

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

panorama

Quarterly Issue #69 September 2018

Recovery stories: Choices for success
Caring for people with a serious disability
Keeping people safe without using force
with diabetes
Debutantes Ball!
Slash your energy bills

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AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives



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 64 of our services in NSW and Southern Queensland.

Chair: [Prof Elizabeth More AM](#)
CEO: [Mark Orr](#)

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Panorama

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

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Joanne Q's Choices for success



Joanne tells about the lifestyle choices she's been making and how simple decisions have grown into new successes

By Joanne Q

(Panorama readers met Joanne Q in issue #48 in 2013. In that issue we heard about her decision to get back control over her life and finances from the Public Guardian. Many people with mental health issues take medications which are known to lead to weight gain. Joanne has a message of hope).

A year or so ago I weighed myself at 112Kg and I was unhappy about that. Something 'clicked' and I said 'come on, DO something!' So I became determined to bring my weight down to something more healthy. Was I successful?

Building fitness

Two months ago, I had a full blood count done which showed my cholesterol and sugar levels were perfect for the first time in 15 years! ALL of my results were normal. How did I do it?

I built my fitness up slowly over ten

months or so. I started by going round the block for 15 minutes. Then I increased it to half an hour. Then I increased my walks to 40 minutes to the beach and back. I regularly walk from Coogee to Randwick four or five times a week.

At the same time I worked on my diet. I stopped eating things like burgers and chips altogether for a while. I found this really hard, but I had encouragement. Before, I would have had three Pepsis a day, but I replaced that with water.

Support

I feel like I have a lot of support from family and friends. Dimitri, my partner has given me a lot of support along the way. For nine months, through my local hospital, I worked with a Dietitian and an Exercise Physiologist for advice.

Foods like burgers, chips, pizza and fizzy drinks are known as 'discretionary' foods. While bringing my weight down

Left: Joanne (seated) with Buckingham House manager Donna Shrubsole (standing) checking out newly delivered gymnasium equipment at Buck House.

I cut them out completely but now that I am maintaining my weight at 80Kg I am able to have these sort of things occasionally. In fact, yesterday I had an Oporto burger! And I had Chinese for dinner.

I replaced 'discretionary' foods with a lot of salads, a lot of Subway sandwiches, Boost juice and diet chocolate instead of real chocolate. If I had any discretionary foods at this time, I must admit, I would feel guilty.

I already knew from experience that some things are definitely hard to give up. I gave up smoking over ten years ago. But I thought that getting to 80kg was achievable and that I could maintain it if I kept up my exercise and limited my discretionary foods.

Today, I've got a lot more energy. I'm ready to get myself back into work again, first by doing some voluntary work, then doing courses and studying.

Future goals

In the future, I would like to lose another 10 Kg to bring my weight down to 70Kg but I'm not sure about that yet. I am pretty happy with maintaining a weight of 80Kg. To do that I need to keep control of discretionary food and limit it to once or twice a week, as well as keeping active.

A lot of people with mental health issues find that the medications that help them also lead them to gain weight. It is easy to lose hope, but if you are determined to keep your weight at a healthy level I would like to say that I was able to do it, and maybe you can do it too! Since I have been able to improve my physical health, my medication dosage has actually been lowered!

If you want to achieve your goals, I'd say 'Don't give up on yourself.' Think of yourself as a valued person. Value who you are and what you want to be.

Joanne spoke to Warren Heggarty. Thanks to Krissy Gram and Donna Shrubsole for their assistance with this story

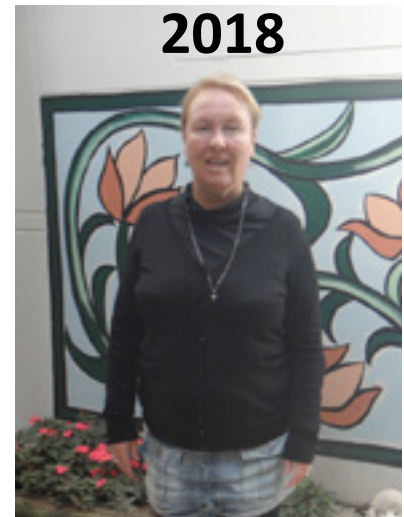
My Continuing Recovery Story

Joanne Q



2012

With more exercise and less sugary food and drink, I very gradually went from 112Kg to 80Kg over 10 months. My cholesterol and sugar levels were perfect for the first time in 15 years. I feel better and my medication dosage has been lowered!



2018

My strengths

Taking responsibility for my recovery

'Before 2012, I was smoking and drinking and eating takeaway, living in a boarding house... I learned the very, very important lesson to live within my means!

Determination

Seeing I was 112Kg, something 'clicked' and I was determined to do something about my weight!

Working

Previously I overcame the feeling that I was unable to work, I applied for jobs and gained work experience and office skills!

Persistence

Regaining control from the Protective Commissioner was a long and difficult process that took 16 months but it was worth the effort!

My goals

Maintain a healthy weight

- Keep my weight around 80kg by limiting discretionary foods
- Continue to exercise
- Maintain good blood sugar and cholesterol levels
- Consider reducing weight to 70kg when and if practical

Further education

Continue to acquire skills and do courses that will assist with employment

Find work

Continue to pursue opportunities for paid and voluntary work



2013

2018

My challenges

- Mental health issues
- The medication I use is known to encourage weight gain

My supports

- Dimitri my partner
- Dietician and Exercise physiologist at my local hospital
- Family and friends



Above: Leanne, Rascal and Leanne's Mum Jenny

Leanne: Sole Survivor

Interviewer: Grant J Everett
Graphic design: Virginia Eastman

LEANNE developed a dangerous disease at a young age, one so rare and deadly that only a handful of other Australian children had it. Leanne is the only member of that small group to survive. She shared her story.

PANORAMA: If somebody asked you to describe yourself, what would you say?

LEANNE: I can be shy at first, but once you get to know me, I can be opinionated (laughs). I love music, arts and crafts. But my main hobby is gardening. I always do gardening with my headphones in. I've spent a lot of time on my own since being diagnosed with my illness, linear scleroderma, so I do a lot of reading. But

I've also got my dog Rascal to keep me company. She's an adorable long-legged staffy, and I rescued her when she was 6 months old. She's by my side all the time. I was thinking of taking her to the hospital for pet therapy because she's really good with people. I'll have to take her through tests to make sure she won't bite anyone, then I can bring her to Cumberland as a companion dog so everyone can pat her.

P: So are you a part of any groups in the community? A church, a book club, a writer's group, the Hell's Angels?

LEANNE: (laughs) Yes, I'm a part of Cumberland fellowship church group on Wednesdays, and I also attend a service there on Sunday morning.

PANORAMA: Pets are very healing, especially dogs. There's just something about them. So Rascal is an indoor dog?

LEANNE: Yup! We even sleep in the same bed (laughs).

PANORAMA: Have you had people in your life who had a profound impact on you?

LEANNE: Lots! Mum would be the main one. I find inspiration in how strong she is, and also my grandfather on my Dad's side. He took me under his wing as a child and taught me everything he knew.

PANORAMA: You identify as a person with physical disability. Could you tell me about that?

LEANNE: I have linear scleroderma, an autoimmune disease. I've had that since I was six, but I wasn't diagnosed until eight. It's a sister disease to Lupus, and there's not much known about either of them. People with scleroderma struggle to produce their own body heat, so we get very cold in Winter. That's why the sunflower is the logo of scleroderma. I also have Raynaud's phenomenon, so extremities like my feet and hands are affected by the cold. Sometimes I'll wake up in the middle of the night freezing until I get into a hot shower. Sometimes I'll be so cold that I can't even get the shower on, and I'll have to call mum in the middle of the night. This will be better once I move into a wheelchair-accessible place. I've put down for Westmead so I can be close to the hospital, because I know that I won't be able to drive forever. As I am transitioning into a wheelchair, I want to be within scooter distance to the hospital.

Normally, scleroderma causes your hands to become clawed, like with bad arthritis. There are lots of pictures on the Internet called "clawing of the hands". My doctors can't believe that my hands aren't clawed. I believe that being on crutches since eight stopped it travelling down my arms.

PANORAMA: You mentioned that your condition can often be deadly. What kind of odds have you beaten by surviving?

LEANNE: Linear scleroderma is a rare condition as it is, but to have it as a child is even rarer. It's more of a women's disorder, and is extremely unusual for men. There were six of us with childhood scleroderma in the whole of Australia, and we used to have a meeting once every two years down at the old Camperdown hospital.

