

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

panorama

Monthly Issue **December 2022 #87C**



Tragically Relevant

"Tell Me I'm Here"
at Belvoir Street Theatre

Alternatives to Self-Harm

Bailey's Long, Long, Long
Walk For Wellness

flourish[®]
AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives

NDIS PROVIDER
— SINCE 2013 —



Where mental wellbeing thrives

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...

panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au
Warren.Heggarty@flourishaustralia.org.au
Grant.Everett@flourishaustralia.org.au

Prefer snail mail?

Publications Officers, Quad 3, Level 3,
Suite 3.01, 102 Bennelong Parkway, Sydney
Olympic Park NSW 2127

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

Contents

COVER: Flourish Australia staff and participants at Belvoir Street Theatre
PHOTO BY GRANT J EVERETT

- 4 Alternatives to Self Harm
- 6 Bailey's Long, Long, Long Walk For Wellness
- 7 Apps for Mental Health
- 8 Tragically Relevant: "Tell Me I'm Here" at Belvoir Street Theatre
- 9 Council Briefs (Community Advisory Council)
- 9 New Ideas? YOU Can Present at Conferences
- 10 Escaping The Rat Race So I Can Create
- 12 Broken Heel Festival
- 13 World Introvert Day
- 14 Loneliness Is Unhealthy
- 15 Join Your Local Library

Contributors include...

Titania is a creative type who is dedicated to her art and the environment.

Bailey Seamer is spending 12 months walking up the entire east coast of Australia to raise awareness for depression and funds for the Black Dog Institute.

Megan Paull provides a first-hand account of how to manage self-harm, and how to support loved ones who are engaging in self-harm behaviours.

Kim Jones, A.S. and John Maraz have been indispensable, as always.

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





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

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



Alternatives to self-harm

Other ways to manage feelings of distress

By Megan Paull

Please take care and be aware that we will be discussing details of self injury in this article – Editor

What is Self Harm?

During the pandemic there have been reports of increases in the incidence of self harm, especially among young people. Here, Megan Paull, who is a student of occupational therapy and accesses Flourish Australia's Hervey Bay Queensland service, shares her own experience of self-harm and of finding alternative ways of dealing with painful emotions.

Firstly, though, let's briefly look at a few facts about self-harm in general. For this we have referred to the Mental Health First Aid book by Kitchener, Jorm and Kelly. Self-harm is often a way for people to manage feelings of distress and can be a quite separate issue from suicidal thoughts and feelings. Over time, self injury can become what Kitchener et al call 'the central strategy for coping with problems, making it very hard to use more adaptive ways of coping.' It cannot be solved 'overnight.' (see Kitchener p 128 and 130). Usually it takes one or more of the following forms:

- cutting
 - scratching
 - hitting a hard surface
 - hitting oneself
 - biting
 - burning
 - Sometimes even overdosing.
- WH

How can we help?

If you feel you need to help someone who is thinking of self harm, Just be there to talk, give them a hug (if appropriate), and be someone they can cry to. Validate the person's emotions and what they are going through.

Discourage self-harm, if possible, but if you cannot, don't make them feel worse than they already do. Also, if they have already self-harmed, ensure they get appropriate medical assistance if needed, and follow up with them. From experience, I always felt so scared that my partner didn't want to know me anymore because of the self-harm, but he would always let me know that this wasn't the case. Make sure to get back to them and let them know that your relationship (whether it's a friendship, romantic, family, support, or something else) is OK and they are not alone.

Battle Scars

A lot of my self harm was cutting and overdosing. Overall, I am quite lucky in terms of long term affects as the main one that I am aware of is excessive scarring, particularly on my arms. I haven't let it stop me from living my life, and I only ensure I cover it up when I am attending job interviews. Aside from that, I accept it is a part of who I am and am not ashamed. Don't get me wrong, if I could do it all over again, I would rather I didn't have them. I call them my "battle scars," and don't think that it is something that must be covered up if I choose not to.

With my self-harming over the years I could have done irreparable damage to tendons and ligaments, brain injury or other organ injury from overdoses, or even death. I am thankful every day that I am still here to tell my story.

