are still appointed more often than women."

"Just the other day on the radio, a sportsman commented "WHY are we putting this money into women's football?" despite the fact that more money is raised by women's football than men's football. To me, gender equality still seems tokenistic."

"It appears to me we still have a very long way to go on gender equality."

Jelena

"I think it's important to reflect and realise we have made a lot of progress but I believe there's a long way to go. Change takes time. The most discouraging thing for me as a woman is that when I speak to men around my age, they can behave very defensively around issues of gender equality, particularly the gender pay gap. I would like to see these conversations start earlier, either in high school or the latter stages of primary school, to raise awareness of the issue so that people become more open to having conversations about it, rather than saying "No, that's not true. You guys have everything already. It's better than it was in the past."

Linda

"We've got a way to go. There's definitely been improvement but until women can feel safe, we can't have gender equality."

Schoolgirls Bella and Sacha from Rosebank College

We attend a co-ed school where everything is pretty much equal. Everyone gets the same sporting opportunities, so while netball is usually seen as a girl's sport, all students play it. Our compulsory subjects also reflect gender equality. Every student learns sewing, food tech, wood tech, engineering and computer skills. Traditionally, you rarely see women in a wood tech career. We believe we all have the same opportunities in life and can achieve what we want to without being held back based on gender.

Figtree Conference Centre
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Sydney Olympic Park
NSW 2127
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Green Caps and Red Caps by Russell Bugg

ABOVE: The Flourish Australia service in Leeton PHOTO BY ANTHONY SCHLOEFFEL

Once upon a time, or in November 2019 to be exact, Anthony and I went to Leeton to visit Anthony's cousins for a holiday. As we were travelling from Penrith, this was a 550 kilometre trip that took 6 hours.

On Monday the 25th, being at loose ends, we went down to the Town Centre at Leeton and checked out an important historical building. It used to be a bank, but now it served as the local branch of Flourish Australia. This wouldn't be the last time he saw it.

After a difficult morning, Anthony decided he wanted to go to the local Flourish Australia centre to sort out his head, so he called them for a pickup. Maggie the supervisor could not have been more helpful. She immediately dispatched their people mover to collect Anthony and me. Maggie and the other local supervisor, Ernie, were very helpful. They welcomed Anthony with open arms, but weren't quite sure about me... until I showed them my WestClub badge (I'm wearing it in my photo). After a brief character check, they said, "Okay, you can come in too."

We arrived at Flourish and all of Anthony's worries melted away once he put his mind to other activities, such as a fitness group called Flo Fit. Ernie put on a Youtube video and we did an African clock dance interpretation, an eagle flap, and a Bogan dance. Anthony commented that every Flourish Australia location should provide Flo Fit.

A group of us went for a drive with Ernie to Aldi at Leeton Plaza to buy ingredients for lunch; a lovely, delicious chicken stir fry. There were approximately six members and a handful of supervisors

who all ate lunch together. After our meal, the numbers dwindled as people went home early but Anthony and Maggie stayed, as did a bunch of the gang. We all participated in making a rather large Christmas wreath.

At the end of the day, Anthony was given a Flourish Australia hat that matched my own green colour. Yes, the hats at the Leeton site are green, but the ones at Penrith are normally red. They're different colours at different locations.

After a wonderful day meeting the gang at Flourish Australia in Leeton, Anthony found it very hard to say goodbye. He was in no mood to leave. With a tear in his eye, Anthony got a lift back to his cousin's place from Maggie and Ernie.

As you get with holidays, it was soon time to head back home again. Anthony returned to Penrith with lots of good memories and some stories to share about the Leeton service with his friends at Westclub.

This story was created and narrated by Russell Bugg. Anthony Schloeffel is my support human.

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18 - 22 Kurrajong Avenue
Leeton, NSW 2705
(02) 9393 9510**

**Flourish Australia Penrith
232 Derby Street
Penrith, NSW 2750
02 9393 9799**



ABOVE: Russell Bugg hanging out
BELOW: Anthony S relaxing after a big day PHOTOS BY ANTHONY SCHLOEFFEL





Tread Softly, For You Tread On My Dreams

by Wayne Salter

ABOVE: Wayne prepares to drop his latest rhymes PHOTO BY MEGAN GRIFFIN

Being part of Flourish Australia's Bega centre has proven to be everything I'd hoped for. I'm surrounded by good people and with their support I've made positive changes to my life, like encouraging others through the hard times with my modern poetry.

When I first moved to Bega from Melbourne, at the age of 30, I had few friends, so when my Case Worker from Bega Mental Health told me about the activities and outings run by Flourish Australia's local service, it really appealed to me as an opportunity to make new friends. I started attending and it's provided everything I had hoped for. I've gone on a few outings to lovely places like Pambula and helped fry up a couple of barbecues. The workers also come around to where I live and support me with getting around to my appointments.

My Mental Health Worker Megan, assists me a lot at the moment with practical everyday things like typing up my poems or giving me a lift to the centre. I'm displaying my entire collection of poetry there on a big piece of coloured paper we bought from the newsagent. Megan added an artistic design around it to make it look even better.

I spent the first twenty years of my life

in Victoria then another twenty in Bega. My poems are about my life in those two places. For instance, "Itchy Fingers" is about the time I experienced financial problems. My money was once controlled by Protective Office and Public Trustee because I was experiencing issues with drug use and gambling. Now that I've kicked both of those habits, I manage my own finances and live within my means which gives me peace of mind. I do my shopping once a week and always pay my rent and bills.

For the love of creating

Poetry for me is not about making money. It's a way of expressing myself and when I put one together it's like "I created that!". I started writing poetry when I was 17 and it's always been for my own enjoyment. I write poems that appeal to me. I never know whether somebody else will like it but I know that I do.

My whole motivation for writing poems is simply for people to read them.

I've heard of poets like Banjo Patterson and may have even read him when I was young but old-school poetry doesn't interest me. They were written for people way back then. I want to do modern poems for modern people based on stories

that have happened in my life. I include a lot of positives and hope in my poetry. I want the reader to know that they aren't the only one to suffer hardship; that it's part of life and that going through positives and negatives is a natural process for everyone.

Despite leaving school at a young age, in Year 7, I read well and my spelling is good.

Flourish Australia asked me if I wanted to go to TAFE or take an English course to learn ways to improve my poetry or branch out into other kinds of writing. I told them I'm not ready for that.

Staying on top of my wellness

I like to stay on top of my mental health because I find that my poetry improves. My thoughts are less scattered and I am able to focus. I tend to isolate myself when I feel unwell. I've been in and out of hospitals from an early age as a result of my lived experience with schizophrenia and find that keeping up my medication helps to regulate my thought patterns and prevent feelings of paranoia.

The symptoms of my mental health issues can draw unwanted attention. When that happens, I'm the one who does it tough because I'm a nice guy and I'm harmless to those around me.

A Close Call

I've experienced a close call in my life when I was it by a car while walking to the local store. The car was moving fast enough to spin me around and I slid up the bonnet then bounced off the windshield. It narrowly missed running over my food as I landed on the road, knocking off the side mirror with my elbow as I fell.

I was fortunate enough to walk away without serious injury. When the driver got out of the car asking "Are you alright? I'm sorry!" I just said "Here's your mirror" and passed it to her.

The Value of Family

I've been living with my Mum for ten years. It's a healthy living situation

We help each other out by sharing the cooking and cleaning and try to do the right thing by one another. I choose to do most of the cooking because I enjoy it and I want to be sure I have all of the necessary skills to live independently. Mum picks up my pills and reminds me to take them. We get along very well and rarely argue.

I have a wonderful family including a sis-

ter who lives in Sydney and brothers in Bega and Pambula, who now have families of their own. I see the brothers from Bega frequently.

I haven't seen my Dad since I was 15 and first experienced mental health issues. He didn't know what to do. He gave me the choice to go back to school and stay with him but I chose to live with Mum.

Is there such a thing as too late?

Next year I turn 40. I know my life's not over yet but I sometimes feel I chose the wrong path in life and missed opportunities. For years I chose drug use over education or work and surrounded myself with negative influences. I've made positive changes since moving to Bega and becoming part of Flourish Australia where it feels great to be around positive people.

