

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

# panorama

Monthly Issue **November 2022 #87B**

**New Life After  
a Brain Injury**

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**Spirit-Sparked  
Recovery**

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**Service Driven  
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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 70+ of our services in New South Wales, Southern Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

### Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or  
flourishaustralia.org.au

Chair: Prof Elizabeth More AM  
Chief Executive Officer: Mark Orr AM  
Chief Development Officer: Peter Neilson

### 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.

### The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

### Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

You can ALWAYS email us at...

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### Disclaimer

Panorama's content is not intended as a substitute for the advice of any specialised or qualified professional. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, not necessarily of Flourish Australia, or any associated enterprises, their staff, management, employees, or service recipients

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### Contributors include...

**Jo Hopper** is in the process of recovering from a traumatic brain injury, and is a regular at Flourish Australia's Nowra service

**Peter Jarman** just started a new, exciting career, and he accesses Flourish Australia's Ulladulla service

**Nathaniel Williams** is a proud Wiradjuri man who accesses services at Flourish Australia's Resolve program at Orange.

**Phil H** accesses Flourish Australia's Maitland Disability Employment Service (DES) and drives for a living

### Contributions are welcome!

#### Publications People

**Grant J Everett** writing

**Kylie Bolton** graphic design

**Warren Heggarty** writing

**Tina Irving** story editor

**Fay Jackson** General Manager, Inclusion

**Jasmin Moradides** Development Projects Manager



Inspire  
YOUR  
Community  
WITH YOUR STORY

You don't need to be a writer to share your story with Panorama's readers: we can help you to write your story. We especially like recovery stories from people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

Email us at: [panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au](mailto:panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*Flourish Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work.*

*We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and recognise their strong and continuing connection to land, culture and spirit.*

*Panorama magazine would like to acknowledge all people who live with a mental health issue, as well as those who encourage and support loved ones. Our universal right to lead full and inclusive lives is the driving force behind why Panorama exists. We also acknowledge the strength it can take to share our stories. The impact of reading about people's journeys cannot be overstated. Sharing our experiences has the potential to change lives and we hope by reading true recovery stories, it gives hope, optimism and support to our readers, especially those on their mental health recovery journey.*



## 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: [www.flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers](http://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](http://www.copmi.net.au)*





Below: Jo Hopper, spending quality time with her best furry pal, Minke. OPPOSITE: Minke, helping Jo with her creative writing. PHOTOS BY TERRY BRENNAN

# New Life After Brain Injury

Strangely, there is an UP side to it...

By Jo Hopper (as told to Grant J Everett)



I've only lived in Nowra for five or six years. I moved down here from Sydney for a fresh start, as a lot had happened in my life, and I just wanted to meet new people and rebuild. I had already been experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and depression for a long time, and I wanted to work on that in a new environment.

Not long after moving to Nowra, I had several nasty falls, and one of them lead to a traumatic brain injury. I actually died from that accident and had to be revived by my friend (who is now my partner). I still suffer chronic pain in my back and neck, but the traumatic brain injury was by far the worst damage.

I now have difficulty with a lot of basic skills I used to take for granted, such as reading, writing, numbers, and just focusing on things.

### Adjusting

I'm also constantly in the process of relearning how to do things that used to be second nature, forcing those damaged neuropathways to remember how to work like they used to. For instance, I do a type of physiotherapy once a week called Brain-Fit, which is like a specialised kind of Pilates. It's been helping my brain to relearn how to balance my body. Experiencing progress has been absolutely essential for my motivation.

Having a traumatic brain injury means that you can get very fatigued, so if I can't finish something, I'll do it tomorrow or the next day and not be down on myself about it. I have learned to be more compassionate and kind to myself. If I'm unable to accomplish something, I will just do something else and try it again later.

Strangely enough, living with this injury has made me a happier person in many ways. I see things differently, I have less inhibitions, I don't worry about what people think of me, I can accept my own limitations, and I find it easy to enjoy the simpler things in life.