LEANNE'S MUM JENNY: It affects everyone in a different way. It doesn't have a pattern. It could affect any organ in the body, any limb.

PANORAMA: Does that mean it can be hard to diagnose? Because it's not

"Linear scleroderma is a rare condition as it is, but to have it as a child is even rarer."

Recovery Story

"People with scleroderma struggle to produce their own body heat, so we get very cold in winter. That's why the sunflower is the logo of scleroderma."

standard?

JENNY: That's why it took two years.

LEANNE: They had to send an interview tape over to America. When the result came back as scleroderma, that was the first time we'd heard of it. But that time I'd already fought it for two or three years, and it had already ravaged my left leg with ulceration, which is why I needed to have it removed. It's starting on my left hand, and if you look at these scars, they look like burns. It ends up really waxy.

Mine only affects the left side of my body, and it's in my brain, not my genetics. This means it won't be passed down to any children I have. My sister has had partners ask whether there was a risk of her having a child with scleroderma. You know, is it hereditary? She gets quite upset about that. But I told her that it was his right to know whether we have flaws in our genes.

PANORAMA: Do you feel your condition has prevented you from doing what you want to do in life?

LEANNE: Not really. I come from a big family, so I always had a lot of understanding from my cousins and my sister. I'd get discouraged because when I'd play as a kid I'd run out of breath, but mum would reassure me that I can stay

on the sidelines and still be involved. Like, you can be a cheerleader, or the umpire. She even said I could do wheelchair sports. So no, it hasn't.

One of your interview questions asked whether the physical disability or the mental disability is harder to manage. I had to think about that one! When I'm



off my medication and I'm elevated and I'm out of it, I feel great, but apparently I can be quite nasty. I felt like I was Superman and could take on the world. That's why I originally connected up with Cumberland 18 months ago. My family was worried about my behaviour after my father passed away. I've since been

diagnosed with schizophrenia.

It's harder with a mental disability, because you've got to have the right headspace to get anything done. I grew up with a physical disability, and kids are just so resilient. They really are. I was more worried about the effect it was having on my family, rather than myself.

PANORAMA: Have you encountered any difficulties from people having a misunderstanding about your condition?

LEANNE: Yeah, you get that. Some people think, wrongly, that it's contagious. I remember one taxi driver, he was a bit freaked out. I could tell. So I leaned over and I touched his arm, and said "I'm not contagious." (laughs) And he started laughing. He told me I remind him of Steady Eddy.

PANORAMA: He's a champ. I love Steady Eddy.

LEANNE: There's also a misconception that because I'm missing a leg I'm also missing part of my brain. So people tend to talk slowly to me sometimes, like, "Are you okay?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm fine!"

*Centre: At her sister's wedding.
Below: Rascal the dog*



PANORAMA: So is Rascal is an indoor dog?
LEANNE 'Yup! We even sleep in the same bed'.



Recovery Story

"... and I'm the go-to for babysitting. I love it when they call up and ask, "Can you babysit the kids?" And I'm always like, "Hell yes! Thanks for asking!"

PANORAMA: What helps you soldier on?

LEANNE: Mum comes around every second day. My sister takes me out once a month for dinner. And my doctors help, and so does the Cumberland chapel group. And Rascal! Rascal gets me exercising. As you know, with the medication you tend to put the weight on, and you don't feel like doing too much...other than what you HAVE to do. I'm getting out more and more, which is great.

PANORAMA: I think we're going to need a photo of Rascal...what's your housing situation?

LEANNE: I live in a one-bedroom department of housing place at Merrylands. I originally moved out with a boyfriend, but that didn't work out. I don't mind it, because I like my own company.

PANORAMA: Are you planning on changing your housing situation?

LEANNE: I'm looking to change, but only because I have steps at my house and I'm going to start using a wheelchair. I'm transitioning slowly, but I will need a wheelchair accessible house. It can take up to two years, but that's fine. We planned and allowed for two years in the timeframe.

PANORAMA: Would you consider yourself creative?

LEANNE: I would, actually. I like arranging flowers. I started a little business on the side doing floral arrangements.

PANORAMA: Is there something in life you'd like to achieve? Some sort of goal?

JENNY: Yeah. Win Lotto!

LEANNE: I don't play Lotto! I think it's a scam. But mum's always hoping that she's going to win, God love her...

I have at times thought about having children. I love kids, but I never saw myself as a mum. A couple of friends from high school have children now, and I'm the go-to for baby sitting. I love it when they call up and ask, "Can you babysit the kids?" And I'm always like, "Hell yes!

Thanks for asking!" I have six Godchildren, and one weekend I had all of them at my house. Everything went fine, so I'm sure I could handle it. But before I make my decision I want to volunteer at the local day care centre for a while.

PANORAMA: You have a licence and drive without any assistance. What did this involve?

LEANNE: I waited until 24 before I started driving because I didn't trust my motor skills. So my sister or parents would drive me around. My ex started taking me for lessons and got me through it. I filled out the logbook and did six private lessons until they were happy with me. I haven't looked back.

PANORAMA: I'd imagine it gives you a degree of freedom you don't have otherwise.

LEANNE: It really does. Mum only lives a suburb away, so it's always good to just pop in and be able to get home without having to be dropped off. I can go to the shops, and take Rascal to the dog park. Rascal loves that. She has a little seatbelt



and everything. I think I take better care of her than I take of myself (laughs).

PANORAMA: How can I learn more about scleroderma?

LEANNE: While my sister was in America she bought a book for me from the Scleroderma Foundation. It's called "If You Have to Wear an Ugly Dress, Learn to Accessorize: Guidance, Inspiration, and Hope for Women with Lupus, Scleroderma, and Other Autoimmune Illnesses." It was written by Linda McNamara and Karen Kemper.

Opposite: Leanne's graphic recovery story designed by Virginia Eastman.



MY RECOVERY STORY

SOLE SURVIVOR

STRENGTHS

Music, Arts, Crafts
Gardening (with my headphones on)
Floral Arrangements Business
Godmother to Six Children
Driver's Licence
Babysitting

GOALS

Having Children
Volunteering at Day Care Centre

CHALLENGES

Linear Scleroderma (people think I'm contagious)
Amputee (left leg)
Mental Health Issues

SUPPORTS

Mum
Rascal the Adorable Dog
Cumberland Fellowship Church





My role as an Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Worker

By Naricah Smith

Flourish Australia Aboriginal Social and Emotional Well-Being worker, Naricah Smith, won the Aboriginal Trainee of the Year Award at the annual Moree Reconciliation Week Ball held at the Moree Town Hall on Friday 1st June 2018.

I am a proud Kamilaroi woman who is passionate about Aboriginal advocacy. I am a member of the Flourish Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island People and Communities CoP (Community of Practice).

I applied for the traineeship in 2016 which involved a couple of rounds of interviews. I completed a Certificate IV in 2017 in four months instead of twelve because I managed to finish all the units before June. Currently I am enrolled in a Diploma in Mental Health at TAFE New England.

My job involves coordination of support for the NDIS. There are people who access our service that I see at regular appointments where I keep an eye on how they are going with their personal goals and keeping their plans up to date.

I also facilitate a regular Art as Therapy Group. It has been pretty popular this year. We get visits from Jane Miller

the Flourish Australia Community Arts coordinator. We all love it when she comes!

Last year I put the idea to Jade Ryall (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community of Practice) that Flourish Australia should be involved at the annual Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout in October. Jade, and Jarrod Cutmore and I put a proposal together and [Former CEO] Pam [Rutledge]

was pleased to support it. It was a really good outcome.

For 2017 mental health month, I planned, consulted and assisted Flourish Australia participants to build a wellness garden that encompassed a variety of cultural elements and mediums.

At Moree I have a great team to work with who give me good support and help me believe in myself. If you work at it and Keep an open mind, this role is really rewarding. Flourish Australia has saved me. I never really

"Naricah is always willing to stretch herself with her skill set and take on more challenges. She happily supports people from all walks of life with a kind and caring attitude."

-A comment taken from Naricah's award nomination

National Reconciliation Week, 27 May to 3 June, commemorates two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey— the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision.

'National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements and to explore how each of us can contribute to creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'

The theme for National Reconciliation Week this year was 'Don't Keep History a Mystery. Learn. Share. Grow'

Reconciliation week in Moree includes the usual sharing of stories, sausage sizzles and get-togethers as well as the Reconciliation Games and a Gala Ball at the Town Hall.

Flourish Australia has been a proud sponsor of the Mental Health Recovery Award for the last five years at the Ball and has seen a number of staff and people we support nominated.

had a permanent stable career.