My self-harm developed over time. I am not sure where I picked up the idea from as it started when I was 14, way back in 1996. After a traumatic event, it was something I did to cope and to convey my distress. The emotions were usually driven by highly stressful situations, but over time my distress tolerance would lower so the threshold to be reached would also become lower. Emotions would be extremely intense internally, and I didn't know how else to convey what was happening or what I was feeling.

Reasons to Sing

Self-harm would become my outlet for several years. My emotions would go from 0-100, so I would rapidly go from completely okay to full blown distress before I knew it. I have more recently been diagnosed with Autism and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, NOT Borderline Personality Disorder, which I was misdiagnosed with for over 20 years). A lot of the reasons driving my self-harm (not being able to explain how I was feeling, etc), suddenly made sense. The new diagnoses, have helped me to identify why I had difficulty over the years conveying the emotions that led to self harm.

"It doesn't have to be a part of you forever, and with the right support around you, it is possible to lead a self-harm free life."

-Megan Paull

I came to the point where I did not want to continue engaging in these self harming behaviours. I came to realise that while it eliminated the intense emotions, it was doing more harm than help. It's not only physical issues, but an emotional rollercoaster that can ensue – presenting to hospital again and again, the negative comments that you receive (that's a whole other article!), the feeling of failure, the impact on loved ones. The list goes on. So, for me, it was more about modifying my behaviour, and that takes time. I have actively been working at this for just over 10 years now, and I'm only eight months self-harm free. But the time between has been getting longer and longer. This is a milestone for me as it is the longest I have been SH free for about 15 years.

Now, when I start to feel like that, I evaluate the worth of doing it (it's never worth it). I will also cry and scream into a pillow, and singing is a new strategy my psychologist and I worked out.

The key, though, is to understand why you self-harm, and to find an alternative strategy that will work. Techniques that mental health providers liked to recommend time and time again, like flicking a rubber band, holding ice, or drawing red pen on the arm, never worked for me. When I was talking to my psychologist recently, I told her that the reason I self-harm is to release emotion, and that's where the idea of singing came about.

What DOES NOT help!

Telling a person that they are an attention seeker, or a waste of space. Anything derogatory doesn't help, and neither does blaming them for being unable to control their emotions, or telling them to just stop doing it. There is something very big and very real

going on for anybody who self-harms. [MHFA agrees 'trying to make the person feel guilty about the effect their self injury is having on others is NOT a good idea (p131)' - WHJ]

If you self harm

If you self-harm, what you're going through and experiencing emotionally is OK. It is real to you and very valid. But know that self-harm is not going to help in the long term, and can do much more harm than good. It is important to find strategies that help you. But if the generic strategies don't help, you're not a failure: everyone is different, and different things work for different people.

Self-harm is usually a way of managing your emotions, and if you have been engaging in it for an extended period, it may not be easy to just stop. If you self-harm, don't berate yourself, as you are doing the best you can in the moment. See it as a speed bump, and if it occurs again, try not to see it as a deep dark pit you have fallen into. It doesn't have to be a part of you forever, and with the right support around you, it is possible to lead a self-harm free (or relatively self-harm free) life.

As someone who engaged in this behaviour on an almost daily basis, I know that it doesn't have to be forever. Never lose hope!

Need Help with self harm? Talk to your support person if you have one or call

Lifeline: 13 11 14

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/self-harm/>

ABOVE LEFT: Megan Paull (left) with the Governor Of NSW Margaret Beazley AC, KC, at the launch of the Flourish Foundation in 2022
PHOTO FLOURISH FOUNDATION



Bailey's Long, Long, Long

Walk for Wellness



By Bailey Seamer
(as told to
Grant J Everett)

On May 16th 2022, Bailey Seamer began to trek along the entire east coast of Australia, a journey of over 5500km. This will take an estimated 12 months to complete. Starting from the southernmost point at Wilsons Promontory, she will be traversing across three states before finishing at the most northern tip of Cape York Peninsula in Queensland.

Here's why she's doing it...

BAILEY: I'm doing this large-scale trek to fundraise for the Black Dog Institute's mental health research, and to help minimise the suicide rates in Australia. My current target is to reach \$100,000 by the completion of my long walk, which I will contribute to the crucial research and services provided by the Black Dog Institute.