There's a quote that I live by: *"No matter how I feel, I will wake up, get up, dress up and show up, and never give up."* I love that quote. It's really been helpful.

### Support From Flourish

I connected with Flourish Australia's Nowra service about three years ago through an organisation called IBIS, which stands for Illawarra Brain Injury Service. IBIS is based in the Shoalhaven Hospital.

Following my accident, Flourish Australia got involved in my care. They used to pick me up and take me to the heated pool for physiotherapy. As I couldn't be left alone in the pool for my own safety, they'd supervise me. From then on, they've been supporting me with my rehabilitation, which is lovely.

Flourish Australia's Nowra service provides some groups that I find very helpful and fulfilling, particularly the writing group on Thursdays and the arts and crafts group on Wednesday. Since my brain injury, I've found it challenging to read and write, so the writing group is helping my brain to regain this ability, and it's an opportunity to express myself, which I really enjoy. In the same way, the arts and crafts group is helping me relearn my fine motor skills, making it a real healing process.

Without Flourish Australia and all their support, I don't feel I would have been able to accomplish what I have.

## Career

Prior to my brain injury, I'd earned a psychology degree at University, and I was employed as a counsellor who worked primarily with young people. I also worked in the disability industry. Since my accident, I haven't been able to work. I used to love my job, but I've accepted that I probably won't be able to work as a counsellor again. I do hope to reach the point where I can be employed in some other field, but that's not something I worry about yet.

## Support Network

When I first moved to Nowra, I didn't know a single person: no family, no friends, nobody. Since my accident, I have developed a good, positive network of friends and support people. A lot of that has been through Flourish Australia. For instance, I visit my best friend every Friday, and she has a seeing eye dog (who's best friends with Minke, by the way!), I have a fantastic GP who supports my mental health and physical health, Flourish Australia referred me to an independent support worker called Annette who collects me from my home, and I have cleaners and lawnmowers who are funded through my NDIS package. I also receive support from Occupational Therapists who worked for IBIS.

This support network has been so very important in my recovery.

**Flourish Australia Nowra**  
67 Bridge Road  
Nowra NSW 2541  
Phone: (02) 9393 9535



# Minke the Support Dog

By Jo Hopper /GJE

**Minke is a King Charles Cavalier dog and she's definitely an important part of my story. My brain injury sent me into a spiral of depression, anxiety and grief. I just wanted to hide away. Once I accepted that I was no longer able to do many of the things I used to do, I decided to get a support dog.**

My partner, Pete, bought me Minke, my support dog. When Minke came into my life, she caused a big 180 turnaround. I now had a purpose for getting up every morning, and I could focus on caring for this little puppy instead of worrying about my own stuff. It was a great distraction from how I felt. All those hard feelings just melted away whenever I woke up and saw her face.

I've had Minke since she was two and I take her everywhere. Minke wears a little service vest, so I don't have any trouble taking her on public transport, into cafes or anywhere else. Minke also comes to all my support groups, and everybody has been so accepting of her from the very beginning.

Minke is the best companion I could ever ask for. Just

communicating with a pet is very rewarding, and talking to Minke is good brain stimulation for me. She has always offered me so much love, and I just want to give her the same in return.

Everyone I walk past on the street says "hello" to me because they want to meet Minke, and they always tell me how cute she is. I used to be really shy and quiet and reserved, so this has really helped me come out of my shell. I actually love meeting new people now! Sure, shopping takes three times as long because now I need to allow extra time for these conversations, but that's actually a really positive thing!

I'm involved with a group called the South Coast Cavaliers Friends NSW Australia, which I attend with Minke on Tuesdays. It's a social group for people who own King Charles Cavaliers. This gives Minke some social time with dogs of her own breed, so it's good for her and for me. I connected with this club so I could develop my confidence by meeting new people on my own initiative.

Service animals can be so healing and therapeutic, and it's amazing how the love of an animal can help with your mental health. Having Minke has helped so much.