A SELECTION OF

Wayne's Poems

SUNNY DAYS TO COME

I've been walking this road for so long,
Will it ever end? Will I ever find the Sun?
Please come back to me and shine forgotten gladness,
Come shine for me so I can let go of all this sadness.
Shining joy you came,
I can let go of all this pain.
Now I shall be free to my only friend,
The Sun

BEGINNING TO END

Who said life was meant to be so easy?
But it turned so bad, and it must of made the Good Lord so sad.
For all we know, it's all in a day.
The sleepless nights for all tomorrows to come right away,
To be made stronger and to become the one.
The one to help others that are so much in need.
Could you please hear these words, I do plead.

Because the life I've been given can be taken away at any time.

So therefore, I must try to enjoy my peace of mind.

Smiles to a tear, and tears to let go.

Because the world has a big job ahead.

As the book of life will let us know.

DARKROOM MADNESS!

I once was lost in darkroom madness,
Hidden from life such hell-bound pain.
Fields of loneliness had grown stronger,
My soul was driven insane.
Highest heaven above could not shine for me
But still I worship love for life
Life for love let be.

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ABOVE: Wayne just enjoying himself at Flourish Australia's Bega service

PHOTO BY MEGAN GRIFFIN

Stay home, stay safe. 

Do not go to work if you have these symptoms:

-  **Cough, sore throat or fatigue**
-  **Shortness of breath**
-  **Fever**
-  **If you're sick, stay at home**



ABOVE: This photo shows just SOME of the group of consumers who attended Janet Meagher and Lily Wu’s “Peer Work” workshop in New Taipei, last Spring. PHOTO COURTESY OF JANET MEAGHER AM

Protection versus risk and recovery

By Warren Heggarty

We recently saw two very interesting interactions between Australian and Taiwanese disability health sectors. Firstly, former Flourish Australia executive Janet Meagher AM and veteran peer worker Lily Wu visited Taiwan to talk about peer work. Secondly, a group from Taiwan visited Flourish Australia to learn about our business services and how they can be of value to people’s recovery. Both meetings were amazing!

“They have such wonderful rehab programs,” Janet Meagher AM told Panorama, “rehab programs that we can only envy. But the next step is missing. There is a reluctance to take that risky but necessary step to allow people to make their own mistakes and learn from them.”

Janet had been invited to the Second Global Summit for Mental Health Advocates to present her paper “Making Advocacy a Tool for Reform.” Some of the other people attending the conference included the Vice President and Minister for Health of Taiwan. “The participants showed great

enthusiasm for the topic as it is like a phantasmagorical idea compared to their current experiences and expectations,” said Janet.

Peer Worker Lily Wu, who accompanied Janet, said, “They were really, really impressed and very excited. They told us ‘we wish we had peer support workers and we hope it will happen soon.’ There was a lot of discussion and free interaction in the meeting.”

Lily’s presentation was based around the Living Library DVD which she explained was developed for the 2018 Mental Health Month and presented through Liverpool Library, near where Lily works at Liverpool Hospital. The host, Professor Chang Chueh, a social worker and former president of the Taiwan Association for Mental Health, said that she would like to use the DVD as a resource in her teaching.

Another thing Lily and Janet were keen to promote was the book “Peer Work in Australia.” They took 15 copies along with them and quickly sold out!

The approach towards mental health service consumers in Taiwan seems to be more protective than our own. There is a risk that protectiveness can have unintended negative side effects.

Janet explained, “I’m starting to think that disempowerment due to being overprotected is somewhat worse than disempowerment due to neglect. At least with neglect, one has the

potential to become self-reliant. The overprotection is hard to be weaned off, to develop a sense of self, to trust one’s own sense of competence, resilience and so forth.”

Is there a parallel between this situation of disempowerment and what was happening some years ago in Australia before the end of institutionalisation?

“Of course,” says Janet, “Although the situation is better in Taiwan. We did NOT have caring people around us to support us in Australia in those days.”

At the Veterans Hospital they visited, to give an example, there were patients trained to be tour guides. However, the public aren’t allowed to ask the tour guides any questions, in case the guides feel stressed! So here we have fabulous ideas and great innovations, but it all stops short of recovery.

We wanted to find some people who had graduated to open employment. Eventually, after some insistence, we were able to speak with two gentlemen. One of them was a cleaner. I asked who supervised him, hoping he would say the cleaning supervisor, but it turned out the Occupational Therapist supervised him. I asked him how much he got paid. He accepted that he was not paid as much as other cleaners because ‘I am not as good as other cleaners.’ He also lived in the ward!

The protective attitude is still commonly held here in Australia, though for several

years now it has not been reflected in official policy.

A Social Worker who accompanied Janet and Lily, whom we shall call Patience Zhang Ping* could not let the opportunity slip by to tell of how she herself had lived experience and was not too vulnerable to work. "You can do it, too!" She insisted to the audience of consumers. 'I am doing it. I have a job and if I am unwell I take leave. I can do it and so can you.'

'People were crying, after that' said Janet. "Actually, so was Patience. She had expressed something which was very difficult for her to express in that situation. You are not weak, you are strong!"

"Afterwards, the people in the audience wanted to keep talking to us. In fact, it was difficult to escape the situation, which is always a sign that you have gone over well."

"Lily Wu assisted me with the workshop and was able to describe her 13 years as a paid peer worker. They were amazed and excited to hear about how this type of workforce actually works!"

"They were somewhat frustrated that there didn't seem to be an obvious way forward for them to achieve such a workforce in Taiwan. They have a couple of people of influence who may be willing to push this concept further, but it will be a long hard battle, I suspect."

Taiwan investigates BuyAbility

If the Taiwanese were excited about the prospect of peer-work, when a group of disability service leaders and specialists from Taiwan visited Flourish Australia in November, they were equally astonished!

The delegates were addressed by James Herbertson, Flourish Australia's General Manager Employment Services; Paul Musso, who spoke about the Disability Services Sector and Simon Scrase who was joined by James to speak about BuyAbility and 'social procurement.'

The idea of personal choice and control, which is so central to recovery in Flourish Australia's way of doing things, was challenging to the delegates. One of the participants asked outright whether we would support a person's choice if we knew it to be a poor one.

'We would support that person's choice.' Said James, much to the astonishment of the whole room. Autonomy is not yet high on the list of priorities in the Taiwan mental health system, but remember, it is still a shocking concept to many people in Australia!

James assured the delegates that a major factor of success in our Business

and Employment Services is the recognition by the employer of the value of lived experience, especially in the particular disability it caters for.

Led by Ms Shih Chen-Yang, Deputy Director-General of the Workforce Development Agency, Ministry of Labour in Taiwan, the delegation included 21 people. Their roles related to vocational rehabilitation, training, and employment including 'sheltered employment.' Many different organisations were represented

According to organizer Chuang Yu-Jen of the Children Are Us Foundation, services in Taiwan are keen to improve their quality by looking at overseas experience. Writing to BuyAbility NSW, the organization that promotes 'social procurement' on behalf of Disability Employment Services, Mr Chuang said 'The case-based funding and star ratings system of Australia's DES are well-known management strategies across the globe.... we are interested in learning more details about practices ... in Australia.'

Flourish Australia was suggested as a suitable partner organisation for the delegation to visit in November 2019. BuyAbility Procurement is part of the National Disability Service. Its ultimate goal is to increase the capacity, capability and employment opportunities for people living with disability. Set up in 2011 its mission is to promote and facilitate companies and governments purchasing goods and services from Disability Employment Services (such as Flourish Australia's Prestige Packing Co).

BELOW: Disability workers from Taiwan confer with Employment Services GM James Herbertson PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY





Flourishing into first place

ABOVE: Natasha Jones flanked by her proud Mum, Debbie Jones, and CEO Mark Orr AM ALL PHOTOS BY NEIL FENELON

Natasha Jones is a Senior Peer Worker for Flourish Australia at our Waratah service. Recently she received the top prize in the Individual category of our inaugural Flourishing Awards.

How long have you been with Flourish Australia?

I have been working with Flourish Australia since 2016. I began in a casual position while I was pregnant with my second son, Natari. When I came back to work a few weeks after giving birth, I applied for a part-time role and did this for a few months before applying successfully for the Level 4 role at Waratah. When a Level 5 position became available in 2017, I applied for that and have been in that role ever since.