My ambition to help those suffering from the growing mental health epidemic faced by 1 in 5 Australians annually stems from my own personal journey: I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder when I was 14, and re-diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 19. This has been the most challenging battle I have ever fought, and over the past 8 years, more often than not I believed it was one that I couldn't win.

"My goal is to educate people about mental health, and to combat the false stereotypes that surround having a lived experience."

Thanks to love and support, I have developed tools for managing my mental health issue, with hiking and connecting with nature being my greatest solace on my path to recovery. As a result, this long hike has been a dream of mine for years, and a goal that has kept me going on my darkest days. As I have a strong desire to provide all that I can for others, I intend to explore what mental health support is accessible to people along the east coast of Australia, and to advocate for people to ask for what they need in order to manage their mental health issues.

My goal is to educate people about mental health, and to combat the false stereotypes that surround having a lived experience. I want to provide hope for those who are struggling, to demonstrate that there is a life worth living, and to share the importance of pursuing your passions despite your diagnosis. Working together, one step at a time, we can create a culture for future generations to inherit better societal acceptance and treatments.

Dropping in at Ulladulla

"Bailey met with people who access our service who attend our Lunch Group, just for a bit of an inspirational, informal talk," said Sandy Robertson, Team Coordinator at Flourish Australia's Ulladulla service. "Bailey is absolutely inspiring to speak to, and I would recommend getting in contact with her, and finding out why she's attempting this amazing feat."

Want to see how Bailey's long walk is going? Keep up to date on social media!

Facebook: "Bailey Seamer Wandering Minds Walk"

Website: www.wandering-minds.org

Instagram: [wandering_minds_walk](https://www.instagram.com/wandering_minds_walk)

ABOVE: Bailey out the front of Flourish Australia's Ulladulla service after her visit
PHOTO BY BAILEY SEAMER

Apps for mental health

How do I choose one that suits me?

By Warren Heggarty



According to some estimates, there are between 10,000 to 20,000 Digital Tools and 'Apps' (computer applications) available which claim to help you with your mental health. We have quantity, but what about quality? Where can you get information about and reviews of these apps so that you know what you are getting? We decided to have a look at what is available.

One source of information is The Black Dog Institute which has detailed information about many Apps on its Resources page. These include:

myCompass: We have already reviewed myCompass on page 19 of the August 2020 e-issue (September 2020 print issue) of Panorama, which you can see online on Flourish Australia's website. It is suitable for people who are mildly or moderately unwell.

iBobbly: iBobbly is a social and emotional wellbeing App for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It can assist you if you have been feeling sad or down or having thoughts of hurting yourself, or if you just want to improve how you are feeling. iBobbly has been designed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples using

metaphors, images, videos and stories drawn by Aboriginal artists and performers. By the way: Flourish Australia's Manager of Back on Track Health Jade Ryall has checked out the Visual Dreaming App and finds it highly commendable.

HeadGear: This is a free App that guides you through a 30 day mental fitness challenge, building resilience and wellbeing while helping to stave off depression and anxiety.

ReachOut is another organisation that has reviews of Tools and Apps for Mental Health. Here you can find information on Apps that assist you with surviving a relationship breakup (Breakup Shakeup), staying sober (I Am Sober) and daily meditation (Headspace). The good thing here is that each App carries two ratings, one from users and one from professionals. The two ratings don't always agree - and quite a few are not 5-star ratings!

BeyondNow Safety Plan App This is the one we encourage staff to use with people who access our services to manage suicidal thoughts and feelings but Fay Jackson, Flourish Australia's General Manager, Inclusion says that she finds it helpful in preventing these thoughts and feelings. 'If I refer to it at an early stage of struggling it can prevent me having suicidal contemplations. Lots of people I know are using it now.'

Wellness

According to the Media Shark site, a number of Apps are aimed at the general population and concentrate on generating 'calmness' and 'mindfulness' without necessarily addressing distressing emotions. These include "Smiling Mind" with its daily meditation exercises, and Calm, which aims to build health and happiness, and is 'for anyone who needs to get better sleep and feel a little spiritual at the time.'