# Perinatal Mental Health Week 2022

By Grant J Everett



**Becoming a parent is exciting and challenging, and it's normal to need time to adjust to its many changes. Looking after a newborn is a steep learning curve, and new parents can often feel stressed, exhausted, and overwhelmed. Disrupted sleep patterns and persistent fatigue just come with the territory, leading to difficulties with focus, concentration or memory.**

Parents can experience "perinatal" mental health issues anywhere from conception to the first birthday of the baby, potentially affecting your mood, behaviour, wellbeing or daily functioning. Perinatal mental health issues affect around 100,000 Australian families every year, with 1 in 5 new or expecting mothers and 1 in 10 fathers experiencing anxiety or depression symptoms. Thankfully, perinatal mental health issues usually respond well to treatment, and have a very high chance of recovery.

## PANDA

From the 7th of November, PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia) runs Perinatal Mental Health Week. By stimulating conversation and awareness of these mental health challenges, this is a great opportunity to share what support and understanding is on offer, and for parents to tell their uplifting recovery stories.

Sadly, it's common for parents to put on a brave face and hide their struggles out of embarrassment. Social expectations or stigma can be an obstacle in seeking support, but reaching out is the first step towards

feeling better, and looking after your own wellbeing benefits your whole family. Admitting you need help is not a sign of weakness, but of courage. You are not alone, and support is available.

By hosting events and raising funds, we move closer to creating a society where perinatal mental health is valued, and where stigma and systemic barriers to seeking help no longer exist.

## A time of emotion

Being a little emotional in the weeks after you have your baby affects up to 80% of new parents. But if you're constantly feeling sad, low and hopeless, crying frequently or withdrawing from friends and family, these are common signs of Post Natal Depression, commonly known as the Baby Blues. You may lose interest in activities that usually bring joy, and if these feelings are impeding your ability to function, it's important to talk to someone.

Many parents will experience a persistent worry about the wellbeing of their baby, sometimes to the point where they develop obsessive

and distressing thoughts. They may feel stressed, overwhelmed, or even outright panicky, with a racing heartbeat, chest pain, breathlessness, muscle tension, shaking, or feeling faint.

## Perinatal psychosis

Perinatal psychosis is a serious illness that affects 1% of new mums. Symptoms can include extreme mood swings, behaviour changes, hallucinations, delusions, and violent thoughts or urges. A mental health intervention is almost always required in such cases.

## Helpful material

PANDA has a Mental Health Checklist for new and expecting parents that may provide an indication of whether seeking support could be useful. This checklist was created with direct input from people with a lived experience and PANDA counsellors.

PANDA also offers a free, anonymous National Perinatal Mental Health Helpline on 1300 726 306.

Source: <https://panda.org.au>

# Community Advisory Council Briefs

31 August 2022

A summary of the latest monthly meeting

James Herberton, General Manager (Services) spoke to the Council about Recnet wage increases for supported employees.

Fay Jackson, General Manager (Inclusion) updated us about the Buck House Videos, Safety Training, the Council-designed survey on culture. She also discussed how we can get local services knowledgeable about what the Council does.



Sumathi Givindasamy (Outcomes and Improvements Manager) and John Maraz (Senior workforce

development coordinator, Left) also spoke about the survey on culture as well as the RAS-DS outcome tool.

Michelle Genoe, Digital Capability Lead, listened to our feedback on the Wi-Fi posters,

Peter Neilson, Chief Development Officer and Steen Wang, Acting Marketing and Communications Manager spoke about Mental Health Month activities and gave an update on 'Complex Mental Health information.' on our web site.



Warren Heggarty, Publications Officer, (pictured), spoke to the Council about how Panorama welcomes people

to share their stories about specific life issues such as learning to drive or surviving a heart attack.

By Warren Heggarty



## Let's Use Strengths-Based Language!

The first of Flourish Australia's THREE VITAL BEHAVIOURS is to use strengths-based language. Strengths-based language encourages us to recognise our existing skills and abilities and to build upon them to get to where we want to go and to become who we want to be. We believe it is crucial to look at what each person CAN do, rather than at their perceived disabilities.