Once I started here it really opened my eyes to a lot of things and I just wanted to do more. I love studying and I'm motivated to be the best worker I can be. I had never really been that way before. I can't thank Claire Dunlop (former Manager at Moree) enough for her mentoring. The little things she has taught me I will always carry through with me.

It is good to know that if you can kick a few goals, it inspires you to do more!

Naricah spoke to Warren Heggarty. Additional reporting by Jim Booth. Source: The Moree Champion

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Workplace Inclusion Award for Flourish Australia Tamworth

By Jim Booth

If you haven't heard, Flourish Australia won the Workplace Inclusion Award at the Tamworth Quality Business Awards recently.

This was the first time this Award has ever been presented, across the region. In Tamworth there was a crowd of 830 people for the dinner at the Tamworth Regional Entertainment Centre. The audience listened intently through our acceptance speech because, I think, there is great interest in the work Flourish Australia does. When we see the people we support reach their goals, these are successes that the whole of Flourish Australia can share in.

I am told the award was judged outside the region, so we must have impressed some good judges!

We were nominated by many of the people we support, which makes it even more exciting. We have been nominated four or five times in the last 6 years or so and have been finalists in 2015 and 2017, but hadn't cracked an award until last week.

We have also presented the Mental Health Recovery Award in both Tamworth and Armidale over the last 4 years. This year I got to present in Tamworth to the Rural Adversity Mental Health Project. In Armidale Isaac Fogarty got to make the presentation to HealthWise.

I need to thank every one of the flourish team, and the people who nominated us, including Kellie Ward and Jarrad Smith who helped put the paperwork together, plus all of our managers who have helped make inclusion a key priority in this organisation.

Our inclusion of people from many backgrounds, more than 20% Aboriginal staff locally, Peer Workers across all programs, more than 50% staff from across the organisation having a lived experience of mental health issues – all represented up on stage to receive the award.

On stage I was pleased to be able to tell the story of our new contract to operate cleaning services at the Tamworth Agriculture Institute, and along with Garry Kelly's Cleaning Service we have just commenced half a dozen supported employees who have all had support with their own mental health issues from Flourish Australia.

In August the chaps completed their first fortnight and for some it was their first pay cheques in their adult lives. We are so proud of them!

Thanks Teams for all your hard work

The results are clear to be seen, with the people we support kicking great personal goals!

Thanks to Joblink Plus for sponsoring the Inclusion Award and ongoing thanks to the Tamworth Business Chamber for supporting Flourish Australia to continue to present the annual Mental Health Recovery award... which this year I had the pleasure of awarding to The Rural Adversity Mental Health Project.

Thanks all – I'm just so proud!



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Princess Moments at the Leeton Op Shop Debutante Ball

By Nikola Baratto

Attending the Leeton Community Op Shop Debutante Ball was a golden opportunity for people who access Flourish Australia services in Griffith and Leeton to be the centre of attention for one glorious night.

Several participants, both women and men, from Flourish Australia put their beautiful ball gowns or smart suits on, tied and buckled their dancing shoes, and danced the night away in the company of their family, friends and their local community.

Traditionally, Deb Balls involve young women being formally 'presented' to high society as being ready to marry. This Ball was a little more inclusive, taking in people all ages and backgrounds. It was a great excuse to get dolled up and boogie with their friends, family and members of the local community.

Although Debutante Balls may have changed over the centuries, certain traditions haven't. For instance, debutantes

always wear beautiful, typically white ball gowns and their partners dress in smart suits, and it's customary for ladies to ask males to the ball.

This Deb Ball had a fundraising component in support of the Community Op Shop, and in return the Op Shop generously donated all of the ballgowns, suits, shoes and accessories that were required, ensuring that everybody looked their best and that nobody was left out.

The local event enabled those that may not have had their "princess moment" to be given such an opportunity whilst fundraising for the local community op shop.

Hair, Makeup & Fundraising

The local event enabled those that may not have had their "princess moment" to be given such opportunity whilst fundraising for the local community op shop.

During the lead up to the event, many

hours were spent practicing the dance routines, finding a ball gowns/ suits, shoes and accessories (generously donated by the local community op shop), and of course building excitement for the night they have been eagerly waiting for.

And before they knew it, their big day had arrived!

Debutantes from Leeton, Narrandera and Griffith accessed hairdressers and make up artists in their local communities. In Griffith, for example, debutantes rallied up to the local TAFE where hairdresser, Tania Cavanagh, and makeup artists, Amanada Bordignon and Karen Snaidero, donated their time and skills to do the participants' hair and make-up. Leeton and Narrandera debutantes accessed their local communities to get their hair and makeup done.

An ABC reporter spent the day with the debutantes capturing every moment. Many participants were interviewed about their experience and this was later presented both in newspaper articles and on television television. Photos and

comments spread through social media including the participants' "No Drama" Facebook page.

Kim Doss, who helped organise the event, certainly had inclusion in the front of her mind during the planning process.

"Everybody is special in their own right and each and every person deserves the opportunity to have a special moment to shine," said Kim. "These ladies may never have had a princess moment, and tonight they'll get their princess moment. The look on their face is enough to get goosebumps. To see them smile and say they feel like a princess is a prize second to none." (Gorman, 2018)

Kim hopes that this annual event will continue to give more people the chance to have a night out they'll never forget.

Movie Star treatment

The debutantes proceeded to the MIA (Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area), a Function Centre where they put their ball gowns, suits and shoes on and did any final touches. And then the flashing of the camera began with multiple photos taken of the debutantes. They were able to have them printed out and have as keep sakes for their amazing experience.

The debutantes lined up with their partners and one by one walked out into the ball where they were greeted with applause and cheering from their family, friends and local community.

"I feel like a movie star, like Nicole Kidman" said one very excited lady, Janice Pandolfo. (Gorman, 2018)

All standing in a circle, the lyrics "I found the love for me..." started and away they went. Dancing the steps, they had been practicing for weeks before the ball. Each person had a smile stretching from ear to ear and showed rhythm and joy in every step they took.

Take your partners

Participants from Flourish Australia included Gail Cummings, who introduced the Mayor of Leeton and his wife on behalf of Flourish Australia, and helped with cutting the cake.

"It's a big day for all of us girls and it's been really exciting," Gail said, feeling happy and a little overwhelmed. "You like to feel special every now and again and have your make-up and hair done. It makes you feel much better." (Gorman, 2018)

Other debutantes include Janice Pandolfo, who was partnered with her son Luigi Pandolfo, Lisa Talliano partnered with Griffith staff member

Nadia Zilliotto, and Kathrine Zannotto partnered with Allen Signor. There were also Michelle Daniels from Griffith being partnered by Leeton staff member Colleen Willis, Rowan Merrylees from Griffith being presented by Craig Willis of Leeton, and Louise Carroll of Narrandera partnered with Garry Wilson of Leeton. Kate Atkins and her partner Darren Halse were both from Leeton.

Once the formal dancing and proceedings had finished, everyone continued to boogie for the rest of the night to the very talented local band Jiakamo Thief. Participant Allen Signor even managed to get the band to sing the "Hockey Pokey" song to which everyone got up and mastered the dance.

Before they knew it, the ball came to an end.

The list of new participants wanting to complete their debut next year started to develop that very night among the people watching their peers participate. It is growing rapidly.

The experience for each person in the debutante ball was incredible and all appreciated the effort that has gone in to making their day be so magical.

Making it happen

Those who volunteered their time in preparing the ball, both in the lead up and on the day, made numerous comments on how grateful they are to have been a part of such an amazing event. The community supported everyone involved and were also thankful for their experience.

Staff from Flourish Australia Griffith and Leeton want to extend our gratitude to all involved in organising such an amazing event.

Also, a special thank you to staff members Colleen Willis and Nadia Zilliotto for making this night possible for all Flourish Australia participants involved. We could not have staff any more passionate and dedicated to supporting individuals to have a memorable recovery journey.

(Additional material by Grant J Everett)

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Bouncing

Back

by Ben S

It's surprising how so many people think that your date of diagnosis is when your disability started, and before this you were completely well. For me, this was far from the truth.

I was shy throughout my school years, and like most kids, I struggled. I enjoyed learning in the class, and it was this that helped me through the formative years. I was surrounded by people, but I felt alone. I was never bullied, just ignored. In year 11, I rarely went to school and spent many days surfing. Needless to say, my grades were poor. It was around this time that I began thinking about suicide, as I struggled to fit in and get the grades necessary to pass the HSC. I bounced back from this in year 12, and actually passed the HSC in 1985.

