

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

panorama

Monthly Issue **September 2022 #86C**



Flourish Australia at
the **BEING Connected**
Conference

Balancing the Scales
of Physical Health
& Mental Health

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AUSTRALIA

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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

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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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PHOTO BY PETER FARRUGIA

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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



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

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



The ABC way to positivity

Or, how to make butterflies

By Helen Fenner

"Helen Fenner has shown so much resilience, has openly absorbed new concepts and ideas and put them into practice. Her enthusiasm, energy and empathy has supported others to do their best. Her creativity is amazing!"

– Maitland Staff

I started doing some arts and crafts in school, but I never thought this would lead me anywhere. I met my husband, Steven, at a wedding, and we started talking, and that was the beginning of a life-long love affair. We started a family and made a good life. However, my mental health created challenges on several occasions, and I spent many times in hospital throughout my life.

I engaged with Flourish Australia in Maitland in 2015, and they encouraged me to join art and craft groups – I thought this was fun and I enjoyed learning new skills. It kept my mind focused on something other than my mental health.

I've always doubted myself and never thought I could do anything.

Over many months and years, I learnt so many aspects of arts and crafts, that I currently combine these different items into my works. I started doing 1:1 art with Flourish

Australia, and attended 'Journeys Creative Connections' (a joint activity with Maitland Art Gallery, Flourish Australia, Stride and input from Community Mental Health). I thrived and finally found my true passion.

I love creating. It's a way of getting my message across, and it allows me not to dwell on my mental health but replace it with positive happy things.

My creative juices flow through a simple ABC process: A= I visualise things in my head, B= put it on paper, C= do it. It makes me feel good and curbs negativity. I get my inspiration from seeing things and images, my life and family.

I attended TAFE in Newcastle – Advanced Diploma of Art in 2017-2020, to further enhance my skill base. I have shown my art in exhibitions in Scone, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Maitland, Newcastle, East Maitland galleries and cafés, Hunter Artisans Gallery, Grossman House, 'C' Studio, Flourish Australia Hunter Street, Sensibility Newcastle and Newcastle Show to name a few.

I am planning an exhibition in Raymond Terrace in October this year for Mental Health Month. I have many friends that are artists too, and would like to showcase their work.

These friends also attend Maitland Flourish Australia. We share our skills and abilities with other, bringing new techniques to the table and supporting each other. I get a buzz doing this; I feel bliss and I'm sure the others feel the same way.

Last thoughts: Always draw a positive from a negative. Like a butterfly, we munch on leaves in a caterpillar state, and turn into chrysalis, then emerge as a beautiful butterfly.

I truly never thought I could achieve anything or that this interest in art and craft would take me anywhere, but it has. It has been an incredible growth from caterpillar to butterfly.

ABOVE: 'I love creating, getting a message across...' says Helen Fenner who attends Flourish Australia's Maitland service. PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY HELEN FENNER

Remembering
to make health
a priority:

Women's Health Week 2022

By Grant J Everett



Women's Health Week 2022 runs between the 5th and 11th of September in Australia, and it's the perfect opportunity for women, girls, and people who are gender diverse to make their health and wellbeing a priority.

Now in its 10th year, Women's Health Week celebrates women from all walks of life. Communities and workplaces are encouraged to get involved by hosting events, sharing health information, and just bringing people together to support one another. Every day of Women's Health Week will focus on a number of important topics designed to provide people with the tools to help you unlock your own powers for good health.

Over the past decade, hundreds of Australian workplaces and community groups have hosted health-themed events for Women's Health Week. Even in 2021, despite a second year impacted by COVID-19, more than 128,000 women participated in 2,277 events across the country, over 54,000 women subscribed to the online

campaign, and over 3.6 million people connected via social media. Let's try and beat it this year!

This is the biggest event dedicated to the good health and wellbeing of all women in Australia, so make sure you have the date in your diary, and start thinking about how you might celebrate the week.

Taking part

It can be so easy to put your own needs aside while you're busy juggling family, work and all your other responsibilities day-to-day, but it's vital that we continue to take care of ourselves. As we are still emerging from years of lockdowns and restrictions that may have affected how regularly we get health checks and screenings, the timing of this wellness message couldn't be better.