But what does strengths-based language look like in action?

One key element is to use person-led phrasing. For example, instead of saying "a homeless person," you would say "a person who is homeless."

Secondly, as the majority of people who work for Flourish Australia are on a mental health recovery journey, we know how vital it is to not reduce anybody to an illness or a diagnosis. So instead of saying "a mentally ill person" or "a schizophrenic," we would say "a person who experiences a mental health issue." A diagnosis can provide a starting point for a recovery journey, sure, but it should not be used to define who somebody is or what they're capable of.

A third point following on from this is that we refer to "people who access our services" in preference to terms like clients, or consumers, or patients.

So have you tried applying strengths-based language to your recovery journey? It might just change your life.





# YOU WON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU HAVE A GO!

By Peter Jarman (as told to Grant J Everett)

**I access services at Flourish Australia Ulladulla, and I want to share the benefits that employment and doing constructive things has had on my recovery and wellness.**

I just got a new job at the local golf course in Ulladulla. A major part of my duties will be washing the golf buggies, putting them away safely in the shed, and plugging them in to charge for the next customer. I've done a couple of hours of training, but I haven't gotten my

work roster yet, so we'll see how I go when my shifts start. It's all pretty straightforward and I'm sure I'll get used to it quickly.

I got this job through the "At Work" job agency located just across from Flourish Australia's Ulladulla service. I reckon if people want something in life, they should just go for it. Take that chance! You won't know unless you try, so have a go!

Also, there was a championship game at the golf course yesterday, and I heard somebody managed a hole-in-one on a Par 3!

## Hard yakka

My previous job was at the Mullala Nursery in Ulladulla. I'd been there for a long time and I was ready to move on. I guess I just felt like a change. Before the Nursery, I didn't have a job for five and a half years, so it's been great being employed this whole time.

I did lawnmowing and maintenance for the Nursery, but the toughest part of the job was the cardboard recycling on Thursdays. This involved driving around Ulladulla and Mollymook in a truck, loading up all the cardboard we could collect. We'd take the cardboard over to Milton and remove any contamination before recycling it into 600 kilogram bales. They'd get strapped tight and lined-up in the shed, ready to be picked up by a big truck and taken to Port Botany. From there, the bales went to China to be recycled into new products. I don't doubt I've seen these exact pieces of cardboard come back in a different shape, and just didn't know it!

It felt good working such an environmentally-friendly job, but it was very physical. On rainy days the cardboard would get wet, and the bags could weigh up to 80 kilograms, making loading and unloading them very demanding. My new job at the golf course will be much kinder to my body, and I'll have the opportunity to use my brain a bit more on the job, too.

## Flourish Australia

I've been accessing services with Flourish Australia at Ulladulla for about 5 years now. I have time with my workers on Mondays and Fridays, and I'll either come into the centre to have lunch and a chat with the other people who access services like me, or my worker will take me somewhere local for a meal or a coffee.

I've been receiving the same level of support from Flourish Australia for a while now, and they've always met my needs. They do a review of where I'm at every twelve months, and I can always honestly report that I'm happy with how things are.

The Flourish Australia workers also encourage me to get enough exercise. Edward Lee (a Mental



Health Worker at the Ulladulla service) gets the people who visit the service into the pool for exercise. Once I know when I'm going to be working, I'm interested in returning to the pool to lose a bit of weight.

To be honest, I've been so busy sorting out everything for my new job that I haven't done much with Flourish Australia for a couple of weeks. On that subject, I've been finding it challenging to manage my time ever since COVID hit, as everything is so restricted compared to how it used to be. On top of COVID, we've also had bushfires and floods to deal with, so I've had those added challenges to overcome.