In 1986 I took a gap year and surfed my way up and down the East Coast of Australia. Towards the end of that year, I developed appendicitis followed by an episode of psychosis. My Dad flew down to Melbourne and collected me from hospital. I was released from hospital without assessment or prescribed treatment for mental illness at that time. Dad took it upon himself to look after me while I went through the manic phase of this episode.

While I was being taken care of by my family the psychosis started to become more evident and I saw a psychiatrist. I was given a diagnosis of manic depression. I recovered from this without medication and went to Uni to study radiography. For the three years of study I did not use medication for my condition.

I was a bit erratic at times, and friends used to joke about my awful driving skills.

Back when I was still a student, no one knew anything about mental illness and still less people talked about it. There were few books available on the topic, and there was no internet to search for information or answers. When I came out of my shell in the 2nd year of my studies, I did not talk about my Mental Illness while at University, because I was afraid of the stigma involved in disclosure. I was worried about stigma from both an external and an internal perspective. I feared being excluded from the course. I was too scared to tell anyone, because I feared being seen as some sort of 'nutcase.'

Just after I finished university, I had an episode of depression that required me to start taking medication. Since then, I have been taking various combinations of prescription medications.

In 1990, I started work in a Sydney hospital working in radiology and I continued to take the medications. Which I continue to do. Everything was new, the work was hectic and I struggled with certain aspects of the job. Even though I never felt on top of my job, I really loved the high stress and adrenaline rushes which were the nature of the work. I believe in hindsight, that I was an adrenaline junkie. My workmates were great, and it was because of them, I stayed on in the position until finishing up in 1992.

In 1992 I had a really significant psychotic episode at work which led to a hospital admission and eventually led to the ending of my employment at the hospital. I remember during this time, feeling like an exhibit at the Zoo, as the hospital staff seemed to be always buzzing around me with some excuse or other for being there.

When my job ended, I moved to Byron Bay and lived with my parents for a while. I tried a whole bunch of different medications in an effort to control my symptoms. Two years later in 1994, I had a debilitating, psychotic episode that required a lengthy stay in the mental health unit at the local hospital. I lost touch with who I was, my humanity was shattered, and it took me a long time to get well again. From there I bounced back and took a Radiography job in Armidale in the same year.

Armidale hospital was more laid-back than Sydney; the work was easier, it was less stressful and the nursing staff were friendlier. I took up bush walking, and spent many days exploring the wilderness around Armidale. I went on many 5 day walks often alone. I started to feel a sense of wellbeing return as I was able to channel all the energy I was experiencing from feeling high, into nature-based activities.

After 4 years of doing maternity locums, I got ill again and no matter what I tried, I could not shake the feelings of depression and when the locum employment finished, I decided not to return to

Recovery Story



*Left: Surfing. Above: Facilitating a group.
Below: Taking it all in.*

radiography.

In 1999 I began studying at the local University, this time studying human bioscience. When well, I studied and wrote my assignments, when unwell I would hibernate and wait for better times. I did this for a number of years and gained my qualification in 2008 whilst at the same time, completing a number of community services courses at TAFE. Also, during this time, I attended the local living skills centre which functioned as a mental health therapy and resource centre. The centre gave me somewhere to go when I felt unwell as well as time out from my studies. While at the centre, I learned about running group sessions, and in 2008 I started work as a volunteer, using these skills, at a new mental health service that came to Armidale called Mallam.

Mallam is a psychosocial recovery oriented Centre run by Flourish Australia. Several mental health programs are run

from there and I volunteered my time to run educational groups which I did for three years.

In 2004 I had an episode that landed me back in hospital for two weeks. I found myself in a scary hospital environment which I shared with some very ill people who were unable to communicate properly. I did not feel safe there. I was glad when I was discharged, and I spent a week at home recuperating before bouncing back and getting into my studies.

I was one of the first people to attend the centre which Pat Schultz was setting up mostly on her own. I had known Pat for a number of years and when she asked me to run some groups on mental health I jumped at the opportunity. I had a collection of books at home on running groups so I prepared a number of talks based on these. There were about 55 talks in all, covering many topics relevant to mental health including managing stress, managing anger, understanding mental health and assertiveness skills. One night, I got so involved in the preparation of a talk that I let dinner burn on the stove. Over the next three years, a steady routine developed and once a week I ran a group at Mallam on mental health. I ran about 150 groups.

In 2012 a job became available at the local mental health Unit. The job focusses

on providing education to inpatients during their stay. I applied because I believed I had the right mixture of qualifications and lived experience to do the work. I got the job. I've worked in this job for over six years now and the program continues to evolve.

Since then I split my time between my job and attending the Mallam activity program. My moods are still variable, but I feel the opportunity for social and community participation at Mallam helps my moods, my focus, and helps keep me on track. I've made friends and continue to work on developing friendships at Mallam and at my local Church. I have attended St Marks since 2000 and it is my first and only Church.

My life is full, and I'm always trying to cram more into it. I feel I am progressing well on my recovery journey, and have recently enrolled in a Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.

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Thanks to Isaac Fogarty for his assistance

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Big Backyard Bonanza with Bunnings and a BBQ

by Warren Heggarty



Flourish Australia's Derby Street Penrith service is a great location. There is a bus stop literally at the front doorstep. A Police Citizens Youth Club across the road, next to a Lawn Bowls club. At the next corner is a Swimming Centre. Round the corner is the Nepean Village Shopping centre and Penrith Paceway- home of regular Wednesday Markets.

Alas, the back yard is entirely concrete. But that is no excuse not to do a bit of gardening. Not when you have a bunch of keen gardeners and two local **Bunnings Warehouses** to help out.

Manager Catherine Andrew said she had been working with Kayla from the South Penrith Bunnings store who was able to arrange a donation of a barbecue for the Day to Day living program, plus some new pot plants to help beautify the place.

On the day, Isabella from South Penrith and Mel from North Penrith Bunnings came bearing bags of potting mix and plants aplenty.

'I'm really excited about this little project

and am really looking forward to having regular barbecues on the site again.' Said Catherine.

But if your back yard is entirely concrete, how do you actually do gardening? Using pots, plant boxes, and painted pallets of course.

Annie – who describes herself as a 'bit of a character' - hung various pots on the slats of several blue pallets attached to the fence. You can see Maurice posing with one on the next page.

In the pictures, Melissa can be seen working on the main decorative pots. She is painting them with a black roller. The pots are etched in patterns that show up green once the roller goes over them. Very nifty.

Isabella handed a spray can to Maurice so he could get started on some rectangular terracotta pots. 'I'm a bit of a stirrer' he admitted as he shook the can then goaded his comrades on to do their share of the work.

Like a number of the people we've met,

Above: Cheryl, Mel from Bunnings and Cheryl's sister Julie-Ann getting their hands nice and dirty.

Maurice doesn't limit himself to one Flourish Australia location. As well as Derby Street Penrith, he attends Embark Cottage at Blacktown and the Richmond service as well.

Julie-Ann and Cheryl were working with Mel from Bunnings North Penrith. Cheryl was scooping potting mix into pots and Julie-Ann was planting. 'I'm a gardener' said Julie-Ann, 'And Cheryl's my sister.' Not only that, Glenn, her husband of eight months is also a member at Derby Street! In fact, they MET at Flourish Australia Penrith.

This is not so uncommon. Panorama can think of quite a number of couples who met and married while both were members or both were employees of Flourish Australia services.

Once the potting mix had been loaded into the pots, people grabbed brooms to sweep up the dirt to make the back

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Coming Soon to Penrith:
Disability Employment
Service!

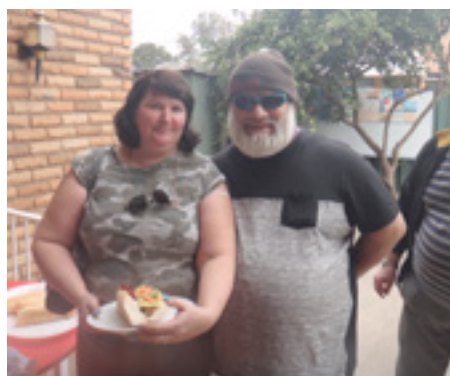
yard table and the pavement respectable again.

After the toil in the garden came the barbecue. Daniel and others had been cooking away on the hotplate while the gardening was in progress.

Panorama put it to the people that Derby Street is a great location in so many ways. One of the ladies said outright that she loves it here! She drew our attention to the various fruit trees in the yard.