How did you come to work for the organisation?

I previously worked for a Family Support Service running a children's school readiness program called HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters). When my contract ended I began applying for other roles within the Community Services Industry. During my time in HIPPY I completed my traineeship in my first year, which included a Certificate III in Community Services, then a Certificate IV in Mental Health during my second year, and I also did a Diploma of Youth Work online.

Why did you get into peer work?

My passion for Peer Work stems from my own personal mental health journey.

I was given a diagnosis of Bipolar Affective Disorder at 16 and Borderline Personality Disorder in my early 20s. Peer Work promotes inclusiveness and growth, and I believe these are both paramount to being an effective Peer Worker.

Have you received support from a service like Flourish Australia in the past?

I have a broad support network, and this includes a clinical team made up of my GP, psychologist and psychiatrist. I can't say that I received support from a service like Flourish Australia, as there weren't a lot of services and supports around, especially for youth. I think I would have benefited from having more services and supports in my local area.

Do you support many people at the Waratah service and elsewhere? How?

Within the teams that I oversee, we support a range of men and women (9 all up) at 3 different properties within the Newcastle area. I am a part of the Community Housing and Accommodation Services Team, which is led by Manager Hayley Darroch. Our team supports 25 people at 8 different properties within Maitland, Newcastle and Morisset. I oversee a team of approximately 30 permanent, part-time and casual staff. My role consists of a lot of background work, but I am also able to work directly with the people we support. Having this flexibility is an amazing aspect of my role.

Do you enjoy your work?

I absolutely love coming to work each day. I feel so privileged to be in a workplace that acknowledges and accepts my mental health and works with me and supports me like this. I feel very fortunate to work with such amazing and skilled people and feel that I am continually learning and growing in my role every day.

You took home a trophy at the Flourishing Awards in the Independent category. Could you tell us about that?

I received a call from Mark Orr AM, the CEO, who informed me that not only had I been nominated for the Flourish Australia Individual Award, but had actually won. I was so surprised! I was in tears and just shocked that this was happening. I was able to bring my mother Debbie, my Manager Hayley and a supporting staff member (Brooke Sharp) down for the presentation, which meant the world to me. I feel so honored to be nominated and recognised for this award. I would have to say it is one of my greatest achievements.

Why were you given this award?

The Individual Award acknowledged my commitment to recovery orientated services and commitment to Flourish Australia's organisational values.

Fellow Peer Worker Anthony Norton initiated my individual nomination, and the majority of people who work within my team each contributed a paragraph in support of my nomination. It was truly heartwarming to be acknowledged for

my work. I was blown away that so many staff members had gone to such an effort to put in this nomination and keep it a secret for such a long time!

Have you ever won an award for anything else before?

When I finished Year 10 in High School in 2007 I received the Lion's Club Award for Improvement and Commitment. This was a major achievement for me, as I was struggling both mentally and academically at the time.

What's your advice to somebody who might be going through what you yourself have survived?

I would say that every day is a new opportunity to make a change. Remind yourself each day that you have done the best that you can. Be patient with yourself, and remember that great things are achieved one step at a time. Every person's journey is unique. With strength, knowledge and resilience, we can do anything.

Are you still studying or hope to resume studying?

I love attending training opportunities and courses. I believe knowledge is power, and the more skills and knowledge I have, the more effective I can be in my role. I recently completed my Diploma of Leadership and Management in 2019, so I'm taking a year off study. However, I hope to return in future to complete something different!

Do you have any study or career goals? Gaining a specific job role, perhaps?

I would love to be more involved in Peer Work initiatives in future. I have been very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to work with Peter Farrugia, Flourish Australia's Peer Workforce Manager, in co-facilitating the Peer Work Training in Newcastle in 2019 and 2020. In June 2019 I completed a 4 week secondment as Acting Manager, and I would love to work my way up to this position in the future.

Besides work, what gives you meaning?

Definitely my family and friends. I am blessed with the most amazing and supportive partner James, children Malakai and Natari, parents Colin and Debbie and sister Ashleigh. My friends also play a very big part in my life.



ABOVE (L-R): Brook Sharp, Natasha, and her Mum Debbie Jones



ABOVE (L-R): Professor Elizabeth More, Natasha, and Mark Orr



ABOVE (L-R): Brook Sharp, CHAS Manager Hayley Darroch, Peter Farrugia, Natasha



Flourishing Awards: Congratulating those who go above and beyond

ABOVE: Brooke Turner (middle) receiving her Highly Commended award from Elizabeth More and Mark Orr PHOTO BY NEIL FENELOON

The inaugural Flourishing Awards recognises employees and teams who exemplify Flourish Australia's organisational values and show a genuine commitment to mental health recovery. These awards are also a chance to share amazing stories of hope, support and team work. This time, the Flourishing Awards have also recognised the workers who dedicated 15 or 25 years of uninterrupted service to the organisation.

In order to win, individuals and teams must first be nominated by their colleagues or the people who access our services. Tim Fong, Janet Ford, Mozzie Wilkinson and Scott Gourlay served on the panel that reviewed and recommended who would win and who would be highly commended. Mozzie and Scott are the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Community Advisory Council, so it was great to have the CAC's leadership involved in this process.

The event was held in Figtree Conference Centre, and presented by Mark Orr AM, our CEO, and Professor Elizabeth More AM, our Board Chair. Board Members Paula Hanlon and Andrew Pryor were also present, and

the award recipients had invited family members and friends to celebrate and cheer them on.

The 2019 Flourishing Award winners are...

Individual Award: Natasha Jones, Senior Peer Worker at Waratah CHAS

Team Award: Team Windsor, Madeline Antonelli, Yvonne Hartmann, Joe Moore, Faafetai Chown, Cassandra Turnbull, Brooke Turner, Liam Ford, Maddie Campbell, Kristi Mapp, Louise Doyle, Maddie Friend and Laura Myers.

Highly Commended

Individual: Brooke Turner, Mental Health Worker, Katoomba

Team: The Marrickville Clean Room Team – Victor Pondikas, Maria Malheiro, Adam Parker, Matthew Chen, Mark DeVires and Darren Hobourn.

Length of Service recognition

Carla Pineda: Senior Mental Health

Worker, Kogarah/Sutherland – 25 years
Rynnette Gentle: Manager, Broken Hill (Bourke and Cobar) – 15 years
Martin Wadick: Mental Health Worker, Moore/Malleny Streets – 15 years

Do you know of an employee or team who you think deserves to be recognised at the Flourishing Awards in December 2020? Then nominate them! To get the nomination form and see the details, ask your manager or other worker to search for the term "New Recognition Awards" on Chirp. Everything you need to know is there.

Special thanks to Alison Perizi, Peter Farrugia, Doris Kluge and Peter Neilson, as well as Sue O'Rourke and the Figtree team for their hospitality and great service.

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Learning and Development Course Review

ABOVE: Kristen Olson, Peer Worker at Newcastle PHOTO BY JAY HOYES

Peer Work Training: Not What I Expected!

By Kristen Olson, Peer Worker

When the day arrived to attend Flourish Australia’s Peer Work Training, I felt apprehensive about telling my story and concerned that I may have been performing Peer Work incorrectly because I had never shared my lived experience in a workplace setting.

Participating in the workshop shifted my perspective completely and now I can’t imagine working in any other way.

As I drank my coffee and got dressed that morning, I was crafting a watered-down version of my own lived experience so that I would have something to contribute. I mentally collected symptoms, memories and

emotions that I felt I would be able to easily convey to others. Once the workshop commenced, it didn’t take long for our co-facilitators, Peter Farrugia and Natasha Jones, to make it clear that there is a crucial difference between “sharing a story” and purposefully “using lived experience”. As they illustrated this for us, I came to see that my role is more about utilising my unique perspective in an intentional and meaningful way than it is about providing the details to a narrative.

“Self empowerment is a vital part of a person’s recovery journey and practicing decision-making for themselves is so important.”