### Getting around

On Mondays I used to have a Flourish Australia worker support me with learning how to drive in order to prepare for the practical test. I'd like to resume these lessons once I figure out when I have time to spare. Gabriel, Team Coordinator from Flourish Australia, told me that there will be a new worker arriving soon who might be able to help me practise. While I haven't got my license yet, I know I'll get it eventually. The next goal after that is buying my own car.

### Study

I have found that doing something constructive, like studying, has been very good for my wellness and mental health. I did a fifteen-week First Aid certificate, and just recently I completed the RCG/RSG (Responsible Service Of Alcohol/ Responsible Service Of Gambling) at TAFE.

I was a bit nervous when I started the First Aid course, but I passed. With the RSA/RCG, I found the alcohol component easier than the gambling part, though I found that I did struggle with some of the reading. I found out that I'm allowed to have a support person sit in, so when I refresh my RSA/RCG accreditation I'll arrange for a Flourish Australia worker to come with me.

### Recovery

My mental health recovery journey is going well. I'm certain that what you do for a living has a huge

impact on your wellness. When I told my Flourish Australia worker, Max, that I needed a new job, he understood that I was ready to find something better, and he encouraged me to push for that. Max has told me that he will support me with whatever I want to achieve in my career.

My advice to people on a mental health recovery journey is to just be willing to have a go. Try things out before you decide to give up on them. And if you don't like what you have, try for something better. I am sure this new, better job will be very good for my mental health.

### Support

My whole family, my Mum, Dad and two sisters, have been very supportive. They've been with me the whole way through everything. I live at home with my Mum and Dad. I pay rent and help around the house, so they're happy to have me there. We live down at Racecourse Beach, a pretty nice area, and I love to go surfing and swimming and fishing.

**BELOW: Peter was more than a little excited to pass his First Aid Course with flying colours! LEFT: Peter zipping a golf cart back to its recharging station**  
PHOTOS BY PETER JARMAN



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Phone: (02) 9393 9530  
Open 8AM-6PM, 7 days a week



# How My Journey Back to Spirit Sparked My Recovery

By Nathaniel Williams (as told to Grant J Everett)



ABOVE: Nathaniel with his didgeridoo.  
OPPOSITE: Nathaniel's painting expresses  
the tough journey he's experienced.  
PHOTOS BY NATHANIEL WILLIAMS

**Through painting, I have reconnected with my spirit and found the resolve to pull myself back from a slippery slope of drug abuse and acting out. I have embraced my people, my culture, and my passion for life. Now I hold my head high as a proud Wiradjuri man, and I find meaning in sharing my lived experience purposefully with young people in my community, to encourage them to lead better lives.**

## Generational Wounds

Growing up in Central NSW, I loved learning about our land and culture from my grandfather and being part of a close-knit community. It was from him that I learned our language, how to play the didgeridoo, and many other aspects of our heritage, which are deeply woven into who I am.

Life took a turn for the worst when I was taken away by the Aboriginal Protection Board, along with my seven siblings. As my mother was among the Stolen Generation, taken from Cowra Mission back in 1953, the generational wounds were still raw. My brothers and I were sent to a boy's home in Kempsey and

subjected to forced labour, while my sisters remained at Cootamundra where they were made to pick peas. With us gone, only my grandfather remained on country.

During my high school years in Orange, the pain and anger I felt from being taken from my family and the loss of my heritage led to heavy drug and alcohol abuse, and I attempted suicide several times. I hated what I'd become, and I recognised that I needed to reach out for help if I wanted to start making positive changes in my life. I didn't want to do it alone anymore.

## The Resolve Program

I held a lot of pain and anger before I joined Flourish Australia's Resolve program at Orange, but after just two years I have completely turned my life around to become who I truly am. I started off by figuring out the recovery goals I wanted to accomplish with the program, and the staff supported me with every step.

What's great about the Resolve program is that it's run by Peer Workers who are happy to have a yarn about the rough roads they've walked in their own lives. It makes

me feel like they really relate to what I'm going through, and this gave me hope. Their support gave me the time I needed to think about exactly how I wanted to change, and I especially enjoyed their overnight residential support, which I stayed at a number of times. The Outreach team regularly supported me in person, and I also called their 24/7 Warmline whenever I felt overwhelmed so that I could talk with someone who cares.