A Warning

An article by Caroline Zielinski published in the Sydney Morning Herald 'Which Wellness Apps Are Worth It?' is a little out of date (2019), but it reveals some of the pitfalls of mental wellness Apps. Caroline reports that researchers have found that these days 'technology has evolved to the point where anyone can release their own App, without undertaking rigorous research first. She quotes Dr Mark Larsen of Black Dog as saying, 'We also know some of these non-evidence based Apps may have the potential to do harm.'

This is all just scratching the surface of the massive mental health App industry, but the important point is to check reviews from reputable sources, ask people you trust, discuss with your support workers.



Tragically Relevant:

“Tell Me I’m Here” at Belvoir Street Theatre

By Grant J Everett

Anne Deveson’s 1991 memoir, *Tell Me I’m Here*, is a harrowing account of trying to find help for her increasingly erratic son, Jonathan, only to be fobbed off at every turn. Anne ran herself ragged trying to hold her family and career together as Jonathon slipped deeper into psychosis, but he was constantly failed by the system until it was too late.

Anne was an international journalist, writer, broadcaster and documentary filmmaker who campaigned for human rights issues, but *Tell Me I’m Here* is possibly her most famous work.

Live Action

Tell Me I’m Here has been reborn as a stage play at the Belvoir Theatre Company over at Surry Hills. The play begins with Jonathan’s birth, explores his descent into psychosis in the early 1980s, and

ends with his unfortunate death at just 24. Although it contains heavy themes, this adaptation has been endorsed by Sane Australia, the national mental health advocacy and support organisation that Anne co-founded in the 1980s as Schizophrenia Fellowship. While they provide support for people with complex mental health issues and their families, Sane Australia also monitors the media’s portrayal of mental health issues.

A group of people who access Flourish Australia services were invited to see the play for free as a part of Belvoir’s Unwaged Performance program, which provides a gratis matinee performance to unwaged members of the community once per season. These tickets can be claimed by anyone with an eligible Pensioner Card, Health Care Card or Veterans’ Affairs Card, so get in touch with Belvoir Street Theatre to find out more!

Powerful and Affecting

The role of Anne, a mother who will stop at nothing to find help for her firstborn son, is absolutely nailed by actress Nadine Garner, and Tom Conroy’s complex portrayal of Jonathan is beautifully three-dimensional and believable. Deborah Galanos, Raj Labade, Sean O’Sjea and Zvedeniuk played dozens of distinct characters between them. The stage started off as a bright white block, but John gradually covered it in increasingly-disturbing crayon drawings as a visual representation of his descent. This allowed the focus to remain on the characters and the story.

Still Relevant

While there are touches of comedy, *Tell Me I’m Here* gets darker and more hopeless by the scene. Although the play is set in the early 1980s, people with mental health issues are still being failed in the same way today, only getting

help once they've already hit rock bottom, or not at all. This may cut too close to the bone for many people, but there a lot of families out there going through these exact same ordeals, showing that they certainly aren't alone.

The themes of this play are tragically still just as relevant as ever, and if we don't see them as a call to action, then who will?

Feedback

Most of the people from Flourish Australia who attended the play either access the Connect and Thrive Program or the Continuity of Support (CoS) Program at Flourish Australia offices at Kogarah, Caringbah, Marrickville, Surry Hills or Maroubra. Overall, everyone was keen for more outings, and a lot of them would like to see another play.

Here's what they had to say...

"I thought the water on the wall was a pretty cool effect, and a good set piece for the play," said Jane. "While I often go out by myself, I don't often get an opportunity to do something fun with a group as much as I'd like. I'd be up for more trips, maybe to the beach or walking at the Botanical Gardens."

Karen said: "I don't often get an opportunity to go out and do something fun with a group. It would be nice to go to the cinema with Flourish Australia next time."

Kellie had a GREAT time at the play: "It was fantastic! I really liked it. It was my first time out in a long time. It was great to meet people, and I felt the way the play dealt with mental health was the truth."