Because I had been a Peer Worker for more than 18 months but hadn’t shared my story in a workplace setting, I was concerned that I may not have been performing my role correctly. I

was pleasantly surprised to discover that I had been putting elements of my lived experience to use more than I realised. Although the people I support have vastly different stories from my own, I have continually found myself responding with empathy, the desire to connect and a willingness to listen. I strive to provide people with the support I wish I had been given during my most challenging days – such as opportunities to be heard. In this way, without being conscious of what I was doing, I had been drawing on the experience of my own recovery journey in my supportive role as a Peer Worker.

My personal recovery journey has become so integral to who I am now that I cannot imagine working in any other way. I have always been person-centred and recovery-oriented in my work ethic and now I know without a doubt that Peer Work is where I belong. Much of what the facilitators spoke about resonated deeply with me, and participating in the workshop strengthened my belief that I was destined for Peer Work.

Among the key terms that were revisited throughout the workshop, the two that stood out for me were **exploring** and **discovering**. These words hold power because they place decision-making in the hands of the individual as they seek out, explore and discover answers for themselves. Self empowerment is a vital part of a person’s recovery journey, and practicing decision-making for themselves is so important.

For me, the workshop was a refreshing reminder that we are the authors of our own lives and the experts on what we need. As Peer Workers, it’s our privilege to pass on that idea to the people we support.

Overall, I was encouraged to learn that our privacy is respected and our differences are celebrated within the Peer Workforce. I feel beyond fortunate to be part of such a richly supportive community. The sense of validation I’ve gained from the Peer Work training has been incredibly important to my own recovery journey and has enhanced my ability to support those who access Flourish Australia services.

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Finding your personal reasons for using medicine towards recovery

By Warren Heggarty

ABOVE: Do you take a passive role when it comes to medication? There are many good reasons for playing an active role in all aspects of your recovery journey including medication. PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

Recovery movement pioneer Dr Pat Deegan wrote a personal account of her own journey with the use of psychiatric medication in the Journal *Psychiatric Services*. What does YOUR journey look like?

Ultimately, using medicine is not a goal or an 'end in itself.' (Deegan, 2020) Medicine is designed to support you. As many of our readers know, however, there can be difficult trade-offs involved. This is especially true if we are subject to Community Treatment Orders (ordered by the courts to take medicine).

In the journal *Psychiatric Services*, Pat Deegan outlined eight common challenges that we might face when we are prescribed psychiatric medicine and how to deal with them. Have you experienced similar challenges? How have you dealt with each one?

1. Moving from being a passive recipient of medicine to actively using it yourself as prescribed

*Terry [not his real name] was formerly a supported employee. He came to work every day with the lunch his Mum had made him (what a great Mum!) and several pills to be taken after lunch. When asked about the pills he said he

really had no idea what they were or what they had been prescribed for. He just took them. Of course, that's Terry and Terry's Mum's business, but what would happen if his Mum (who was elderly) was unable to provide him with the correct dose of pills if she had to go to hospital for a while? How could Terry be sure that the pills were doing what they were supposed to be doing? Do you think that it might have been better or safer for Terry to take more of an interest in his meds?

2. Dealing with the 'new normal' of ongoing medication use

BELOW: Socheat has to manage medications for a number of different conditions, including physical ones.

PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY



Using medication might help with relating better with people, but it might also result in experiencing much duller emotions.

Some people might experience an unpleasant sense that "this is not really me" when using medication. However, this needs to be balanced with the experience you (and those around you) have without medication.

3. Finding an acceptable trade off with side effects

Do you consider the relief of unpleasant symptoms to be worth a side effect such as sexual dysfunction, or metabolic syndrome (becoming obese, developing diabetes etc)?

Socheat, who accesses Flourish Australia's Blacktown service, experienced some unpleasant side effects when his doctor switched him to a new pill last year. He was very concerned about the side effects, which he had never experienced before, and was hospitalised. After a while, he began to feel better. 'My head is very clear now!' he says.

4. What about the 'other drugs' we take, such as alcohol or cannabis. Do



ABOVE: 'I've trialled lots of different types [of medications] over the years.' A moment of levity as Scott Gourlay addresses the Community Advisory Council : PHOTO BY NEIL FENELON

they help or hinder the process of recovery?

There are some medications which have negative interactions with alcohol or even certain types of food. Soheat, has been prescribed a medication which interacts negatively with alcohol and even certain foods like grapefruit. He has an information sheet which he can consult if he is in doubt.

Flourish Australia Community Advisory Council member Daniel Singh, who accesses the Marrickville service, experienced an addiction to ice and alcohol. Not only did drug use hinder his recovery, it was probably the main obstacle to recovery! After a year participating in rehab, he came to see addictive behaviour as a burden. (See Daniel's full story 'Letting go of the Burden')

5. Medication fatigue, which comes from trying new medications or new doses (in consultation with your doctor), only to be disappointed

This can also refer to being fearful of trying new things your doctor might suggest. Wayne said: 'I started with

a new doctor after moving house. The doctor noted that I was not happy with my antidepressants and she recommended a new drug. I was horrified because I know someone who took that drug and experienced all sorts of side-effects with it. I have continued to use my original medication.'

6. All considered, is the medication really working?

It might support you to feel less anxious, but it might result in you feeling less alive. It might assist with organising your thinking, but might negatively affect your imagination.

Scott Gourlay in his story 'My Life... and schizophrenia' revealed that he discovered he was part of that very small minority for whom meds 'don't seem to work at all...I've trialled lots of different types over the years, and while a number have initially shown promise, sooner or later my symptoms would flare up and I'd experience yet another stay in hospital.'

7. Finding YOUR personal motivation for taking medication

What is in this for YOU? It might be simply that taking medication supports you to stay out of custody. Life might seem easier when using your medication.

8. Exploring (in consultation with your doctor) the possibility of discontinuing or reducing the dosage of the medication

This includes trying complementary, alternative or non-medical ways of dealing with your mental health challenges.

For Scott it became necessary to learn and use coping strategies and self-examination skills. 'While I still experience some voices, delusions and paranoia, the important thing is that I don't allow them to rule my life anymore...

'Despite not using any regular medication, at this point I have managed to stay out of hospital for 6 years straight. As my best previous record was 18 months, this is a source of great pride for me!'

DISCLAIMER: Take your medication as prescribed and don't cease or change the dose without discussing it with your doctor or treating team first. You can get a second opinion if you aren't happy with what your doctor suggests.

References

Deegan, P. (2020). The Journey to Use Medication Optimally to Support Recovery, Psychiatric Services. Pat Deegan's website: www.commongroundprogram.com/

BELOW: Dr Pat Deegan SOURCE PAT DEEGAN'S WEBSITE <https://www.commongroundprogram.com/>





Recovery Camp

With Kasey and Troy

ABOVE: Troy (left) said: 'There was no TV in the cabins but we didn't need TV because we were so tired after the days activities that we fell asleep straight away!' PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

By Warren Heggarty

There are places in this world where you will have no need for TV or radio. One such place is Recovery Camp. Kasey and Troy spoke to Panorama about their 'unplugged' experience in January 2020... they are already talking about doing it all again!

Kasey and Troy, Nina and Robert all access Flourish Australia's Embark Cottage service at Blacktown NSW (we've met Nina before in September 2019 Panorama - she's part of Epik Treo). The four of them took a one week holiday to remember at Recovery Camp, Yarramundi at the base of the Blue Mountains NSW.

'There were no bushfires here at the time, luckily,' said Kasey, 'but we could smell the smoke in the air.' That was pretty much the same in much of Australia at that time.

'We had to pack a lot of stuff,' said Troy, 'blankets, pillows, a torch, our meds, but no need for a tent.'

'Who would want to stay in a tent!' said Kasey in mock horror. 'Tents are not comfortable. What if a snake got into it?' 'Yea' said Troy, 'It might bite you on the backside or something. But we stayed in

cabins. There were seven people in the cabin.'

'There were heaps of people altogether at the camp, though. About fifty I guess. We all had meals in the same dining room. The food was great. There was breakfast, lunch, dinner and morning and afternoon tea.'

One of the activities available was Kayaking. Troy said he tried a kayak for size but decided against taking it out on the river.

'There was a bush dance' said Kasey 'with a Hawai'ian theme.'

'It was fun,' said Troy, 'We got to dance round with everyone. I'd never done it before. We just joined in and did it for the first time.'