I've been provided with art supplies for pursuing my creative passions, and they recently helped me to purchase a bike to help improve my fitness and so I can travel to see my family. I also have a television at home now, which makes my environment feel more settled.

Up until I connected with the Resolve program, the only help on offer for my drug problems was the methadone program, which I believed would have just transferred my dependence from one drug to another. What I really wanted was to be completely free from addictive behaviours. Since connecting with the Resolve program, I'm proud to say I've not touched drugs or alcohol.



I really feel I've grown up and become stronger in myself. I now consider myself to be a happy-go-lucky, deeply spiritual person, and I can socialise at the pub without feeling the need to have a beer.

### The Power of Expression

I rejected the idea of painting when it was first suggested by a Peer Worker from the Resolve program, but once I gave it a go I was amazed by the shift it brought about in me. This was the beginning of reclaiming my spiritual and cultural identity.

As a part of my recovery, I painted an artwork to display at the Flourish Australia office. It speaks of the traumatic life journey of my family and I, which played a big part in forming my identity for many years, and how embracing my culture and heritage has been the key to my mental health recovery. My painting reflects all these life experiences: the green dots represent the peas my sisters picked, the green lines indicate the roads that we journeyed on in all directions, and the sharp spears signify the fight for our lives and the right to self-determination.

### Lasting recovery

I've set out to mentor as many young kids in my community as I can to prevent them from heading down the same destructive paths I did. Together with a few mates, I've started a Hub House where kids can come after school for a game of table tennis or basketball and have a Milo and a chat. I share the same cultural knowledge my grandfather handed down to me so I can impress upon them the value of respecting who they are and their proud heritage. My hope is to raise enough funds to be able to get them out in the bush so I can teach them how to live off the land, prepare bush medicines and get hands-on with spears and fishing.

As I've come back to myself, I'm taking a more active role in Land Council Meetings and other community groups. It's about doing my bit to break negative life cycles and give young people the hope of a better, healthier future.

When I was high all the time, nothing mattered to me. Now that I'm standing in my spirit, new opportunities are opening every day.



As a part of my recovery, I painted an artwork to display at the Flourish Australia office. It speaks of the traumatic life journey of my family and I, which played a big part in forming my identity for many years, and how embracing my culture and heritage has been the key to my mental health recovery.

**Flourish Australia Orange  
Resolve Program**

**5 Bonanza Place, Orange NSW 2800  
(02) 9393 9390**



## The Middle Path

Supportive

Under involved

Trust

Over involved

Distancing

Respect

Boundary crossing

Disinterest

Collaboration

Boundary violations

Neglect

Informed choices  
& following  
agreed plans

Sexual misconduct

# Professional Boundaries Following the Middle Path

By Warren Heggarty

Adapted from Flourish Australia (2019) 'Facilitator Guide, Professional Ethics and Boundaries. Adapted in turn from a nurse's guide to professional boundaries

**We have seen in the previous article that having good, clear boundaries is a key to personal flourishing. Professional boundaries are crucial too, both for staff and for the people who access our services.**

Providing services for people with mental health issues means developing supportive professional relationships with them.

### Transparency

Because of this, Janet Ford, Flourish Australia's Professional Practice Manager, says we need transparency in all we do. When we work collaboratively with people, it is crucial that we build trust and respect. We need to maintain confidentiality and privacy, but that does not mean doing things in secret.

Providing support involves seeking the middle path between undesirable extremes: Overinvolvement and Underinvolvement.

### Overinvolvement

Staff need to be wary of falling into the trap of 'doing things FOR people.' This is sometimes hard, because the very people who like support work often have a strong desire to help others. In fact, doing things FOR another person rather than WITH them may be hindering them, because the person may begin to lean on the staff member too much. This would be a 'boundary crossing.'