ABOVE: A group of Flourish Australia staff and people who access the Connect and Thrive and Continuity of Support Programs outside the Belvoir Street theatre following a performance of "Tell Me I'm Here." FROM LEFT: Jade, Brian, Caitlin, Matthew, Katherine, Tim, Lucia, Gina, Isabelle and Billi
PHOTO BY GRANT J EVERETT

BELVOIR STREET THEATRE

25 Belvoir St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
(02) 9699 3444

Community Advisory Council Briefs

28 September 2022

A summary of the latest monthly meeting

Discussions included:

- Successfully maintaining supports during staff training
- Council Chair and the Annual General Meeting
- Promotion of the Council throughout services
- Mental Health Month Activities

Indigenous Recruitment

Steven Aleckson of Inverell facilitated a discussion about the recruitment of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and First Nations People within Flourish Australia. Council recognised how important it can be for people to have this cultural connection with support workers from a similar cultural and spiritual background. Many services are in localities with a high density of Indigenous communities, especially in rural areas.

Flourish Australia actively seeks recruitment for designated positions within these cultural communities. It can be difficult to find people from these communities with the necessary qualifications, so Flourish Australia provides traineeships in the New England area to support Aboriginal people to gain qualifications in mental health. Flourish Australia will continue to investigate ways in which we can improve our supports within Aboriginal communities. KJ/WH

Check out the story on Yarnup in November Panorama. This is an internal group for first nations support workers to connect with each other regularly.



NEW IDEAS YOU can present at conferences

It is the TheMHS Conference season once again! One of the ways people spread important new ideas is through making presentations at conferences. People who attend a good conference often report feeling 'energised' by the new ideas.

We know that many of our readers can draw upon their own recovery experience to make a presentation and make a difference in the wider world.

In recent years, there has been increased conference involvement by people who live with mental health issues. Flourish Australia has long encouraged this participation. It is important that what we present at a conference really does address needs in the community and that it does so in a constructive way. People out there might be looking for your idea!

Getting to a conference, however, is not just a matter of will. You have to develop your idea in a way that makes a difference.

We intend this column to be a regular source of tips for people to follow so that their ideas will become presentations that will get heard and get things done.

Next month we will look at ways in which you can develop your basic idea for a conference presentation. WH

RIGHT: Titania, taking a dip with a friendly dolphin buddy. OPPOSITE: Titania's sculpture **Eco Warrior**
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY TITANIA

ESCAPING The Rat Race So I Can Create

By Titania (as told to Grant J Everett)



Bitten By The Writing Bug

I write and create art to awaken and inspire people to create a more positive world.

I began with a memoir about my mental health challenges, and this blossomed into a number of self-help books. My aim is to show people how awesome they are, how they can change their world and the environment, and how to develop good mental and physical health. I believe I came to Earth to make a difference, and to share that a lived experience can be a blessing rather than a curse.

When I am writing, the 'voices' bother me much less. Recently, I explored in writing why my mind feels it needs to hear voices, and I came to the conclusion that they provide a feeling of familiarity, and have actually protected me during tougher times. After hearing them since the age of eight, though, I've experienced them for more than long enough. By the time I'd finished exploring, I had typed up eight pages.

I always keep November free for the NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) Challenge, where you write 50,000 words before December. In 2012 I worked like the clappers, writing almost 150,000 words in my epic fantasy quartet. I have ideas for many more novels, mostly fantasy, science-fiction, romance and young adult, as well as screenplays, children's picture books, and poetry. I have a book published under pen name of Elysia, and I must get it on Amazon!

My ultimate dream is to start up an independent publishing company.

Keeping And Staying Well

In 1977, when the world was awash with Star Wars fever for the first time, I was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder at the age of five, and experienced hyperactivity until 14. I was then diagnosed with schizophrenia at 28, then Asperger's at 37.

For a lot of my past I felt guilty just for breathing, but I've come to the realisation I am a strong, vivacious woman who is more than

good enough, and who has many amazing gifts. We all deserve to shine, and I want to support others to live brightly, to pass on our insights, inspiration and wisdom. I shared this realisation with my psychiatrist, and he told me it needs to be published. I was chuffed!

I believe in alternative health approaches and spirituality. I meditate daily and take Australian Bush Flower essences Emergency Essence when I am stressed. I also have regular time-outs, and I practice positive self-talk and self-care. I also find brushing my hair is very therapeutic.