'There was a lady who called out the steps and told us what to do' said Kasey. 'Then there was the trivia night. Troy [who is not a blond] wore a blonde wig for that!'

'There was archery too!' says Troy. 'That was fun.'

Kasey said: 'And a treasure hunt and a flying fox, where you slide down on a cable. And Rock climbing... but I

didn't try those things, and there was a swimming pool to relax in. Plus there was an obstacle course which had tunnels and old tyres and swings and things to go through.'

Troy said, 'The first day I was there I felt really nervous, because I didn't know what to expect, but after that it was great! I also got to see some wildlife. I saw a goanna and a water dragon... After I settled down I made some new friends.'

It was also a learning experience for people training in psychology and mental health work. Students with no previous experience in the field went along to experience interacting with people who have mental health issues and they reportedly really enjoyed it.

'It was great,' said Troy, 'I loved it. I can't wait to go to the next camp in three months' time.'

Thanks to Melanie Dragusanu for help with this story.

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ABOVE: Helen Waite and Judy Johnson getting their thumbs green. PHOTO BY HELEN

Cultivating friendships: the Cooma community gardening group

By Helen Waite, Peer Worker at Cooma

A big part of my job at Cooma is supporting people in their homes as a friendly face. All of the ladies I visit have one thing in common; they love gardening. Young or old, they enjoy getting their hands dirty. So when one of the women I support, Judy, told me about a community gardening project running over at the local Anglican church, it seemed like a perfect fit. I felt this would be a great opportunity for the people I support to meet other people and develop friendships, doing something they enjoy.

My Manager Elizabeth and all the ladies I support could see the potential. With Elizabeth's approval we bought our first plot for an annual fee of \$15. This fee allows us to use everything in their tool shed, including lawnmowers, all kinds of fertilizers and a wide variety of gardening implements. We were gifted with a helpful planting guide that taught us what to plant and when. As I didn't have a clue about gardening, this

was valuable information.

We are nurturing two plots at present and tending them has become one of our most popular activities. Once we decide as a group what to buy, from season to season, we'll plant it, fertilise it and mulch it. The ladies take turns watering the plots every second day. They are also welcome to go and get their hands dirty at the garden anytime they like (even when they're not with me).

We recently planted a whole lot of vegetables and flowers that are absolutely flourishing and really pretty. We put in "companion" flowers like pansies and marigolds to organically protect our vegetables from aphids. As a social activity, our gardening group can be very calming and healing. If somebody is having a tough day, we can water the plants and sit in the sun and talk until they feel better. In Judy's case it's a great way to exercise. Pulling weeds and watering is good for her health and wellbeing.

It's fantastic how they've all taken an interest in the garden. Of the 15 or 20 people I support, pretty much all of the ladies are involved. It's something they love.

I haven't brought in any of the gentlemen yet, but that's a work in progress!



ABOVE: Cassie Willet planting seeds. PHOTO BY HELEN



ABOVE: Judy, Cassie and Helen kicking back after a job well done PHOTO BY HELEN



ABOVE: Helen showing off the literal fruits of their labours PHOTO BY HELEN

Take an active interest in your health treatment!



ABOVE: Socheat gives the thumbs up to recovery in the back yard at Flourish Australia's Embark Cottage, Blacktown! PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

By Warren Heggarty

Socheat is very well organised and that is a positive way to be. He experiences a number of different health conditions and carries a list with him on his mobile so that he can show anyone who needs to know; for example, doctors, pharmacists and so on.

In November 2019, Socheat's doctor decided to prescribe him a new tablet. Socheat experienced awful side effects. He slept only two hours a night, which led to a hospital admission.

'It was a new experience for me. I experienced dizziness, a heavy

headache, vomiting and chest pain. I asked myself "how can I handle this?"

After his hospital visit, Socheat says that the side effects of the medication gradually improved. 'My head is very clear as well now!' He has discussed with his doctor the possibility of trying a long lasting injection rather than taking the pills.

It is easier to deal with issues like this if you are well organised and take an active interest in your treatment, in your medication and in your physical health as well.

"I have been diagnosed with a number

It is easier to deal with ...if you...take an active interest in your treatment, in your medication and in your physical health as well.

of significant health conditions as well as my mental health issues: Inflammatory Polyneuropathy, High Cholesterol, Diabetes, Hypertension, Cyst, Fatty Liver, Gout, Hepatitis C and also Weakness of my joints."

"I have been admitted to Hospital in New Zealand as well as Blacktown Hospital."

"When I am unwell because of Schizophrenia I experience a loss of confidence, motivation and concentration. I confuse things a lot and think very slowly. My memory is not reliable and I experience weakness, tiredness, depression and stiffness. I feel scared, not strong, I sleep too much and so on."

"When I feel better, I relate like other people! When I have really wanted to go back to work, my doctor always said I have Schizophrenia and increased my medication which affected my mood: I felt very low, very tired, very weak. I would sleep a long time and get up late."

"In 2009 I experienced serious illness. I could not move with my both legs and my right hand dropped. I now use a wheelchair and a walking frame, and I expect to take many years to recover from a condition the doctor called Inflammatory Polyneuropathy."

Some years ago, Socheat worked as a store keeper, in charge of inwards goods as well as despatch, marshalling, assembly and driving a fork lift truck. This is perfect work for someone who is well organised. Due to his health issues and the side effects of medication (such as sedation) he says that at present it would be better for him to do office work rather than driving a fork lift around.

In fact, he recently gave up driving, because of the side effects. Giving up driving led to a couple of frightening experiences. One time, two boys on bikes assaulted him, giving him a black eye and a bloody nose. Socheat reported

them to the police. The police thanked him and said 'you have done the right thing.'

On another occasion, while he was shopping, three boys followed him. One of them made eye contact and stared at him, then they began to surround him. Soheat went into a newsagency to escape them but when he came out they followed him again. They were yelling rude things at him but he kept his head down and walked on. Fortunately, they lost interest in him and he made it home safely!

Soheat came originally from Cambodia where he says 'it was not safe for both my parents.' First they moved to New Zealand and then they moved together to Australia where they have been since Saturday 5th March 2011.

As you can see from the picture he feels proud to wear the green and gold.

'As my parents have since passed away I now live in a Granny flat attached to my brother and sister in law's house; I am in the process of arranging my own housing through Housing NSW.

'When I first came to Flourish Australia, Malcolm at Embark Cottage, Blacktown assisted me with dealing with Centrelink, and my residency status in Australia. I have not been able to secure an NDIS package, so Blacktown Flourish Australia staff have helped me to access HASI [Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative]. I am grateful that they want to support me as much as they can.'

Something Soheat would like to pursue is fitness. He has spoken to his GP about accessing a gym in the community and is interested in a local gym at Emerton, just to the West of Blacktown. 'I would like to be able to learn the exercises so I can do them at home, too,' he says.

Soheat told us he was looking forward to attending the Recovery Forum at Penrith. He is also looking at joining some groups run from Flourish Australia's Seven Hills service.

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ABOVE: "Who ARE those masked women?" The ladies of Leeton indulged in facials at the Girls Day Out for Women's Health. PHOTO BY VICTORIA MURRAY

"Girls' day out"

Women's Health Day at Leeton

By Victoria Murray

I had the idea to run a women's health day at Flourish Australia's Leeton service on 26th February 2020 and we decided to call it "girls day out".

During our girls day out, we were lucky enough to have the Leeton hospital facility manager Amanda Culpan come to the office and have a chat with the women regarding women's health.

Amanda gave the women information on rural doctors' surgeries in our local area and services that are provided in Leeton. Amanda answered questions the women had about their personal health and assisted in leading the women in the right direction for where to get help in our small rural town.

Lunch was kindly donated by The Hungry Fox Bistro, (14 Kurrajong Ave, Leeton NSW 2705, Phone 0405 164 647). The women sat around chatting and eating.

Once lunch had finished, Jeanette from Terry White Narrandera Pharmacy (58 East St, Narrandera NSW 2700, Phone (02) 6959 1099) came to the office and kindly donated skin care products for

the women to use. Jeanette provided a demonstration on how to use the products, the importance of taking care of ourselves, practicing good hygiene techniques and so on.