‘The trouble is there is no parking for the staff’ she said. ‘They are going to build a nursing home next door where the staff park. I don’t know what they are going to do for a parking spot then. Especially on Wednesdays because that’s market day.’

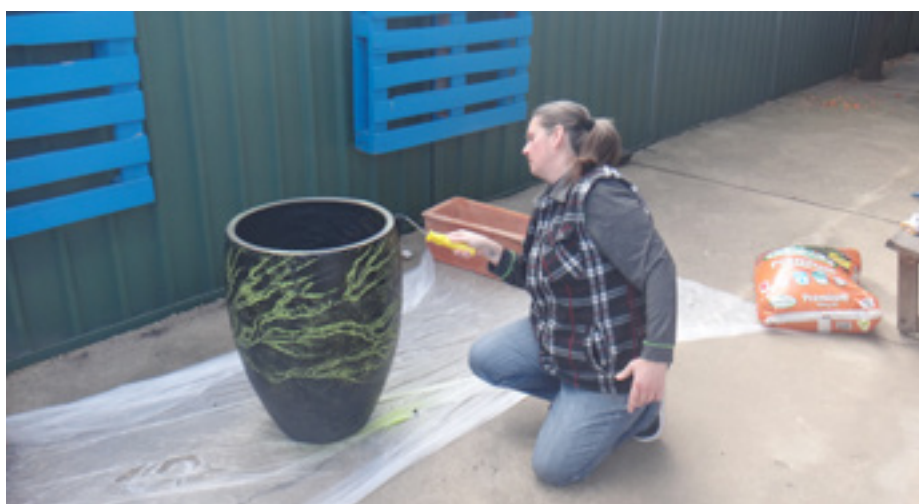
Well at least there will be plenty of pretty flowers to make up for it!



Above: Annie, left, and Isabella from Bunnings South Penrith work on a plant box while staff Catherine and Peter look on. That’s an orange tree behind Annie.



Maurice shows what you can do even without a ‘real’ back garden. Putting the plants up on pallets like this saves you the trouble of bending down to smell the flowers! In fact, it’s BETTER this way because you can paint the pallets the colour of your choice.



Left: Julie-Ann and Glenn. Above: Derby St. member, Melissa rolls the black paint over one of the feature pots. The etched pattern shows up as green tendrils. The big question is what is going to go inside the pots. Someone cheekily suggested Maurice might flourish in one.

If you’re in the neighbourhood, you will find a **Bunnings** at The (South) Penrith Homemaker Centre, 2,745 Wolseley Street 02 4737 5400, AND at 2,166 Castlereagh Road, (North) Penrith 02 4720 2000, both open till 9PM.



Above and Beyond: Caring for Loved Ones with Serious Disability

by Patricia Sutton

South Australian advocate Patricia Sutton, her husband Keith and both of their daughters have cared for her two sons, Peter and Ben, since the early 90s. First Patricia discusses the importance of the NDIS. Then she tells us the story of life as a carer, being on standby, 24 hours a day, seven days a week - Editor)

Not so long ago, I recall feeling very happy and relieved when I received a phone call from NDIA informing me that my two sons Peter and Ben had been accepted as participants of the NDIS, National Disability Insurance Scheme. As a carer, I felt a little bit like that was the first day of the rest of my life – as it meant that Ben, Peter and our family will now have control over what supports are received, and control also over who actually provides those supports. This was something we'd never experienced before in the 26 years we've been

involved in the mental health sector!

Not long before that, my family had gained the services of Partners in Recovery who began to provide at least some of the support which our sons desperately need to live independently in the community without the need for Keith and I to be there all the time. However, this has all come after fighting for a long, long time

THE NEED FOR HOPE AND THE PROMISE OF NDIS

In order to promote a strengths based approach in services for people with mental health issues, the people who access those services need to have an appropriate level of support. Otherwise, it is setting up people (and their families and carers) to fail, and actually diminishing their hope for the future. Previous (and in South Australia, current) block funding only provides for 'welfare checks', provision of meals (sometimes) and not much else. I have found during my 20 years of advocacy that underfunding is a common situation throughout the country. The reality of the situation with our family, given the lack of funding across the country for community based mental health services, has not been very hopeful.

The support which our family would

need in order to increase Ben and Peter's independence has to include support to maintain their independent living, i.e.

- Regular cleaning,
- Tidying, general upkeep of their home,
- Regular gardening,
- Shopping for groceries,
- Self-management,
- Financial management,
- Assistance with social interaction and communication,
- Support to increase motivation and accept help,
- Support in assisting them engage in regular recreational activities,
- Establishing daily routines,
- And eventually support in re-engaging in work or employment opportunities.

Attending day centres and respite in nursing homes, as has been suggested to us, are NOT dignified nor appropriate options. So at least in our state (South Australia) to date there has been and is very little funding for support for such activities of daily and independent living and virtually non-existent funds for psychosocial rehabilitation. This is why in recent years, my advocacy has been focussed on the NDIS – which to my mind, is the ONLY hope for our family for the future. Under NDIS, not only will my sons receive the community support they desperately need, we can decide where the funds are spent.

The elephant still in the room of course, is the barrier of 'anosognosia' which exists between many people with severe mental health issues and their families or carers. That is, where they believe that they do not have issues and that they do not require services.

THE STORY OF BEN, PETER AND THEIR FAMILY

I have four adult children aged between 41 to 49. Prior to 1991, all of them did well at school, and had good social networks, and lived happy lives. However, our family was changed forever when both of my sons developed mental health issues.

My eldest son, Peter, was the first to become unwell. Peter had just completed an apprenticeship as a fitter-and-turner at the age of 21 when he was the victim of an unprovoked assault

Carer's Story

(what's known nowadays as a coward punch). This attack resulted in a serious brain injury that caused Peter's mental state to deteriorate.

My other son, Ben, had been achieving good results in Year 11 when he also became unwell. Ben's condition soon became so severe that he had to leave school, and he hasn't been able to return to his studies since. As we were still reeling from Peter's assault, this was a very hard time.

While most people who develop mental health issues are able to rebuild their lives, this has not yet been the case with Peter and Ben. My sons also have significant problems with thinking, memory and concentration. They have great difficulty managing the basics of life without assistance including ordinary things like remembering and attending appointments or taking care of their physical health.

Their only income is the disability support pension, they have never worked, have no friends, engage in few meaningful activities, and spend most of their time smoking cigarettes and drinking lots of Coke and coffee. Apart from us, Peter and Ben have been living entirely isolated lives and it has looked unlikely that things would change anytime soon.

PHYSICAL HEALTH NEEDS

Peter has particularly complex requirements because of an eating disorder coupled with insulin-dependent diabetes which he acquired as a side-effect of medication. It is extremely difficult to manage these complex needs, which can lead to hospitalisation. During some of Peter's very long hospitalisations staff have had to force-feed him in order to save his life.

Despite being non-violent, while waiting for an ambulance on one occasion, the police, who were supposed to be protecting Peter, restrained him used their batons on him 'for his own protection'. After this traumatic event he stopped speaking, although he occasionally communicates with us by writing notes.

Peter actually came close to death from ketoacidosis and it resulted in an eight week long hospital admission, and his care during that time served as yet

another strong demonstration of the chasm that still exists between mental health and general health services it seems that providing adequate physical health care to a person with mental health issues is too much for our system to handle. Despite all the rhetoric we've heard about improving the appalling fact that people with a diagnosis of a serious mental health issue live 20 to 25 years less than the general community, very little has changed.

THE DILEMMA OF AGEING PARENTS AS CARERS

As Keith and I are basically on standby 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it has been impossible for us to have a holiday for 12 years. The grief felt by the parents of people with severe mental health issues is immense, and it is totally unacceptable that families - particularly ageing parents who are often experiencing health problems themselves - have been left bearing the burden of caring for loved ones with disabilities with little to no support. We find it especially difficult to accept the scarcity of mental health services in the community here in South Australia.

For instance, there are literally no appropriately supported accommodation options tailored towards people with severe mental illness in South Australia. I believe this lack of support is directly attributable to the widespread stigma and discrimination so prevalent in the community towards people with mental health issues. Certain mental health issues are an unpopular cause among the general public, and therefore politicians fail to prioritise it.

As there is no suitable supported accommodation available for Peter, Ben or the many others like them, our sons lived with us until recently. Thankfully, a couple of years ago Keith and I were able to buy a property, divide it into two flats and give it to our sons. The property is situated conveniently close to our home and both our daughters' homes.