NLP

I was bullied relentlessly at school and in my 20s for being different, and I developed many harmful beliefs concerning my self-worth and body image. However, since starting to use NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) around two decades ago, the results have been phenomenal. I've worked hard on getting rid of head trash such as "I'm not good enough, and I never will

be, I don't deserve good things in my life," and other hurtful nonsense. I no longer cry myself to sleep, and my thoughts of suicide have very much lessened. I now consider myself very healthy.

My Interests

I love Greek, Arthurian, Norse and Egyptian mythology. I regularly listen to uplifting music, podcasts, and webinars, and I also attend seminars and workshops in person. My loves include reading, beach walks, forest bathing, ocean swimming, Qi-Gong, and Shakti Dance. I'm just a big kid who collects toys - I still have my She-Ra and Sailor Moon collections from the 80s and 90s - and I'm also a tomboy who loves Transformers!

I'd rather watch a fantasy series than bother with the scary news or backbiting, bickering 'reality' shows. I'm more interested in changing the world than hearing what the Kardashians are doing! I've never been one for shallow gossip: give me a meaningful conversation anyday.

During the pandemic I donated a large number of self-help books to the Lifeline Book Fair and to the many street swapping libraries you find around Sydney. With my neighbour's help, we've just erected our own street swapping library in Brookvale.

Support

The NDIS is a real gift. I access many essential services, such as being driven to my appointments and receiving help with my shopping. The shops can seem particularly stressful when people use their trolleys like a demolition derby...I also have a cleaner, and I've taken part in many self-development programs that have helped me to learn and grow.

I regularly call my friends and family, I visit my neighbours, and I talk to my spirit guides. I also enjoy visiting Pioneer Clubhouse, my local mental health wellness centre, where I am a proud member and volunteer. It's a home away from home, and I can take part in social outings, cooking exotic recipes, and weaving. As they say: Diversity is the spice of life.

The Grind

Over my career, I've only ever loved two jobs; the first was packaging New Age products like incense, suncatchers and smudge sticks, and my former boss is still a good friend. As an avid reader, I also greatly enjoyed working at my local library in 2016 and 2017. Pioneer Clubhouse helped me land that position, and I'm forever grateful for the experience.

I decided to leave behind the cold, corporate world in order to write and create art. The rat race is no place for a free spirit.

My Creations

My sculpture 'Humanity Awakening' is about the positive things we can do in lockdown to prevent depression, such as creating art, cooking healthy meals, reading, meditating, and drinking healthy tea and kombucha. We can dance, sing, and do Qi-Gong and Yoga in our own homes. 'Humanity Awakening' has been in two exhibitions.

Eco Warrior showcases the staggering amount of single-use plastic we go through every day, and it's bursting with junk I found on the footpath, in parks, and on the beach. I nearly fell over when I found an entire lounge suite in a creek! After adding a dumped television to the sculpture, I put up a caption saying "I wonder what's on TV?" This piece won two highly commended awards in the Mental Health Artworks Exhibition at Gosford in 2019, and the other award was for Mental Health Creativity. The message is that we can create a more beautiful environment if we do our bit.

"Ask not what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go and do that, for what the world needs most is people who have come alive," ~ Howard Thurman.

I also found this wonderful proverb from George Bernard Shaw: "Those who say it cannot be done, shouldn't interrupt those doing it."

Boom!





Celebrating the Broken Heel Festival

With thanks to headspace Broken Hill

The Broken Heel festival is living proof diversity in the outback is alive and well! Held annually, Broken Hill frocks up and parties with desert, disco and plenty of divas! But behind all the glitz and glamour is a very serious intention: raising the visibility of LGBTQI+ artists; celebrating diversity and providing a point of connection for the local LGBTQI+ community, First Nations people and regional groups.

Flourish Australia was represented through headspace Broken Hill. A big thank you to Broken Hill staff Susanne Jones, Jodie Guidolin, and Rynnette Gentle, the headspace Broken Hill Youth Reference Group and all the other headspace staff and supporters who assisted to make this a very special experience for young people accessing headspace services in Broken Hill.