All of the women enjoyed facials as you can see in the picture!

Terry White Pharmacy also donated some products to Flourish Australia to keep in the women's bathroom for the use of people who access our service.

Some of the women wanted their hair done, so I curled and straightened some of the participants' hair, and also painted some fingernails!

After the pampering, a parcel was sent around the group which included lovely prizes for the women to take home and use.

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ABOVE: One of Gabriella's hobbies is making greeting cards for all occasions. They are a practical way to showcase her poems! PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY **INSET: Gabriella and Bron on their wedding day.** PHOTO COURTESY OF GABRIELLA KOZLOWSKI

Gabriella's epilepsy became more severe after this. As her seizures increased, she did not feel safe enough to continue work in the cake shop and so left the job. There are many things that Bron, and now Luke, have watched out for as carers. One of the obvious things is supporting Gabriella with her medication. The seizures can cause Gabrielle to become disoriented and forgetful, even about what day it is, and she often relies on Luke to remind her of things.

'My husband used to put me onto my side at night when I would start shaking in bed' she says. 'I only cook when my son is there and I only shop or go to the hairdresser and so on if there is someone with me.'

'My son is 21 now and he is an adult. I don't want to tie him down, but I do need his help. Sometimes if he wants to go out he will ask me "were you all right today" and if I have not experienced any seizures and it seems safe he will ask "can I go out?"'

So Gabriella is aware of how important the support of family is and how caring for someone can impact the lives of those carers. She is also diligent in doing what she can for herself.

'I like to maintain a strict routine to keep track of my seizures.' She actually records them in a journal and supplements that information by asking Luke to fill in any blanks. 'Luke reminds me of things. Sometimes he will remind me "Dad's not here now." If I have experienced a certain number of seizures, then Luke knows it's time for me to take a certain pill to assist with managing it. I take about sixteen pills regularly. A Webster pack helps me stay organised.'

Of great importance is keeping mentally active. 'I rarely just sit there doing nothing. Even if I am watching TV, I will do a crossword. I also create my poems and crafts, like making greeting cards,

**Flourish Australia's
Flowerdale Cottage
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LIVERPOOL NSW 2170
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Gabriella's poems from the Tree of Life

And the importance of Family and Carers

By Warren Heggarty

'I could sit there all day writing poetry. I have always enjoyed poetry and putting words together.'

Gabriella has had a number of her works published in local papers like the Fairfield Champion and the Advance. She can even make up a poem on demand, to a topic of your choice. She insisted on demonstrating this talent for Panorama and we were amazed that it was not only on-topic but it rhymed.

'I once had a poem called "Coping with Cancer" published in a book which was called "Memories of the Millennium."'

It is a tragic irony that Gabriella's

husband Bron passed away from cancer three years ago. This was especially challenging for her because he was also her carer. For a while she felt unable to see any hope for the future.

Gabriella lives with epilepsy and experiences frequent seizures, but Bron was not deterred by this.

Bron worked at Australia Post while Gabriella worked in a cake shop. Her employer was aware that she experienced frequent seizures and was very understanding and supportive. He even left her in charge some afternoons.

21 years ago, Gabriella and Bron had a son, Luke, after several attempts through and IVF program. Unfortunately,

Creative Corner

which are mainly made for the sake of the poems, but I do enjoy making them as well. I have started to do a journal at Flowerdale called the Tree of Life Journal. Flowerdale is extremely important to me because coming here allows me to keep mentally active while being with people, as I do not feel safe alone.'

'There was a neighbour once who found out I experienced epilepsy and she said "I experience epilepsy too!" It is so important to me to receive support from the NDIS, from Flowerdale, from Uniting Care, who assist me with my shopping, and from Community Transport.'

A message from Gabriella Kozlowski 'On the Road to Recovery'

Panorama offers great and warming issues to read and share, relating to mental, physical and disability recovery. Since I have been attending Flowerdale Cottage, Liverpool, their warm and dedicated team of workers and also all the people and friends I have made, have contributed meaning to my life.

Prior to joining Flourish I had a warming carer, my husband Bron Kozlowski and

unfortunately at the age of 57 he passed away with cancer. I have a loving son, Luke, who was born through IVF and he is 21 years of age. For three years now he has supported me with my epileptic fits, which has been challenging for him.

I really want to show my gratitude to NDIS in providing me with assistance for so many useful things like community transport, groups, making friendships and shopping.

I have a great interest in poetry and I've written a poem for Panorama readers "On the Road to Recovery."

TO MY DEAREST VALENTINE

To my dearest bundle of joy
Who I always love to hug
You make me feel so warm and cuddly
just like a baby rug.

When I see your lovely eyes
twinkle in the sky
I think of how lucky I am
Which makes me want to cry.

I hope this really tells you
I love you in every way
You'll always be my one and only
Happy Valentine's Day.

GABRIELLA KOZLOWSKI
BOSSLEY PARK

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Flourish Australia is greatly known
as a great beginning to recovery in life,
we all have established different experiences
whether with friends, alone, families or husband and wife.

Learning and discovering in other stories in life
will show you that you are not alone at all,
just remember Flourish and other useful organisations
will show you that is what friends and carers are for.

Just attending Flourish for many interests,
outings and friends of many kinds indeed,
will open up a brighter future
and more eagerness to succeed.

NDIS providers have been around since 2013
and have contributed greatly to people in need,
their great success is here never to be forgotten
and supporters hearts and thanks are there indeed.

GABRIELLA KOZLOWSKI
BOSSLEY PARK

Dr! Dr!
by Murray
Dean
#1 Going on Holidays





Taking Peer Work to the Next Level: Flourish Australia's Peer Space Learning Workshop

ABOVE (L-R): Peer Workers Rebecca Smith from Goulburn and Peer Worker Sophie Ambrose of Queanbeyan. PHOTO BY PETER FARRUGIA

Peter Farrugia has been traveling across New South Wales in order to run the Peer Space Learning Workshop on behalf of Flourish Australia. The Peer Space Learning Workshop is an opportunity for Flourish Australia Peer Workers to develop their skills at using their own lived experience to do their job more effectively.

"I created the Peer Space Learning Workshop a couple of years ago because there's a single question that a lot of Peer Workers have trouble answering, and I ask them this question at the beginning and the end of the Workshop: as a Peer Worker, how do you use your lived experience in your day-to-day role? This Workshop assists with answering that question, and we'll all spend the remainder of our time practising how to perfect this technique. The Peer Workers end up taking away a direct, succinct answer to this question, and can carry it through in their work."

"Each year, I like to offer Flourish Australia sites the opportunity to be the first location where my tour starts off," Peter told us. "I've done that before in Broken Hill and other places, and there's a reason I like to do this: people experience a sense of pride about hosting Workshops and welcoming you as a facilitator. People also feel comfortable in their normal surroundings. They won't have to get up early to travel, it's more convenient and it always brings a piece of Flourish Australia head office out to our frontline, rather than them always coming here. This year, I travelled to Queanbeyan to deliver the Peer Space Learning Workshop for regional Peer Workers. Goulburn and Cooma are pretty close by, so there were Peer Workers from those sites, too."

"We need Managers to be able to gauge whether Peer Workers are using their history to its fullest potential," Peter

said. "I was a strong contributor to the national qualifications Certificate IV of Mental Health Peer Work, and I sat on two national committees to contribute to developing that course. Even during the delivery of this qualification, not knowing how to answer the question about the effectiveness of a lived experience plagued many of the students. They might grasp the philosophy and the concepts and theoretical ideas, yet they won't know how to actually do it. I gathered their feedback, combined it with the knowledge of that qualification, identified the gaps that learners were telling me they wanted to fill, and put together a practical one-day one-off opportunity to practise using their lived experience in their work. That's how this Workshop came about."

I try to just be a part of the group rather than a lecturer. My role is probably best described as a "time manager" who brings about each activity in the forum program.

"Once Peer Workers understand how to use their lived experience in their job roles, the next step is to support their colleagues and Managers on the same front. Hopefully they will all continue passing this on, allowing this message to spread across the whole organisation. Everyone is getting the same information, everyone is developing the same understanding, everyone is reading from the same page and so, as a collective, we are all thinking and doing the same thing. This is especially valuable within such a diverse organisation; the diversity of lived experience, diversity of local culture, diversity of identity, diversity of values and beliefs, diversity of geographical location. We have all these variations and intersections across the organisation because people are people, and every single person is unique."