Another sign of overinvolvement according to Janet is 'excessive exposure to one particular staff member,' or the sharing too much personal information.

'Some personal information is OK to share, when it is part of building rapport with the person,' but it becomes an unhealthy boundary crossing when a staff member burdens the person with their own problems.

Everybody needs friends and our staff need to behave in a friendly manner, but our role is to help the person to develop their own friendships in the community.

### Underinvolvement

The opposite extreme is underinvolvement, or lack of interest in a person. The danger here is neglecting the genuine needs of the person.

It is not all a one-way street. Staff members actually learn a lot through their involvement with people who access our services. We can learn from each other.

Sometimes the boundary is breached by the person who accesses our service. For example, when people deciding they are going to smoke in a non-smoking zone or become aggressive towards a staff member who is having trouble understanding them.

### Breaches

Janet says that the first step to re-establishing healthy boundaries is to apologise for overstepping the mark. That clears the way for looking at how to solve the problem. 'Where can I smoke?' or 'how can I make myself understood' are questions that will lead to solutions.

Sexual misconduct by anyone is very serious. Staff are responsible for preventing it. There is a power imbalance involved and exploiting such an imbalance in this way is also potentially illegal.





# Yarnup 2022: Together we are Strong and 'Deadly!'

By Warren Heggarty

**The Yarnup forum is an annual event where staff identifying from First Nations communities can come together, meet in person, and discuss how Flourish Australia can promote and support First Nations initiatives across the organisation.**

Yarnup is especially important in Flourish Australia because we serve such a wide area of Australia, including rural and remote centres separated by long distances.

'The forum was an opportunity to discuss Flourish Australia's Strong and Deadly Together Plan,' said Tim Fong, Flourish Australia's General Manager, People and Culture. 'This plan has been developed to support the highest standard of social and emotional wellbeing for First Nations people and communities

by enhancing Flourish Australia's cultural responsiveness to the needs of First Nations people.'

'This coming together was also an opportunity for staff who identify as being from First Nations communities to connect and reconnect with their colleagues, spend time together, share thoughts, and share ideas' said Tim.

This year, Yarnup was held on Thursday 8th September and Friday 9th September 2022 at the Flourish Australia Support Hub at Sydney Olympic Park.

Of Course, The 'Strong and Deadly Together Plan' has not been finalised yet. Panorama can tell you that some of the topics that have been under detailed discussion include:

Discussing how Flourish Australia can work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

How can we make our services welcoming places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Respecting and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff knowledge and skills

Training staff in cultural awareness and responsiveness.

Promoting cultural responsiveness, including delivering services that are culturally responsive,

Some of the Yarnup group are keen to have their next official group meeting at Moree.

Some of our readers may be unfamiliar with the contemporary Aboriginal usage of "Deadly!" to mean AWESOME. According to Macquarie Dictionary Online, this usage originated in the 1900s and by 1970 had been adopted into Aboriginal English usage.

ABOVE: The Yarnup forum. Participants (L-R) included Jenée Smith (Support Worker, Moree), Jo Bishop (Support Coordinator, Penrith), Jade Ryall (Program Manager, Back on Track Health, Sydney), Mel Powell, (Peer Worker, Muswellbrook, NSW), Brooke Sharp (Team Coordinator, Peer Specialist, Thornton in the NSW Hunter Valley) Shawn Brennan (Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Trainee, Moree), Mecca Jones (Peer Worker, Thornton, NSW), Danny Dalton (Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Trainee, Tamworth), Ann Holden (Team Coordinator, Moree, NSW) and Ruby Golding (Manager, Penrith, NSW). PHOTO BY DANNY DALTON



## Driven to Service

# Phil H has an Attitude of Gratitude!

By Warren Heggarty with Jessica Burke

**It often happens that people who live with a disability or with mental health challenges work very well in supporting others! Phil H, who accesses Flourish Australia's Maitland Disability Employment Service (DES), is an example.**

Phil is currently working as a Driver for the Assisted School Travel Program. Each day, he drives a 12-seater van to pick up children who live with disabilities and takes them to and from school. He works alongside an Assisted School Travel Officer who looks after the children while Phil drives the van. "my dad used to drive trucks," says Phil, "so

I must have gravitated towards this career following in his footsteps!"