ABOVE & LEFT: People who access the Broken Hill service of headspace showing their support for the local LGBTIQ community. **TOP RIGHT:** A reveller with some serious elevation. **PHOTOS COURTESY OF HEADSPACE BROKEN HILL**

World Introvert Day

By Grant J Everett

World Introvert Day is a great opportunity to recharge our social batteries by getting some well-needed peace and quiet. This event always falls on January 2nd so we can spend a day recovering from the draining holiday marathon between Christmas and New Year's.

Activities (or lack thereof)

The funny things about World Introvert Day is that it isn't "celebrated" by throwing parties, but by avoiding them! It's the perfect opportunity for introverts to have the space that they need to recharge those depleted social batteries.

You can...

Stay at home: It's the perfect time to cancel any social plans you may have, and just curl up in bed with your favorite movie. For best results, stay in your pajamas all day, and keep the blinds closed. There's nothing out there but people.

Go On A Walk: Pick a quiet road and ride shanks' pony (i.e. walk!) for half an hour or longer. Take your pet along, and enjoy the serenity. It's the perfect opportunity for some self-reflection.

Create Something: Introverts are at their most productive when they are alone. So create! Write something,

put paint to canvas, work at building your website, and generally use your talents to bring happiness to the world.

Origins

World Introvert Day was created by German psychologist Felicitas Heyne, author of *Happily Introverted Ever After*, and first celebrated in 2012 after Heyne blogged "Here's Why We Need a World Introvert Day." Heyne has also highlighted the discrimination introverts can often face because of their reclusiveness.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung first defined introversion (and extroversion) in his 1921 book, "Psychological Types," theorising that every human being falls into one of these two categories. Psychologists have since developed expansive theories about these binary personality types.

5 Things You Should Know About Introverts

1. Introverts tend to prefer limited social engagements, and are most happy in their own company. However, introverts still enjoy human company from time to time.
2. Introverts can be misunderstood as arrogant, disinterested, timid, or aloof, but their silence or awkwardness isn't rudeness and doesn't mean they are trying to offend.

3. Introverts can still be extroverted sometimes. Once an introvert gets comfortable with you, you might suddenly be getting to know an entirely different person!

4. Introverts aren't necessarily shy. In fact, some of the world's most famous public speakers are introverts, including former U.S. President Barack Obama.

5. Introverts are often very interested in people, and they can be the most avid people-watchers.

Appreciating Introverts

January 2nd is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of introverts. Some of the smartest people of all time, from Charles Darwin to Albert Einstein, have been introverts, and this is a time to laud their contributions to the world. It's also a good opportunity to recognise that introversion does not limit a person's intelligence or talent.

Whether you're an introvert or an extrovert, though, we all need some calm in our lives. World Introvert Day is the perfect opportunity for quiet reflection and to clear your head in a world full of noise and distraction, even if you're an extrovert.

Source:

<https://nationaltoday.com/world-introvert-day/>

Loneliness is Unhealthy

On par with smoking and obesity!

By Warren Heggarty



Loneliness can affect your mental and physical health. This is shown repeatedly by scientific studies. Loneliness has long been a growing problem; but the isolation experienced by people during the pandemic has made a bad situation worse. (Athey, 2022) What can we do to fight the effects of loneliness?

The most recent study, working out of Hong Kong, China, used a statistical tool called an 'aging clock' to determine how much loneliness and sadness accelerate your aging compared to other factors like sex, marital status, and smoking. (Galkin, et al., 2022)

'The detrimental impact on psychological well-being is of the same magnitude as serious diseases and smoking,' the study's authors conclude. This result echoes a comment by Dr Douglas Nemecek who said in 2018 'Loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, making it even more dangerous than obesity.' (Athey, 2022)

In 2021, at the height of COVID-19 lockdowns, Medibank's Chief Medical Officer Dr Linda Swan told the Consumer Health Forum that loneliness had been an issue for many Australians for a long time,

but "of all the restrictions placed upon us because of COVID-19, social isolation has been one of the hardest to bear for many Australians". (Consumers Health Forum of Australia, 2021)

A 2021 Consumer Health Forum report said, "Both loneliness and social isolation have been found to predict premature mortality, depression, cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline, and to be associated with higher engagement in unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and physical inactivity."