"There were six or seven Peer Workers at the Queanbeyan Workshop, and every participant made a contribution in their own way. Naturally, while there are talkers and contributors, there are also more observing learners. Bringing those two different dynamics together requires key facilitation skills as a trainer.

I find when you can get a confident mix among all the learners, it might sound a bit cliché, but everyone just flourishes. When people hear from others, they take on what they like and for the listeners, or thinkers, it broadens their scope by providing new concepts to consider. It creates a great space for learning.”

“When it comes to running workshops and forums and groups, I have a personal motto of ‘no boring bits’. I’ve been a learner many times in my life, and I’ve always enjoyed the personal growth that happens when you feel a part of it, especially when it’s energetic, so I strive to bring those dimensions into each session. It can be a real challenge as a trainer when you are working with a combination of learners, who are hearing a concept for the very first time, and very experienced Peer Workers. Finding that right balance works very well in an interactive session. Quite often I’m encouraging learners to mix up pairs or small groups with people they haven’t already worked with in order to find that balance.”

Did you get much feedback afterwards?

“I specifically ask for feedback so I can keep the content evolving towards what the learners tell me they need. It’s a very informal delivery but it’s also very structured. This lack of formality helps the learners feel comfortable. I find that when people aren’t worried about what they do or don’t know but are just hearing messages that they might incorporate into their role, they are more receptive to messages you are putting out there. This has been a winning combination so far, so I keep working with that.”

So do you think that this series of workshops you’re doing across the state will change as you go?

“The Workshop evolves quite often. I’m really happy about that, because it reflects that we are taking into account the things people are identifying they need. What I observe and feel as a trainer with each delivery contributes to continual improvement. I learn so much every time I deliver a group. Sometimes it’s new ideas from the learners or I might come up with something that I know they can benefit from. Where it’s

appropriate, I incorporate these ideas. Now, the Workshop that I’m currently delivering looks very different to the pilot that I offered two or three years ago. I’m really proud to watch it evolve and become something very current, purposeful, and fine-tuned. That evolution will continue as long as I am rolling it out.”

What kind of resources do you need to run these workshops?

“I usually hire a venue that’s accessible for people coming from other locations. I like to facilitate in a neutral space, so no-one has ownership or power over a venue more than anyone else. It has to be a very open, shared, friendly space. There’s a considerable investment made by Flourish Australia to train staff. Travel, accommodation, venue, catering and resources all adds up, so in order to maximise our reach I aim to do it as economically as possible. A lot of the resources are blank templates that I bring, so they are filled up with information and knowledge and ideas and concepts that are relevant to that group on that day. I provide some pre-course reading and run interactive activities on the day. The rest evolves from people’s contributions. It’s very person focused, very interactive. If you, as a learner, don’t contribute, then your template remains blank. I use that purposefully as a form of adult learning. In fact, I’m disseminating very little new information, but rather extracting existing knowledge from the learners, to create a bank of suggestions and ideas that people take away with them.”

Are you accompanied by anybody for the Workshop? Is it just you on the open road?

“That’s a really good question. There’s an open invitation for our Community Advisory Council (CAC) representatives to co-facilitate and make the most of every journey. In locations where representation doesn’t exist or isn’t available, I extend the same invitation to Senior Peer Workers. This is open for people to have a go at it, if they wish. I’m always there to stand alongside and support people to find the confidence to do that if it’s of interest to them. If nobody is available, then I facilitate the forum on my own.

Helen Waite, a Flourish Australia Peer Worker from the Queanbeyan and Cooma service, attended the Peer Space Learning Workshop

“I just want to say that I really enjoyed the Peer Learning workshop,” Helen Waite told us. “Peter made it really interesting and thought provoking. He taught me to decipher between the value of ‘story telling’ and ‘lived experience perspective.’ I learned to actively listen and, when suitable, use my lived experience perspective.

Another key point that Peter emphasised was to maintain a reciprocal relationship with the people I support. The roleplays at the Workshop supported me to practice the meaning of reciprocity. I really benefited from this and have made changes to my approach in how I support my participants.

Not only did I learn a lot of useful skills from this workshop, I also had the opportunity to listen and engage with other Peer Workers and pull from their wealth of knowledge. A fantastic, interesting, engaging workshop!



ABOVE: Peer Worker Helen Waite from Queanbeyan



There are all kinds of community services fields you can study besides Peer Work

By Grant J Everett

If you've been a part of the mental health sector over the last few years, you might have noticed the huge influx of peer workers in the mental health field. These days you can find peer workers providing invaluable support in government, public, private and community-managed services and settings.

In case you aren't familiar with the term, peer workers are people with a lived experience of mental health issues who purposefully use their lived experience and their knowledge to encourage and assist other people who are going through similar challenges. Flourish Australia alone employs 251 peer workers all up and our employee pool is growing all the time.

The average weekly salary for a community worker is \$1,364 (Source: joboutlook.gov.au)

A lot of people get into peer work because they want to give back to the community and assist people in the way they once needed assistance. While peer work is awesome and it wouldn't be an

exaggeration to say it has become an essential component of modern person-led care, it isn't the only career option that people with a lived experience of mental health issues have when it comes to open employment. Peer work is just a single branch of the greater Community Services field.

How do I become a Peer Worker?

In addition to having a lived experience of a mental health issue, you also need to attain a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work to qualify as a professional peer worker. If a Certificate IV sounds a little daunting, don't worry! You can always start with something like a Certificate II in Community Services and work your way up.

The Cert IV in Peer Work is a course composed of 8 core units and a number of electives, usually spread over 37 weeks, but some providers offer part time or online options as well. Your choice of electives will allow you to tailor your specialty; for instance, you might want to know how to work more effectively with people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or people who have substance abuse

issues, or you could decide to focus on suicide prevention among young people.

Peer Workers draw on their lived experience of a mental health issue to walk beside people who are on a recovery journey of their own. They build respectful, professional, appropriate relationships based around conversations that draw on their experiences and emotions. These conversations can play a crucial role for individuals who are embarking on a similar journey. You also have to complete at least 80 hours of on-the-job work placement, which requires a Working with Children Check and a Criminal Record Check. The TAFE Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work is available at Nowra, Wollongong, Hamilton and Kempesie, though it's definitely worth checking if there's a campus closer to your location that provides this course.

So what other options are there?

As we've said, peer work is just one possible career choice. Every job role in the Community Services field is all about supporting people to make positive changes in their lives in some

Employment Panorama

way, so if you are driven to help others, there is a whole range of TAFE NSW courses that can help you achieve your goals. Whether you want to support the wellbeing of individuals, families or the wider community, these courses can contribute to preparing you for a great career in a growing industry. Aged care, community care and disability care, for instance, are all popular choices, and might be worth a look.

Some of the Community Services courses offered by TAFE NSW include...

- Counselling
- Leisure and Health
- Mental Health
- Client Assessment and Case Management
- Social Housing
- Community Care
- Community Services (Case Management)
- Community Services and Welfare
- Client Assessment and Case Management
- Disability Worker
- Mental Health Counselling
- Alcohol and Other Drugs Worker
- Financial Counselling
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
- Youth Work and Justice

Here's a few examples of where specific Community Work TAFE courses can take you.

Certificate III in Community Services > Community Service Worker

Certificate IV in Community Services > Case Worker

Diploma of Community Services or Diploma of Community Services (Case Management) > Case Manager or Community Services Coordinator

TAFE NSW Bachelor of Community Services > Community Services roles in everything from management and intervention to specialist practice

You can download a comprehensive Course Guide of the courses that TAFE has to offer from their website.

At your own pace

It's understandable if you don't feel

ready to dive into a Certificate IV straight away. You can always start off with a shorter and less intensive course, such as a Certificate II in Community Services, and work towards the field that most appeals most to you. You can go back to TAFE at some point in the future and upskill if you want to adjust your career focus. It's the role of TAFE teachers to connect you to the right course so you can achieve the best outcomes, so be sure to include them in this process.