Jess describes Phil as empathetic, kind, resilient, giving and "driven!" – pardon the pun.

After spending just 6 months engaged in DES as a voluntary job seeker, Phil was able to start working. "The highlight of this for me is that Phil is on the Disability Support Pension and doesn't HAVE to work but wants to, because he knows it benefits his mental health being out earning a wage and helping people." Jess explained. "Since I have been supporting Phil, I have learned that he is a kind-hearted and giving person. This led

me to look for opportunities that would really suit these personality traits. When I came across the opportunity for the Assisted School Travel Driver, I knew it was a perfect match!"

Phil volunteered for several years in Australia and overseas in Thailand. While in Thailand, he supported children with disabilities. When recounting his experiences volunteering overseas, Phil said, "Seeing how grateful and happy these children are to be alive despite their health challenges really made me realise how lucky I am. It reminded me to be grateful and always try to give back to those people less fortunate than myself."



Before volunteering, Phil spent 33 years working as a Customer Service Officer for the Council. In 1997, his father passed away and Phil became unwell. He took leave from work for 6 months to recover and was assisted back into the workforce by a return-to-work nurse.

### Working on his Recovery

The most intensive part of Phil's recovery journey spanned 7 years. Over this time, he worked with over 10 psychologists. One was through his work's Employee Assistance Program, another from Relationships Australia, and another was the Minister from a local church who was a Clinical Psychologist as well.

In the early 2010's Phil had experienced an amicable marriage breakdown and was experiencing deep depression and suicidal ideations. He was diagnosed with clinical depression. Due to the severity of Phil's mental health challenges, his family weren't in the best position to support him through this. They were able to work with Phil to find the best suited professionals in the mental health field to assist in his recovery. It was through this continued therapy that Phil was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. His continued engagement in therapy enabled him to stabilise his mental health and this saved his relationships with his family and friends.

Before joining Flourish Australia's DES Program in Maitland, Phil had been out of the workforce and volunteering for a few years. He was really struggling with his mental health after returning home from Thailand during the COVID-19 Pandemic in early to mid 2020. He was admitted to hospital for treatment and since being discharged he struggled to find stable and safe housing. This is something that Phil was still having difficulty with until very recently but since starting work he has been able to move into a unit of his own.

Phil also has Irlen Syndrome. According to the Australasian Association of Irlen Consultants, Irlen Syndrome is a disorder of how the brain processes visual information. Often people with this

condition use coloured glasses or coloured paper to make reading and understanding written information easier. There is a website, <https://aaic.org.au>, where you can watch a video to learn how people with Irlen Syndrome see when reading information and this helps to understand the difficulties they experience. At the top of the page, you can also choose a suitable background colour to see what might help you. In this article we are using blue which is the colour that helps Phil.

**"Phil is on the Disability Support Pension and doesn't HAVE to work but instead wants to because he knows it benefits his mental health being out earning a wage and helping people"**

*– Jess Burke*



**ABOVE: Phil (Right) with Employment Co-ordinator Jess completing some paperwork for his next milestone in employment. RIGHT: In the drivers' seat PHOTO PROVIDED BY JESSICA BURKE**

# YOUR JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT

Every year 1 in 5 Australians will experience some form of mental health issue.

Flourish Australia provides mental health specialised disability employment services (DES) supporting people living with a mental health issue to access sustainable employment.

## Flourish Australia DES locations:

Bankstown	Morisset
Broken Hill	Nelson Bay
Caringbah	Newcastle
Cessnock	Penrith
Harris Park	Raymond Terrace
Hornsby	Seven Hills
Liverpool	Wollongong
Maitland	

To see if you qualify for our free service, please call us for a confidential discussion or visit our website for more information.