Being a part of Women's Health Week is easy: just Google "Women's Health Week 2022" to sign up for daily emails full of free health tips, articles, podcasts, recipes and more. You can also take a look at the hundreds of events happening Australia-wide to find what ones work for you. These events can

be educational, celebratory and fun, and are a good opportunity to connect with women in your community. You may also consider running an event of your own, or just getting together with some friends or colleagues for a walk, a coffee and a chat.

Women's Health Week attracts the support of organisations, high-profile ambassadors, businesses, and community, sporting and media groups across the country.

Common Women's health checks

- Am I due to have a mammogram?
- Do I have troubles with my period? Is it very heavy, very light, irregular, or has it stopped?
- Have I got any signs of menopause? Such as hot flushes, night sweats, irritability?
- Am I due for a cervical screen?
- Do I know what vaccines are available to help prevent cervical cancer?
- Am I (and my intimate partners) using birth control properly?

The Cheese Toasty Intervention: A Better Way to Address Crisis?

By Dr Grenville Rose

Anyone can experience a crisis, but if it happens while a person is already hospitalised in a mental health unit, it's not unusual for the staff to deal with this through the use of seclusion, and even physical or medicinal restraint.

Do restrictive practises work to defuse a crisis? In a way. But can they also be a traumatic experience for a person who is already going through a hard enough time? Yes, they certainly can.

As I have not been hospitalised under the Mental Health Act or been subject to seclusion and restraint, I wasn't aware of the use of these restrictive methods until I read a study Bradley Foxlewin had written for his Masters thesis, which examined the impacts of seclusion and restraint in a Canberra hospital. Bradley consulted all those who were impacted by restrictive practises - including the nurses and doctors, as well as the patients - and he found that it was essential for the staff to recognise that seclusion and restraint are NOT therapeutic "interventions," but therapeutic FAILURES. Seclusion and restraint are unpleasant for the medical staff to administer, and they are definitely a negative experience for the person being restrained. Nobody benefits from this.

This opinion piece is far too short to do any justice to the work in Bradley's thesis, but suffice to say his research lead to the staff in that

Canberra hospital greatly reducing how often they used seclusion and restraint.

The Asylum Oxymoron

The actual meaning of the word "asylum" is a place that's away from it all, a place of peace and tranquillity, a place to repair yourself and to relax. This should be at the very centre of psychiatric care in all hospitals, but to the best of my knowledge, this is often not the case. Australian psychiatric hospitals are not very therapeutic environments, they are not person-centred (let alone person-led), and institutional treatments are often delivered to the person rather than with the person. This may work for treating physical injuries, but as I understand mental wellbeing, this model is ineffective unless the intervention on offer is offered with humane compassion and ensures the person experiencing difficulty is an active agent in their own recovery and wellbeing at every point of the process.

What way makes more sense? Picture this: you are in a distressed state that has led you to be detained in a mental health unit. While in

this environment you experience another mental health crisis that leads to you being visibly distressed, and the staff's response is to lock you in a room by yourself, and to administer drugs with potentially uncomfortable side effects. Unpleasant? Yes. Traumatic? Probably. It's pretty much exactly the opposite of what you would hope to happen in a supportive, therapeutic environment.

How about this as an alternative: you are starting to become distressed in a mental health unit, and one of the competent, caring staff notices. They come over to you before you become too severely distressed, and ask you if you'd like to come have a cheese toasty, a cup of tea, and a chat.

Can you see this as being a viable alternative to restraining someone physically and chemically?

Which type of intervention is more pleasant for the person being cared for, as well as for the staff? What would be less traumatic? What is less likely to cause injury? What would have a more positive impact on the relationship between the staff and the person with a lived experience?

The Safewards Victoria example can't cite a single case study that demonstrates the effectiveness of a cheese toasty intervention, though the Safewards Victoria model (an intervention type that has been highly effective in reducing conflict and containment, and has led to increases in a sense of safety and mutual support for staff and patients) does mention the provision of grilled dairy-based foods in times of crisis.