During the first few years of caring for Peter and Ben I did everything I could to continue with my career in the Arts. However, as time went on I became more and more involved in advocacy, so I eventually sought employment in the mental health sector. This enabled me to advocate full-time for my sons, as well as all the other people like them who are still unable to speak for themselves. For the last 20 years I have advocated extensively at local, state and national levels, and been employed in many positions that utilised my lived experience with both government and non-government agencies and organisations, including the Guardianship Board of South Australia. I went down this road to have an influence on how services are delivered and, hopefully, work toward bringing change to the culture of Australia's mental health system.

Despite some wonderful people fighting alongside us for Peter and Ben's independence, it has been an ongoing battle to gain the support our sons urgently need to ensure their ongoing independence. My hope is that our sons' lives will change for the better with the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and my dream is that my husband and I can return to just being parents for our sons, rather than carers.

In the meantime, it remains extremely difficult for Peter and Ben to live independently or to engage in rehabilitation activities of any kind without regular help.

While our two sons depend on my husband and I to be able to live in the community, Our daughters are doing well in life. They both work and have families of their own. As a direct result of what our family has been through, our youngest daughter Sarah became a clinical psychologist. They've both put in a lot of time and effort in caring for Peter and Ben over the years.

Please note that some of the conditions in South Australia are different to NSW and Qld where most of our readers live
-Editor

In order to promote a strengths based approach in services ... people ... need to have an appropriate level of support. Otherwise, it is setting up people (and their families and carers) to fail, and actually diminishing their hope for the future.

Whispering Loud and Clear Flourish Australia at TheMHS Adelaide 2018

The TheMHS (Mental Health Services) Conference at the end of August 2018 was a great opportunity for 18 people from Flourish Australia to connect with the breadth and depth of the community mental health sector across Australia and New Zealand.

I have been inspired by the presentations the Flourish Australia team have made. My pride in everyone has been expanded more by the courage demonstrated as people have shared their personal stories, spoken in front of people or at a conference for the first time, asked great questions or debated issues with other conference delegates.

The team were fantastic Ambassadors for Flourish Australia, and represented us all beautifully. Our approach to being a recovery oriented organisation shone through and was commented on positively by others.

On top of all of that I was delighted that the Chair of our Board, Professor Elizabeth More AM joined us for Thursday and presented a paper on the NDIS and Organisational change. Elizabeth was able to hear some of our presentations and was very impressed by people's passion and commitment.

Our presence was well promoted through social media, an amazing stall in the exhibitors' hall and an updated promotional video. People were commenting about how good all of this was.

My thanks to everyone on the Flourish Australia team here in Adelaide, Matthew, Fay, Mark, Jade, Clare, Edwina, Bruce, Peter, Michael, Monique, Glenn, Daniel, Kim, Grant, Alison, Peter, and Matthew for their amazing work."

Mark Orr, CEO Flourish Australia



Peter Farrugia

Our Presentations

by Grant J Everett and Warren Heggarty

Bruce Jones (peer worker at Flourish Australia Moree):
"Stories of men's mental health recovery in a dry and dusty land"

In the opening ceremony, South Australian Minister for Health and Wellbeing, The Hon Steven Wade MLC, actually made mention of Bruce's forthcoming presentation!

Bruce had been very nervous to begin with. 'This was my first go at presenting. So it was very daunting.' His background is in driving, living off the land and more recently peer work. But it went well on the day.

'I am trying to get rid of mental health stigma in the bush. I told about my own issues and recovery journey following a relationship break up. It's important to be able to talk about these things to men on the land.'

Peter Farrugia, who saw Bruce Jones' presentation, said that it had "a lot of heart" and went over well with the audience.

Clare Evans (Marketing and Capacity Manager) and Matthew Schipp (former program participant):

"Flourish Australia's supported outplacement program: redefining supported employment"

This presentation was about the supported outplacement program featured in Panorama #66 [December 2017]. Clare Evans explained how the program works and then handed over to a participant Matthew Schipp. Matthew explained how the program helped him to eventually gain a job at CSIRO through a competitive interview.

Daniel Reynolds (senior peer worker at Newcastle):
"Supporting people through the transition to NDIS"

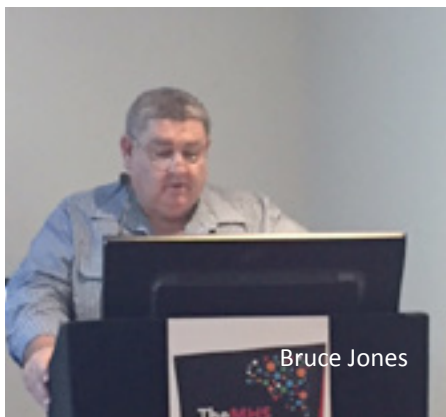
Panorama is going to be presenting a series of articles on this topic in coming issues!

Edwina Keelan (accesses Flourish Australia's Marrickville service):
"Trans-Tasman Transgender"

Edwina's presentation covered her life story which was published in December 2017 and March 2018 Panorama. It was a challenge to squeeze all of that into a short presentation but she went over very well indeed according to those present! She also struck a high fashion note wearing an ensemble specially styled for Adelaide TheMHS.



Edwina Keelan



Bruce Jones

Fay Jackson (General Manager Inclusion), Kim Jones (project officer Inclusion), Jade Ryall (Program Manager B.O.T.H.), Matthew Salen (Cluster Manager, Queanbeyan) and Michael Wren (accesses Flourish Australia's Bathurst Service): "True co-design starts with one question only"

Co-presenter Kim Jones said 'some of the people at the workshop THOUGHT they were already co-designing in their organisations. But they learned from us that because they had already come up with the concepts before they took other people's views on board, it wasn't genuine co-designing.

Jade Ryall said 'There were about four groups of six, say 25-30 people. That's quite a good crowd. Many of the workshops I've seen at TheMHS have nine or 10 people- because they hold a number of workshops simultaneously. Our workshop had a LOT of discussion."

"It was only an hour long," said Kim, so it was a packed program. We broke them into groups then asked them to choose a topic, such as 'if you could design your own mental health service, what would you do?'

Monique Diplock (blogger who accesses Flourish Australia's Taree service) and Fay Jackson: "Good services aim at making themselves redundant"

Monique Diplock told Panorama that in her presentation 'I shared some handy tools and ideas, as well as my own story. Fay Jackson and I were originally going to do 10 minutes each, but Fay decided

it was important for my story to be told in full.

The support I got from Flourish was great! They got me to Adelaide, and I was able to attend the entire TheMHS conference. The learning opportunities were endless. I came home with new ideas and angles for projects that I've wanted to get up and running for a while.

Glenn Botfield (senior peer worker, Tamworth): "Navigating services in regional, rural and remote NSW"

Glenn Botfield told Panorama: My topic, "Navigating services in regional, rural and remote NSW", was targeted towards people with a lived experience - as well as their families and carers - who live in regional, rural and remote areas. Everybody should have access to adequate mental health services, and if they don't, then we need to introduce them. I also wanted people to know that a lived experience is not a barrier when it comes to being employed in the mental health field (quite the opposite, actually). The audience seemed to like my talk, and asked a lot of questions about the realities of Peer Work.

Grant MacPhail (senior policy and planning coordinator): "Advancing beyond recovery-oriented mechanisms toward equitable and valued social inclusion for people with mental health issues"

Grant MacPhail addressed how self-stigma, stigma, and discrimination inhibit social inclusion for people with mental health issues. There is little evidence on how stigma can be overcome, especially long-term, so he developed a transdisciplinary framework which ultimately calls for further research. The various disciplines included psychology, anthropology, peer work, politics, economics, sociology etc.

A key principle includes the need for people with mental health issues to express a lived-experience identity in positive ways as a collective. Starting off at a safe local level, the social

capital generated will hopefully snowball as it includes wider society. At the same time, this will allow the development of our unique personal strengths. Grant was the first to present, and all the speakers who followed on from him all referenced aspects of my presentation!

'I think the organisers cleverly scheduled the presentations, as my presentation seemed to be a theoretical overview of the practical examples of support activities that followed', he told Panorama.

Peter Farrugia (Peer Workforce Manager): "Supporting LGBTI people in the workplace"

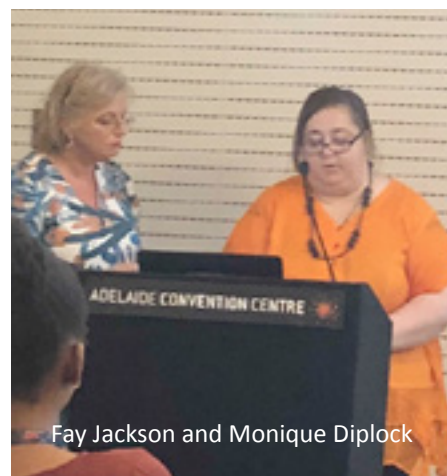
The rates of harassment, discrimination and suicide amongst young people who identify as LGBTI are well above average. Presenting this topic was very personal and emotional for me, and many people declared the session to be moving, thought-provoking and heart-felt.