Loneliness is not just being alone. For most of us, having time alone to ourselves is healthy and necessary. Some people need more time alone than others. Loneliness, however, involves a sense of hopelessness that we are not getting even the minimum amount of personal contact that we need.

It is obvious that no medication will cure loneliness. This is a problem that requires practical solutions. One of the many things that Flourish Australia does is to work with the people who access our services to support better social and community connections. People who access our services report that these opportunities to connect with other people are key factors in their recovery.

Flourish Australia also sees physical health as crucial. We recognise that people with complex and enduring mental health conditions are vulnerable to developing certain physical illnesses sometimes called 'metabolic syndrome.' Things like diabetes, obesity and diseases of the heart and circulation.

Addressing factors like loneliness and 'metabolic syndrome' will increase the quantity of life through improving its quality.

WORKS CITED

Athey, A. (2022, September 29). Loneliness might be worse for you than smoking. *The Spectator*.

Consumers Health Forum of Australia. (2021, 2 22). Time for national action on loneliness, the unnoticed epidemic. Retrieved from Consumer Health Forum of Australia:

Galkin, F., Kochetov, K., Koldasbayeva, D., Faria, M., Fung, H. H., Chen, A. X., & Zhavoronkov, A. (2022, September 27). Psychological factors substantially contribute to biological aging: evidence from the aging rate in Chinese older adults. *Aging Vol 14*, pp. 1-17.

ABOVE: Loneliness is not just a problem that increases with aging, it actually CAUSES ageing! PHOTO BY ADOBESTOCK

Join Your Local Library

Step-by-Step

By Warren Heggarty

I registered online with my local library and was so impressed with what they had on offer that I went and joined it in person that same afternoon!

One of the things I discovered on offer at my local Library were free technology classes called "Tech Savvy Seniors." Just as a sample, here is what they were running in the first two weeks after I joined: 'Introduction to Tablets- iPads,' 'Introduction to Smartphones,' 'Introduction to NSW Transport Apps,' and 'Introduction To Online Shopping And Managing Your Digital Assets.'

These courses are EXACTLY the sorts of thing that we know many Panorama readers need, and what is more, they are FREE. Many local Libraries run these courses, if not this month, then next month. If you at least register on line with your local library, you will hear about them like I did!

What do I need?

Nothing: You can VISIT and use all public libraries for free, but they will not let you borrow books and might not let you use the tech centre, printers or photocopiers unless you join.

What if I want to borrow books and use the tech centre?

You need to:

1. Live in the same Local Government Area (LGA) as the Library OR be able to pay a membership fee (usually \$20 or \$50).
2. Have Proof of Residence, such as a Drivers Licence or a letter with your address on it. Why do I need this? Most Libraries are run by Local Councils. That means the cost is met by Rate Payers. That means either you or (if you rent or pay board) your landlord.

Reciprocal Membership

Some smaller Local Governments have agreements with neighbouring areas which enable reciprocal borrowing rights WITHOUT fees being charged. An example is Shorelink Libraries which includes Libraries in Lane Cove, North Sydney and Mosman LGAs of NSW.

What about Technology?

To use the tech centre, printers or photocopiers, there may be additional requirements. Check at your local Library. Most of them will have Library cards that you can charge with money to pay for copying, etc.

What about local history?

Since the rise of the Internet and the ability to read online, the role of the Library has shrunk somewhat. Older people will tell you that there are fewer books available for loan than even forty years ago. Local history is one of the areas where Libraries have not had quite so much competition, and so their collections are often jealously guarded! You will need to get clearance from the Librarians before getting your hands on the local collection.

Other Languages and Specialisations

Some local libraries specialise in particular collections. For example, Stanton Library at North Sydney specialises in architecture books, Chatswood Library in Willoughby Local Government Area has a lot of books in the Armenian language, as well as a collection of Classical Music scores. If your local Library does not have what you are looking for, it might be possible to organise a loan from another Library that does!



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	Hornsby
Broken Hill	Liverpool
Caringbah	Maitland
Cessnock	Penrith
Harris Park	Seven Hills

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