The Safewards Victoria model is a more humane and human interaction that is also appropriate to use outside "therapeutic" environments and, anecdotally at least, it's an effective intervention. I suspect that people who have experienced the trauma of being sectioned, secluded, and restrained under the Mental Health Act would champion any intervention that was more humane. The mere fact that some academics believe there is the possibility some deaths by suicide are nosocomial, that is, they are caused by the experience of being in a psychiatric hospital, should drive us to think of ways that we can make the overall experience of hospital less traumatic. Summing up, seclusion and restraint as therapeutic interventions are both anathema to psychological recovery. I believe a cheese toasty and a chat has a much better possibility of setting someone on the road to taking control of their own wellbeing both in the hospital and after they (thankfully) leave the therapeutic environment.

Flourish Australia promotes positive support practices by seeking to understand what causes people distress, and then we encourage them to draw on their inherent strengths to process these feelings. Flourish Australia promotes the use of positive support practices which are consistent with our Recovery Action Framework.

With our priority always being people's safety, Flourish Australia has in place a "Reducing or Eliminating use of Restrictive or Restricted Practices Policy."



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.

Balancing the Scales of Physical Health & Mental Health

By Zac Wrona (as told to Grant J Everett)

After struggling with agoraphobia for a number of years, it reached the point where I felt too scared to leave my own apartment.



As a result, in 2013 I spent a couple of months in Bloomfield hospital, and during that time Lindal from Flourish Australia's Orange service used to visit me and see how I was. That's how I connected up with the organisation, and thank God for that! I was feeling so low and worthless at that point, I really needed some support. I like to think I was able to repair myself enough at Bloomfield that I was ready to go back into the big, wide world.

I usually make my own way to the Flourish Australia services at Parkes so I can have a coffee and join group activities, but recently a lot of the support I've received from Flourish Australia has been over ZOOM. At the moment I'm working with them to get NDIS funding to cover things like social access, and one-on-one support. On the subject of one-on-one support, I was actually just out having a coffee

with Lane, my Flourish Australia support person, earlier today.

While I'm a creature of habit, I've really found myself changing for the better for a while now.

Physical Health

I haven't had an admission to Bloomfield since 2013, but over the last few years it's been more about my physical health than my mental health. Some medications I was taking impacted my physical health, so this became something I needed to be aware of and act on. After reaching 167 kilograms, it felt like I'd traded agoraphobia for obesity. I got so big that I suffered two heart attacks, and it also made me dislike my own appearance. I couldn't bear to look at myself in the mirror, and this really bothered me.

Thankfully, I found that physical illness is more straightforward to deal with than mental health issues.

Taking (Literal) Steps Towards Weight Loss

I've slimmed down to 125 kilograms, and I managed this by regularly going to the gym and walking for an hour on weekdays. My heart specialist is very happy with my health at the moment, and my family are all glad that I've lost the gut. I've discovered that if you feel better physically, you'll feel better mentally, and vice versa.

Flourish Australia is continuing to help me maintain my physical health with their walking group and gym group, and this is so important because of my cardio problems. Even back in the day when I was pretty much housebound, I had a Flourish Australia worker encourage me to get out of the flat and exercise.

ABOVE: Zac Wrona, living his best life. PHOTO BY LANE BIRMINGHAM, TEAM COORDINATOR AT FLOURISH AUSTRALIA'S PARKES SERVICE

What I've Learned

There were a number of factors that helped me to lose such a large amount of weight. Here are some of the tips and tricks that worked for me:

- Be consistent with your exercise routine.
- Don't expect to lose it all overnight, or you'll be disappointed.
- It's normal to plateau from time to time, where you stop losing weight despite doing the same amount of exercise. Don't get discouraged!
- Don't just rely on what your scales say: see the difference in how your clothes fit, or how much easier it is to walk around.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Give yourself a cheat day. Enjoy that burger, so long as you get back to exercising the next day.
- Eat the right balance from the different food groups. Instead of sugary stuff and fatty sausages, nowadays I eat a lot more fish and salad.
- I also drink meal replacement shakes and bars from my local chemist. A good thing about those is they don't cost much.
- We all need to have people who spur us on with our goals. I'm lucky to have the Flourish Australia staff encouraging me to keep going. I usually start my day by hitting the gym right after breakfast. This has made a huge difference.