They acknowledged the difficult circumstances from that part of my life, and thanked me for sharing. After watching my presentation, one person declared a changed point of view from that moment forward. I received a standing ovation at the conclusion of the presentation.

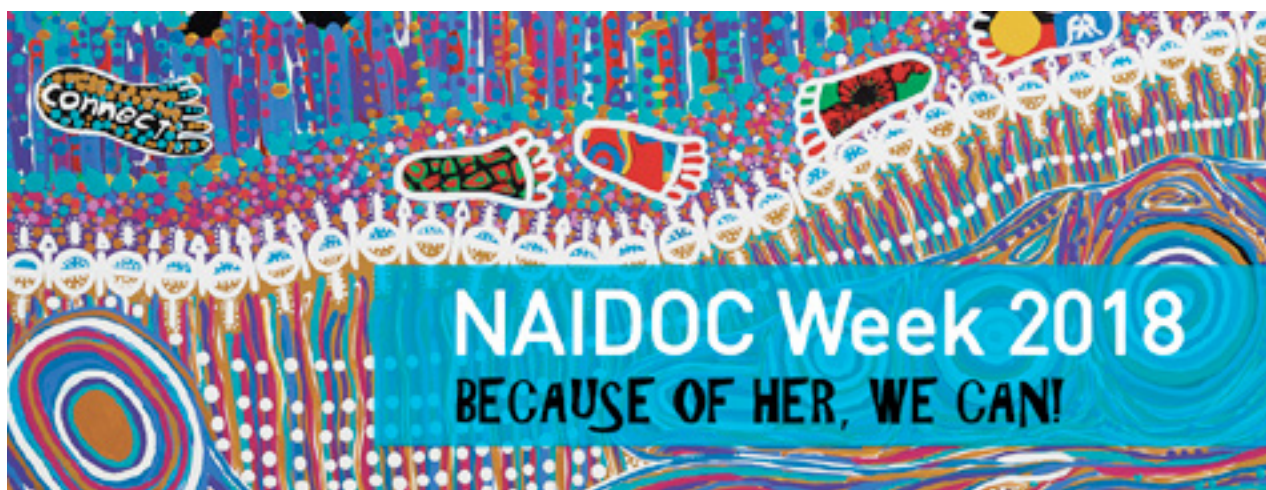
Readers can see more workplace based initiatives at...

www.prideindiversity.com.au

Thanks to all of the presenters for providing us with information for this article.



Fay Jackson and Monique Diplock



By Grant J Everett

Photos provided or taken by Jim Booth, Warren Heggarty, Cathee Andrew, Nicole White. Banner from NAIDOC

Every July, NAIDOC Week events are held across Australia to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The core focus of NAIDOC Week for 2018 was on the invaluable contributions that so, so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have made (and continue to make) to our nation, summed up as a declaration: "Because Of Her, We Can!" NAIDOC originally stood for 'National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee' but the acronym has since become the name of the week itself! Here is a roundup of some of the many celebrations...

Olympic Park 12 July

NAIDOC in the Park was hosted in Jacaranda Square on the corner of Australia Avenue and Dawn Fraser Avenue, directly opposite Sydney Olympic Park station, and was a great opportunity to learn about the people of the Eora Nation who traditionally live on this land. Running from 11am to 3pm, this event packed a lot of Indigenous culture, music, food and fun into its four-hour runtime, and everything on offer was free.

The theme "Because of Her, We Can!", celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have played, and continue to play, active and significant roles at the community, local, state and national levels.

Some of the highlights included...

- An information tent filled with tools and artefacts constructed the traditional way, such as clapping sticks, didgeridoos, smoking ceremony equipment and painted objects.
- Research detailing how Aboriginal people may be one of the oldest farming civilisations. Indigenous historian Bruce Pascoe has revealed that Indigenous Australians were baking a good 15,000 years before the Egyptians. There's a link at the end of this article to an interesting talk Pascoe gave on the subject. His 2014 book 'Dark Emu' argues for a reconsideration of the 'hunter-gatherer' tag for pre-colonial Aboriginal Australians. Bruce Pascoe provides evidence from the diaries of early explorers that suggests that systems of food production and land management have been understated in modern retellings of early Aboriginal history.

- Guided Mangrove Walks showed how the people of the Eora nation survived in the mangrove wetland environment.
- There was even stuff for the kids to do, such as weaving, art and storytelling.

When the Bushfeeds BBQ lunch was served, the crowd suddenly swelled as though most of Olympic Park had appeared out of thin air. The meal choices included kangaroo skewers, emu sausages, crocodile sausages, and chicken skewers (for the less adventurous). I had the crocodile sausages, which had been spiced up with chilli and other aromatics. Dessert was scones with thickened cream and jam made from Australian native ingredients. NRMA generously funded the BBQ.

While we enjoyed this delight for the

tastebuds, we were also treated to a feast for the eardrums: Leah Flanagan, a singer who identifies as Indigenous, was good enough to provide the crowds with live music.

Shannon performed the Welcome to Country on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and paid respects to Elders past and present. Shannon performed a smoking ceremony with a torch made out of tea tree bark, explaining that it is meant to cleanse bad energy and welcome good energy, and makes anyone who "washes" themselves in the smoke (scooping it up along their body) closer to the land. There was a large chill-out area with bean bags, large mats, chairs. People were welcome to relax, listen to the live music and enjoy the atmosphere.

And because it is Olympic Park, they also honoured all of the Indigenous athletes on the Honour Roll:

Evonne Goolagong Cawley MBE AO (Tennis)
Nicole Cusack (EDITOR: My Mum and Dad followed her games every week!)
Arthur Beetson OAM (Rugby League)
Laurie Daley AM (Rugby League)
Joseph Donovan (Boxing)
Mark Ella AM (Rugby Union)
Michael O'Loughlin (Australian Football)
Dave Sands (Boxing)

Jamison Park 13 July

There is a major NAIDOC Week celebration held at Jamison Park in Penrith. Dozens of local services who take care of the greater Penrith area – from Centrelink to Medicare to Flourish Australia and beyond – ran information booths.

The one key factor that these organisations had in common was that they provided services specifically tailored towards the Indigenous community. This isn't the first time Flourish Australia has taken part in the NAIDOC celebrations held at Jamison Park, and staff members from services at Penrith and Seven Hills ran our stall in shifts between 9:30am and 3pm.

All the stalls were handing out goodies like hats, lollies, beanies, balloons, stress men, magnets, pens, drink bottles, and information resources. But without a doubt, the most popular items were the fidget spinners. The kids just can't get enough of them!

Cathee Andrew of Flourish Australia, Penrith joked that our stall would be ten times more popular if we simply hung out a sign that said FREE FIDGET SPINNERS.

There were also lots of fun things for children of all ages to do and see, like a jumping castle, a helicopter, a fire truck manned by the fire brigade, a culture tent, mixed netball games, a rock-climbing wall, and some entertaining performances by Indigenous dancers and didgeridoo players. They even had

a chance to fire off a full-strength fire hose! Like all NAIDOC celebrations, there was also a free BBQ lunch to be enjoyed. Quite a few of the people who access our services at Westclub Penrith turned up, and had an awesome day.

Our representatives always have the same goals for these NAIDOC events: for visitors to learn about and embrace Indigenous culture, to enjoy themselves and to access information about the services that Flourish Australia offers in their area.

There was a lot of foot-traffic going through the park, and over the span of the day at least 1000 people came over to have a look at what was happening. Hopefully next year will be even bigger and better with more of everything!

The traditional custodians of the Nepean area around Penrith are the Dharug people. Many local residents identify as Indigenous. There are a number of indigenous people in the area already accessing Flourish Australia's services, and so we would like to spread the message of welcome to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who might benefit from our respite and social and emotional well being programs.

Some of the people who worked really hard towards making our presence felt in NAIDOC include Catherine Andrew and Ruby Golding from Penrith, and Nicole White, Michael Towns, Amy Calver, and Elaine Zander from Seven Hills. People worked really hard and really went above and beyond. Cathee Andrew, did a lot of prep before the event to get everything ready, and Nicole White prepared a major art piece which is illustrated below. After preparing the background and dot patterns, messages about the theme of the day were gradually added to the board one by one to make a great mural about what it is we can... because of her!