Recognition means acknowledging any of your previously completed qualifications, skills, knowledge or experience that is relevant to your course. This may reduce your course fees and allow you to achieve your qualification faster.

You may need to meet some enrolment conditions if you want to study certain courses, so it's important to know what these are. Some careers in Community Services will require more qualifications than others. Counselling, for instance, starts at a Certificate IV and can progress through to Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelors, Masters and beyond. The "Course Details" section on the TAFE NSW website contains everything you need to know, including entry requirements, when information sessions will be held, attendance expectations, fee details, how to enroll, what units you need to complete and related career opportunities.

What is Carer to Career?

Carer to Career is a different pathway into qualifications that recognises the skills you have already gained through your experiences as a carer. This experience can count towards your studies, potentially allowing you to finish your qualification sooner. If you are supporting and caring for somebody who is aging, experiencing mental health conditions, has a chronic health condition or has a disability, it can speed up your progress toward graduation.

visit.tafensw.edu.au/carer-to-career

Fee information

The cost of a course can vary greatly depending on a number of factors; whether this is your first post-school course or not, whether you are attending it as a part of an Apprenticeship or a Traineeship, and if you are receiving certain welfare benefits (such as a Disability Support Pension). If you are receiving a DSP or other Government payment, be sure to let your TAFE know. This can greatly reduce the cost of your course, or even negate the price entirely.

Support for students

TAFE NSW provides many services to ensure a supported and successful learning environment for all students. This includes services and counselling for different inclusion groups (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, elderly, etc).

Upskill with short courses

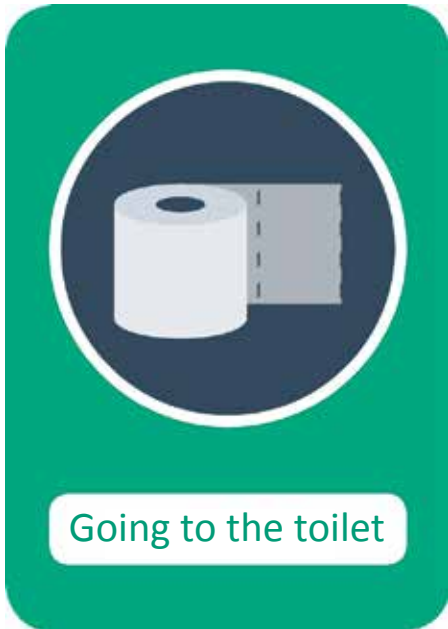
TAFE has a huge range of short courses from Statements of Attainment onwards that can provide everything from basic foundations to advanced specialised career skills. These courses are constantly being developed and updated, so it's worth checking out TAFENSW.edu.au/short for all the latest.

Source:

www.tafensw.edu.au/

While Flourish Australia's focus is people who have a lived experience of mental health issues, everyone who accesses our services has a different background and life story, so when our staff broaden their educational horizons it can greatly increase the value of what they have to offer. For instance, Flourish Australia runs a number of youth services, services for mums with small children, and assistance for people experiencing issues with substance abuse or homelessness. If you have studied these areas, it will enhance your value as a worker.

Physical Health



The Bane of your Bottom: Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are literally a pain in the butt: they can be a soft, grape-like mass poking out of the anus, a painful bulge, or a firm lump. When you have a bowel movement, they can cause you pain or bleed.

You may be surprised just how common this problem is; according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, an estimated 75% of people aged 45 and over have hemorrhoids. They may experience hallmark symptoms such as rectal pain or itching, and bleeding is another story.

While hemorrhoids can be unpleasant and embarrassing, you can manage them by following some basic steps and with a little help from over-the-counter medicine.

What causes hemorrhoids?

Typically, hemorrhoids are associated with chronic constipation or diarrhea, straining during bowel movements, or sitting on the toilet for too long, and pregnancy can cause it, too. As the common side effects of many medications used to treat mental health symptoms include weight gain,

constipation, tiredness and being more sedentary, this can be a golden recipe for hemorrhoid development. Other risk factors include pregnancy and ageing. Hemorrhoids are more likely to develop in people who don't eat enough fibre or get enough exercise. Both of these things can contribute to bowel movements becoming more difficult. However, you can also develop hemorrhoids for no apparent reason.

Symptoms

The type and severity of hemorrhoid symptoms can vary widely from person to person, but some of the most common symptoms include...

- Itching or discomfort around the anus
- Bleeding during or after a bowel movement, like bright red blood on the toilet paper or coloring the toilet bowl water
- Sharp pain during bowel movements
- Being able to feel a small painful bump inside of, or around, your anus
- Sharp pains in your butt if you sit in certain positions

What can I do?

Obviously, your GP can help. However, as hemorrhoids are a butt-related illness, you may feel as though talking

about them with a doctor is taboo, or something to be ashamed of. While we might prefer to keep our nether regions hidden away from observation, just remember that GPs look at things like this for a living, for hours and hours everyday, and your case will be attended to in the same way as all of their other patients.

Treatment options often include...

- Over-the-counter products like medicinal pads and soothing creams can assist by shrinking inflamed tissue and provide relief from itching. You can buy some over-the-counter brands without a prescription, but you'll need to see a GP if you want the more powerful kind.
- For times of particular discomfort, basic painkillers will help.
- Try a Sitz bath by filling a tub with three to four inches of warm (not hot) water and sit in it with your knees bent for 10 to 15 minutes.
- A high-fibre diet is very important for all of us, but especially for those of us with hemorrhoids. Fibre helps your stool to pass more easily and this will prevent your hemorrhoids from becoming inflamed and bleeding. Your local pharmacy has all kinds of over-the-counter options if you want to start using fibre supplements.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/healing-hemorrhoids>



You CAN manage your money, no matter how little you have



By Shane Bentley

When it comes to budgeting, we all have our own ways of managing. Some spend it wisely to pay their bills and buy their food while others use it by going to the track or playing the pokies in the pub. It all comes down to personal choice.

The nitty-gritty of how I personally manage my money is as follows.

A friend once told me that when we pay half of what we owe on our bills and then pay the other half the next fortnight, we are being wise.

If you really think about it, we all know someone who runs short of money once a month, because they spent the money that they could have saved, then ask for loans and contact organisations to seek financial support.

Sometimes you might experience an emergency or a major family issue or have a situation where an animal needs to go to the vet, but charities are not intended to be an every week rescue.

I simply go through last month's bank statement and find all the reoccurring charges such as my phone bill or health insurance extras and then contact the service provider to request the B-Pay details and set my Centrelink deductions.

Some won't offer the centre-pay option and in this case, you contact those service providers and ask for a BSB and account number, as well as your reference to identify you, and then add those deductions to your bank.

I avoid payday loans.

When we receive a few bills or owe the chemist money for an account we have been putting off paying, it's tempting to resort to payday loans.

However, there are better alternatives. If you are on the DSP, you may qualify for a no-interest loan up to \$1340. If you're not on the DSP, but receive another benefit, you may qualify for NILS which means "Low-interest Loan Scheme." They can assist with buying a fridge if you need it, or some other awesome things that you don't have the funds to pay for in one go.

flourish
AUSTRALIA

Community
Businesses



We
support
the NDIS

EMPLOYMENT & YOU...

Are you living with a mental health issue?

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

Flourish Australia Community Businesses support people living with a mental health issue to take part in meaningful employment.

Whilst providing employment support in areas of lawn maintenance, packing & business services we meet strict service standards to ensure real employment outcomes.

Employees of the community businesses have access to one-on-one support from our peer workers and the option to attend our onsite recovery groups that cover a range of vocational and life skills topics.

We also offer tertiary qualifications onsite, including:
Cert. 3 in Warehouse Operations and Cert. 3 in Horticulture.

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

**Flourish Australia is a registered
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider.**

OUR CURRENT JOBS AVAILABLE

Prestige Packing Harris Park:

Supported jobs in packing and light assembly.

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Supported jobs in packing and light assembly and scanning and document management services.

Flourish Maintenance St Marys:

Supported jobs in lawn mowing, grounds maintenance and professional cleaning services.

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Supported jobs in lawn mowing, grounds maintenance and professional cleaning services.

To find out more or to APPLY: Phone: 02 9393 9000 Email: clare.evans@flourishaustralia.org.au

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