Future Plans

I've had so much great support from the Flourish Australia staff at the Parkes service that I'm really looking forward to the future. They've helped me to feel better mentally, get back to driving a ute, and get physically fit. Getting to where I am now has been a big deal for me, and I feel that I've made some major achievements. I had ten years of my life stolen from me by mental health issues, so I want to do what I can to get them all back.

I'm now interested in doing some volunteer work, maybe cleaning the Flourish Australia office or doing some other kind of upkeep. I'd really like to give something back, but I still need to research how it all works. I'm also really looking forward to the Flourish Australia groups starting up again soon, particularly the art group. We used to practise a variety of different styles, and one of my favourites was making dreamcatchers with what's known as "nail board" art. You start off with a timber board and nails, and weave woollen thread around it. It takes a while, but it's satisfying watching it develop.

I want everyone to know the good that the Flourish Australia workers are doing out here. They've helped me learn about balancing the scales of physical health and mental health.



Keeping physically strong & healthy will help you reach your recovery goals

Talk with your local Flourish Australia team today about keeping your physical health and recovery on track.



Back On Track Health Program

POSTCARD

Why not go on a proper holiday?

By Grant J Everett



ABOVE (L-R): Jarrod, Suzie, Linda and Emma outside the beautiful Plum Blossom Cottage.
OPPOSITE: The holidayers visit the Three Sisters. PHOTOS BY GRANT J EVERETT

After discovering that many people with a mental health issue never go away for a holiday, particularly if they're on government payments or a limited income, my wife and I invited some friends on an affordable five-day trip to Katoomba so we could figure out the most affordable way to get away from it all.

We evenly split a holiday house between the five of us, and our accommodation costs only came to \$300 a head. Better still, where we stayed was central to Katoomba's main stretch.

Here's what Jarrod, Emma and Suzie had to say about the trip.

Jarrold works for Flourish Australia at our Marrickville branch of Prestige Packing.

I was really happy with how much the holiday cost, though the highlight for me was just hanging out with my friends. I had plenty of good chats with Suzie and Emma about what OCD is like to live with, and they seemed interested and were able to empathise with me. Being able to relate to other people who have their own mental health struggles was good, and we were all able to support each other. For instance, as everyone had their own medication to take, this made it easier to remember.

It was great watching funny YouTube clips on the television and going out to cafes and restaurants and getting whatever we wanted. Just the freedom to do that was good fun.

While I've been on a number of holidays with my family, and I'm planning on going on a trip with my mate Chris to Falls Creek, I haven't gone away with friends like this before. As my OCD is a little easier to manage nowadays, I can get myself around more easily than in the past, and I think I'm doing better than I'm giving myself credit for.

I think I'd be able to plan a holiday like this one if I had a little help with it.

Emma works for Wesley Mission's kitchen at their Kogarah service, and is currently studying at TAFE to become a veterinary assistant.

This Katoomba holiday is the first one I've had in forever, and I really enjoyed it and hope to do it again. I'm glad I could have this experience with my close friends.

The price of accommodation, food and entertainment was all well within my range. I saved a bit of money over the last six months, so I was able to do everything I wanted to do while I was away. I definitely think I could afford to go on a proper holiday like this at least once a year, so I think other people on limited incomes could do it, too.

I feel like I could arrange my own holiday by using one of those travel websites. I'm hoping to visit the Central Coast around Christmas to hang out where my partner and I used to go before he passed away. For instance, there was an excellent fish and chip place at Woy Woy we both liked. I'd also love to go to the Reptile Park, as I haven't been in years, and there's that huge shopping centre at Erina Fair. They have a cinema there, too, so we could see a movie or two. I'll start saving again soon, and I might even invite some people along, if they're interested.

One day, I'm planning on going to Italy with my sons. One day!

Suzie runs a market stall at Fairfield where she sells crystals, perfumes, oils, dreamcatchers and other handmade crafts, and has done quite a bit of process work, too.

The house was beautiful, and it was excellent to have my own room with that big, comfy bed all to myself. I definitely got some use out of the electric blanket.

The kitchen was nice and big, and so was the loungeroom. We had enough chairs and couches for everyone, and the house was very warm. The company was lovely, and I just really liked how comfortable everyone was. We watched whatever we wanted on the television, and we streamed a few movies and shared some microwave popcorn. Everyone just did their own thing, but we also went out for a lot of meals and coffees and outings together. Spending quality time with other people who have a lived experience of mental health issues like my own was excellent.

One thing that was a bit disappointing was when we got to the Three Sisters and it was all foggy. It was funny when Grant took a photo of us in front of the solid wall of cloud anyway! Also, I had enough spending money for the holiday...until I went into the local crystal shop and spent most of it there...

I feel a little bit confident that I could arrange a holiday for myself. On that subject, I now have plans for when I retire: I'm going to use my superannuation to go to Tasmania, and I will be inviting people to come with me.



Want to go on an affordable holiday with your friends? Here's how!

- There are many travel websites you can use to make holiday planning easier. These sites are pretty easy to use, and reward repeat business. You could also just visit an actual travel agent. Just watch out for hidden costs.
- Booking well in advance is the key to getting great deals, though you can also get amazing discounts at the last minute if you're lucky.
- Consider going off-peak; while the beach isn't ideal in Winter, Autumn and Spring are doable.
- Thoroughly check out the place you'll be staying at before booking. How many bedrooms does it have? Will your friends need to share bedrooms? Do you need to bring your own towels and linen? What is expected of you when you check out? How far is it from amenities?
- Cooking facilities are a MUST if your group wants to keep costs down. If you're having a homecooked meal, figure out who will be prepping, cooking and cleaning. Always divide the chores fairly.
- If you have a Concession Card, be sure to use it. This can make a real difference.
- If you haven't traveled with somebody before, maybe start out small with a daytrip. Be sure to have a proper decision about your goals, expectations and boundaries for your outing so there's no surprises.
- Investing in a sturdy suitcase with wheels is essential. Dragging a big, heavy thing around with you is no fun at all.
- Many places offer free WiFi. You can use all your streaming accounts easily enough, but be sure to properly log out before you wind up your trip.
- TRIPLE check you've got everything you need. Most of all, be sure you have your essential medications, phone and wallet.

Enthusiastic Reflections on 'BEING Connected'

By Kristen Olson

Peer work Forum in Sydney
27-28 June 2022



When I saw the announcement for the BEING Connected Conference for Peer Workers across NSW, I couldn't register fast enough.

I had been waiting for the day a Peer led conference would be announced, and I would have the opportunity to gather in a room filled with a wealth of lived experience knowledge and expertise. Particularly following so many challenging years enduring COVID-19 isolation, I have, more than ever, identified the need to bring together people who value and thrive on a sense of community and belonging. Peer Work itself is a living testament to the fact that we need connection, so to gather peer workers across NSW into one room to network, hear from keynote speakers and learn about professional development, just made sense.

Having the chance to network with a variety of people working in Peer roles across the state was deeply refreshing. Engaging in conversation with other Peers who work in different programs revealed to me how diverse the role can be. I spoke with Peers working for Hear2Talk (a Peer led phone coaching service), Safe Haven, The Sydney Clinic, GROW programs, amongst many others. No two people accessing support are alike or have the same needs, so being able to hear about what other Peers are doing in their positions provided me with a greater perspective of what it is to be a Peer Worker it gave me a renewed inspiration for how I can support the people I work alongside.

Many of the speakers who delivered presentations mentioned that even five years ago, if someone were to have told them that there would be a conference room filled with 120+ Peer Workers, they would hardly believe it. The Peer Workforce is blossoming, growing each year, building new pathways, being integrated into more and more programs, and is introducing more opportunities for Peer Supervision and training than ever before. It's incredibly exciting to be a part of the emergence of the Peer Workforce, as well as have been able to share that excitement with all of the other Peer Workers who are pioneering the way.

We heard from a variety of speakers, ranging from Darren Wagner, a person with lived experience who is employed as a Project Lead at a Suicide Prevention initiative through Wellways Australia, Pam Rutledge, the Deputy Commissioner of the NSW Mental Health Commission, to Peer educator Ian Moorehead, and. The variety of speakers approached the Peer Workforce from professional, personal and researched perspectives, and has left me with a lot of appreciation for the multifaceted nature of the workforce.

My hope is that this conference continues to run annually, and we can continue to celebrate each year all of the wonderful things that Peer Workers are doing to support others across NSW. There is power in bringing like-minded people together, particularly in efforts to determine the trajectory of the Peer Workforce and take action to further its growth.

TOP: The Author, Kristen Olsen. RIGHT: BEING Connected panel discussion: Peer Work Pathways. The speakers are Peter Schaecken, Peer Work Coordinator, New Horizons; Carmel Tebbutt, CEO, Mental Health Coordinating Council; Peter Farrugia, Manager Peer Workforce, Flourish Australia PHOTO FROM MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATING COUNCIL



Professional Initiatives

By Warren Heggarty

Peer Work Comes of Age at Flourish Australia

Some big initiatives in the realm of peer work are beginning to take shape and, ultimately, Flourish Australia will be able to establish an even more professional peer workforce. Peer Workers draw upon their own personal experience of mental health issues to walk side by side with people on their recovery journeys.

When Peer Work was first developed late last century, there was some question as to whether it should be regarded as a “profession” at all. There were some who feared that Peer Work might end up becoming just another paid clinical job, whereas the whole point of Peer Work is to address the things that are OUTSIDE the clinical or medical realm.

In the end, as our regular readers will know, Peer Workers have revolutionised the mental health sector. “Lived experience” is now valued and can be used as a part of a person’s holistic recovery. It has helped by putting the focus on human beings and their lives, rather than whatever illness they might be diagnosed with

Flourish Australia has been at the forefront of Peer Work pioneering. You can read all about that in the

book *Peer Work in Australia* (Ed. by Fong, Meagher et al). Peer Work is now a profession, but one that has its own values, skills and practices that lie outside of the medical model.

To ensure professionalism there needs to be standards, and those standards are partially derived from proper initial training (hence the *Certificate IV qualification in Peer Work*) and ongoing in-service training. Another way of maintaining professionalism is professional supervision. This is not simply line management and reflective practice, but the active ongoing development of the values, skills and practices of the profession.

Back in July, Flourish Australia launched two new training programs. The first was Impactful And Practical Peer Work, and this serves as a prerequisite for participating in the Professional Peer Supervision program. Expressions of interest were invited from our Peer Workforce on the 30th of June, and these courses will continue to be rolled out from August 2022.

So Peer Workers, keep an eye out for future announcements, or talk to your manger. Read Panorama for more reports.

ABOVE: A contingent of Flourish Australia Peer Workers at the recent BEING Connected forum. FROM LEFT: Christopher Grumley (Seven Hills), Kristen Olson (Waratah), Kerrie Gentle (Tumut), Maisie Sheehan (Newcastle), Melany Rooney (Seven Hills), Leah Bergen (Tumut), Louise Perkins (Windsor), Britt Pauley (Nowra), our friend and Chair of BEING Inc, Faye Nour; Lindal Brown (Orange), Ashley Crampton (Orange) and Peter Farrugia (Sydney Olympic Park). PHOTO FROM FLOURISH AUSTRALIA



YES, YOU CAN NETWORK!

JOB FAIR AT THE ICC

By Warren Heggarty

Sometimes it is not WHAT you know as much as WHO you know. And even if you are an EXPERT at a job, you still need to get the message across that you are ready, willing and able to work.

“Networking” is the fashionable term for getting a message out there, but people make it sound like some intricate (and slightly cynical) ritual of politicians. Did you know that governments and private companies are DESPERATE for you to come to their networking events? That is why they hold job fairs all around the country!

Let us tell you what you missed at the recent Sydney Job Fair held on 28 June 2022 at the ICC Exhibition hall #5...

- There were stalls for over 100 different employers. Employers don't waste money on sending representatives to job fairs unless they have vacancies to fill.
- There were four or more massive job boards full of cards showing actual, vacant jobs.
- There were workshops designed to help jobseekers.

- There were people you could book one-on-one time with, who could help you with your resume. Our own Adam Tanner from Bankstown headspace was one of them!
- headspace and several other disability organisations had stalls because if you need extra support, they want you to have it!

There was a variety of employers ranging from Bakers Delight and Hungry Jacks to Qantas-Jetstar and Apprenticeship Careers Australia. There were stalls for budding bus drivers (Transdev) and up and coming croupiers (Crown). Even Defence Force Recruiting was there.

At Sydney Job Fair you can meet employers, talk to them, ask them questions, take notes, take brochures and compare one to another. What's more, you KNOW that the employers are looking for people. You are not just taking a pot shot: you can put your name down, or even leave your RESUME with them!

Why not get a resume drafted, run off a dozen copies, and come to the next jobs fair near you (Google "Workforce Australia Jobs Fair" for

details). If you want to improve your resume, you can make an appointment on the day to see someone to help you with it.

Job Fairs are FREE which is another way of saying that taxpayers and employers are funding it. That means people are actually investing money to make it easier for YOU to network and get to meet people who can either get you a job now or, at the very least, help you prepare for a job in the near future!

Workshops included...

- “What Employers Want,” which explored the local Sydney labour market and what employers look for when hiring new staff.
- “Dressing for Employment,” where the “Dress For Success” organisation showed how to present yourself in a way that makes a good impression on potential employers.
- Careers in the Hospitality Industry
- Diverse Employment Challenges, featuring the stories of how people overcame their “barriers to employment.”

ABOVE: Exhibitors ranging from Crown Sydney Casino to Transport NSW displayed their wares at the ICC. What a great opportunity to mingle and network! INSET: Vivien, a volunteer from Bankstown Headspace, was there drumming up business. PHOTOS BY WARREN HEGGARTY

Password Managers

They need not be a nightmare

By Warren Heggarty

People invest a lot in hardware and software, but spending a little extra on a good Password Manager app can protect vital information from fraud.

Passwords protect us against fraud, among other things. 25 per cent of Australians experienced an attempt at identity fraud in 2019 from a scammer (Northrop & Rowe-Roberts, 2022, pp. 35-43).

Because the number of tasks for which you need a password is increasing and because no human is capable of remembering so many, we all need a method of managing our passwords. You can try writing them all down, hoping that some villain does not get a hold of that document, or you could use a digital method: a Password Manager.

A Password Manager is an app that manages your passwords, and yes, you'll need yet another password to operate it. However, there is a surprise benefit to make it all more attractive. Password Managers can fill out forms on your behalf (this is called 'autofill'), so while setting the thing up will be a little tedious, once you have a Password Manager up and running, it's likely you will be glad you did!

Once you've set up your Password Manager, your zillion passwords will

be guarded in its vault, impenetrable to the bad guys. When accessing a familiar website, you enter the Password Manager with your master password, and the Password Manager does the hard work of finding and retrieving that site's actual password and fills it in for you. If you have to create a new account to log into some new website (how annoying is that?!), the Password Manager will generate a strong password for you and store it in the vault with the other zillion.

So what Password Manager apps are available, and where can you find information on them? You could Google the consumer magazine Choice www.choice.com.au, which has a Password Manager buying guide. You can actually get one online for free, but Northrop and Rowe-Roberts recommend checking out reviews and ratings by Choice and other reputable tech and consumer publications like PC Mag and C/Net to make an educated purchase.

So are Password Managers safe? With the vault protected by layers of encryption, apparently so, but nothing comes with a 100%

guarantee. Choice magazine says that the master password is the only key to your vault, so you have to keep it secret and safe. The Password Manager will not store this information for security reasons (Zaluzny & Duncombe). But what happens if you forget your master password? Well, it's called a "master password" for a reason, and unless your memory returns, you're not getting into the vault.

Some apps allow for a third party to gain access in case of death, but if you forget your master password, you'll lose everything that isn't committed to your memory!

For more information check, out Chapter 3 "Managing Passwords" in Northrop and Rowe-Roberts, or for something more technical, Zaluzny And Duncombe's article in Choice online, listed below.

Works Cited

Northrop, M., & Rowe-Roberts, D. (2022). *Life Admin Hacks*. Sydney: Harper Collins.

Zaluzny, P., & Duncombe, S. (n.d.). How to find the best password manager. Retrieved from Choice : <https://www.choice.com.au/consumers-and-data/protecting-your-data/data-privacy-and-safety/buying-guides/password-managers>



How Smokers can Help to Create a

More Beautiful Country

By Grant J Everett

While we've all heard how harmful plastic straws, coffee cups, and plastic bags are for the environment, the National Litter Index shows that cigarette butts are by far the most common kind of illegally-discarded trash in Australia.

While the paper and the tobacco in a cigarette is biodegradable, the filter isn't, as it's made from a kind of plastic that can take up to 15 years to break down. To make matters worse, cigarette filters are full of toxic chemicals, not to mention being unsightly.

A Butt's Journey

Of the 24 billion cigarettes smoked in Australia every year, 7 billion spent filters are carelessly dumped on our streets, where they get washed into storm water drains, streams, rivers and waterways, leaking poisonous chemicals like cadmium, lead and zinc along the way. Cigarette butts are also the most common ocean contaminant, and as they are often mistaken for food by marine life,

discarded filters have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, sea turtles and other oceanic creatures.

Danger Zone

Flicking away a spent cigarette can incur a fine of \$200, but if it poses a public risk (such as discarding a lit butt into dry grass or a bin full of paper, running the risk of a bushfire), then the fine can be \$500 or more. As smouldering cigarettes start literally hundreds of fires around Australia, it's not hard to see why.

So always be sure to stub out your cigarette butts before putting them in the garbage. Carrying a pocket ashtray can be very useful if there are no bins around. Like with any environmental issue, if we all do our bit, we can literally change the world.

Is landfill really the best option?

So it's hardly news to say that cigarette butts are bad for the environment. But is there a better option than sending trillions of cigarette butts to landfill?

An Australian waste management company, Waster, has partnered with Terracycle, a company that specializes in recycling challenging substances, to provide a cigarette butt recycling program.

Waster provides recycling boxes for cigarette butt waste to any companies that request them. Cigar stubs, outer plastic packaging, inner foil packaging, rolling paper, and ash can also be placed in the recycling box. The collected plastics are processed into new products rather than being dumped in a big pile.

Source: "Bin Your Butt," Keep Australia Beautiful WA website

Every year worldwide, smokers burn through 5.5 trillion cigarettes. An estimated two thirds of these filters get flicked away, damaging the environment.



Vanessa Surprises Herself!

With a little help from her (furry) friends By Jacob Brodrick

Vanessa has recently found retail work with CTC (Cigarettes Tobacco Cigars) and has surprised herself with how well she is performing. Not so long ago, Vanessa wasn't confident in her own ability to perform at a job even at 15 hours a week. With the support of Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service (DES), as well as NSW Department of Justice Victim's Support Services and her network of friends, Vanessa has been able to build on her strengths in order to overcome her barriers to employment.

"I originally come from Sydney, but I moved to Newcastle six years ago. Before that, my housing arrangements had not been stable or safe."

Vanessa has faced a lot of housing instability in her life, and she does not have a family she can rely on. "I have been diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)," says Vanessa. This is an anxiety disorder that develops from a traumatic experience, such as war,

a crime, or a serious accident. Vanessa's high levels of anxiety had created a barrier to her entering employment.

Building on Strengths

Vanessa has many strengths that are naturally attractive to a prospective employer. Vanessa is a very honest, reliable and humble person who works hard to help those around her. For example, within 13 weeks of starting her role with CTC, management was so impressed with her that they are planning on finding a way to train her to be a store manager!

Vanessa is a fast learner and she's also very resilient. She's surprised herself with how good her work performance has been, such as how she's kept pace with her rostered hours, and she's found that she can pick up extra shifts as needed.

A love for animals (see picture, it shows) has led Vanessa to explore opening her own pet sitting business or animal sanctuary in the future. Vanessa has spent time studying a Certificate II in Animal Studies through TAFE.

Build Confidence

So just how did Vanessa build her confidence back? Firstly, she developed strong relationships with her friends to ensure she has a proper support network in place.

Secondly, Vanessa linked up with the NSW Department of Justice's Victim Services, and goes to counselling through them to assist with her PTSD. She's also tried out EMDR Therapy (short for Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing Therapy).

"EMDR has been very useful in helping me to deal with the distress caused by traumatic memories," Vanessa says.

Thirdly, Vanessa says the support she's received from Flourish Australia's Employment Coordinators have helped her to find work. Flourish Australia's DES (Disability Employment Service) program helped Vanessa to customise her resume and build a cover letter to apply for work.

"I find my Post Placement Supports to be very helpful in keeping me motivated in the job!"

ABOVE: Vanessa and a Furry Friend PHOTO COURTESY OF VANESSA

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.