Thanks to Ruby Golding, Team Leader Partners in Recovery at Derby Street, Penrith, for filling us in on how the day went.

Sources:
www.naidoc.org.au/about/naidoc-week
 "Indigenous historian Bruce Pascoe says we've got our story all wrong", Ben Graham, news.com.au, July 11th 2018
<https://tedxsydney.com/contributor/bruce-pascoe/>

Below: Messages from the NAIDOC celebrations in Jamison Park, Penrith. Because of her, we can...





Grant and Warren reveal their experience of believing things that seriously needed fact checking...

Challenging our perceptions

By Grant J Everett

Sometimes, it's best not to automatically trust everything we see, hear, or believe, to question what we perceive. We asked Warren Heggarty about a personal experience to illustrate this.

Warren, could you share an occasion where you believed something that turned out not to be real? Perhaps one that could have had serious consequences?

WARREN: During an interview with a Disability Employment Service employment consultant I began to believe that she was mocking me because I was a nobody who wasn't good enough to have a job. I also felt that having to go through all of this bureaucracy was part of a plan to wear me down and destroy me. I started yelling at the consultant, and I became so aggressive that I was asked to leave the premises, and I was still shouting at them as I left. I'd been feeling worthless one moment, and then BANG I was in a rage. I suddenly believed I was a god, and this led to me walking into busy traffic on the Hume Highway. I was going up to cars, and people were swerving to avoid me. I was lucky people didn't get killed!

P: What did you do next?

W: After a few minutes, the godlike feeling left and I came to my senses. I decided I'd better hand myself into the police, because I felt I could be dangerous. I couldn't find a police station, so I went to see a GP instead.

P: Did the doctor actually say, "I don't think what you're experiencing is real?", perhaps in a more diplomatic way? Did she say or do anything that caused you to doubt your beliefs?

W: The opposite! The GP actually asked ME how I knew it wasn't real- that I was a god, and wanted to know why I felt this way. Seeing as though the episode only lasted about 10 minutes, there was no need to challenge these beliefs. When it was happening, though, I was utterly convinced I was all powerful and nothing could have dissuaded me from it.

P: Were there any other factors at play with this episode?

W: I felt justified in going off my head because I was facing some major problems. I had been unemployed for the first time in my life and it had been 18 months I'd also just visited my terminally-ill mother that morning and she wasn't doing so well. I'd only just given up drinking. As an alcoholic, I hadn't developed any skills at dealing with problems that didn't involve getting inebriated. I felt a great deal of resentment about not getting any help.

P: Was this the only time you experienced this sort of episode?

W: Unfortunately, this was just one among many over a span of five years. I think psychotherapy contributed to resolving this problem, but it's still a bit of a mystery as to how I was able to stop having these episodes. It wasn't medication; in fact, I suspect the medication I was on was actually making things worse, because it lowered my inhibitions.

P: Were there any other tips that you might have for other people who might experience episodes where they might act in ways that are inappropriate or even harmful?

W: I think that taking responsibility for my behaviour has gradually led to less and less of those episodes. Once I realised my actions might ruin other people's lives, that was when I started to come down from the high. I was brought up to be accountable for my actions, and I know that screaming and terrifying people who are just doing their job, throwing things, and trying to cause

car accidents is just not acceptable. I was behaving in a morally wrong way, and it was my responsibility to do something to stop it. Learning how to deal with problems constructively is very important, because chucking a tantrum doesn't get you anywhere.

The lessons of experience

By Warren Heggarty

Grant is determined not to yield to the thought that has been nagging him to buy a lottery ticket for weeks now. He has learned not to have blind faith in his feelings. Experience has taught him to 'fact check' his thoughts.

'I used to be an angry kid, always lashing out. There came a point when I was a teenager I was really unwell and began believing that I was a really important religious elder and I made prophecies about the future. These prophecies had no basis on any evidence or knowledge. They were ridiculous and I'm embarrassed thinking about it today.

'I warned friends, for example of a terrorist attack in 2000 that did not eventuate.

'Another time, I was staying in a hostel and I told people that I was Jesus. At the time I totally misread the reaction of those people. I just assumed they believed me, but looking back I can see that they were laughing it off. I was so stuck inside my own head!'

'Later I came to meet other people who thought they were Jesus, too. Nowadays I don't blindly trust my feelings.'

Grant suggests we should always question ourselves and others to some degree. We should speak with trusted friends to get a grip on what is really happening. We should try to learn about ourselves and get to know how other people might see us. If we are stuck inside our own heads, we need to get out more!

Recovery Conversations

Mental Wellness

September 2018- 2

ACTION
Adapting CANSAS to Individuals' Own Needs

CANSAS Theme #8

flourish
AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives



Cultivating Wellness

By Warren Heggarty

The Queensland Health Department web site says that 'just like you eat your veggies and exercise to keep your body well, there are things you can do to promote mental health (handily, they also include eating well and exercising!).' (Queensland government, n.d.)

Can you guess the trouble with that? People often DON'T eat veggies and exercise. Likewise, they don't often do what will make them mentally strong either. I guess that is because there is a certain amount of effort, challenge and even drudgery associated with developing mental wellness. If you have the whole world on your shoulders, why would you want to take on new things as well?

This is why baby steps are needed. Little steps, one at a time, might just make a difference over time. This approach is illustrated in the WoW (Wheel of Wellbeing) system explained in the box. It is also tied up with the second of the three secrets to mental strength listed later in this article.

Looking after both body and mind, building relationships (meaningful ones with people who want what's good for you), exploring the meaning and purpose of your life and giving your mind a workout are all important.

You can find more resources about looking after your mental health on the Head to Health website. <https://headtohealth.gov.au/> This Australian Government website focuses on four

broad aspects of life that can impact your mental wellbeing: physical health, connectedness, purposeful activity, and feeling safe, stable and secure. (Australian Department of Health, n.d.)

Head to Health is a great place where you can find all kinds of digital resources, including apps, programs and forums that can help with your mental wellbeing.

Mental Strength

What about cultivating mental strength. There is lots of advice on the net about this topic but here are three simple (and we think rather challenging) attributes of people who have well developed minds:

1. They don't feel sorry for themselves (not for too long, anyhow. You need to keep working even when you feel defeated. Giving in to despair will make despair stronger.)
2. They don't expect immediate results (also known as making sacrifices in the present to build a better future, or 'deferring gratification.' Successful people see mistakes as learning opportunities.)
3. They don't resent other people's success. (In fact, they are more likely to ask successful people how they did it and then apply those tips to their own lives. (Di Benedetto) (Bradberry, 2017)

If you want to get really serious about this, you might find the following video amusing- and inspiring. It is a commencement speech by an 'old sailor' Navy Admiral William H McRaven to students at the University of Texas. If nothing else, his description of Navy seal training might make your lot seem a little easier! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K13p1DIsDMQ>

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Wow! Introducing the Wheel of Wellbeing

The South East London and Maudsley (SeLAM) health district in the UK has developed an online tool by which you can monitor and improve all aspects of your wellbeing, physical, mental, social and otherwise.

It includes a place where people can exchange tips about what works for them. Users can also review the tips to show how they work in practice.

The Wheel of Wellbeing consists of 6 'spokes' containing Tips, Activities and Places which can lead to increased happiness. These six are: bodily actions, mind actions, spirit actions, people actions, place actions and planet actions.

You can 'like' the tips people suggest and save them to your Wheel, taking them on as challenges. The wheel then tallies up how many you have competed on your Wow Tracker. When lost for ideas, you can always turn to the Wheel of Wellbeing for inspiration.

You can also suggest your OWN tips that other people can use. Most of the users, of course, come from London, but Panorama has seen plenty of Australians using the Wheel.

The creators say that 'a compelling body of international evidence links our happiness with longer and more fulfilling lives, better mental and physical health, stronger relationships and a range of other psychological, social and economic benefits. The team behind the Wheel of Well-being have developed an approach that moves **away from mental ill health**, towards a focus on **positive mental health and wellbeing** as something that will benefit all; staff, communities and organisations.' <https://www.wheelofwellbeing.org>



Some medications are 'time zone' sensitive. Insulin dosages, for example, might need to be adjusted to suit the new zone.

The National Prescribing Service in also warns travellers to avoid purchasing medicines in 'low income' countries. This is because substandard and even counterfeit medicines are quite common in some parts. (Zwar, 2018)

Complying with the law

There are strict regulations about taking medicines subsidised by the Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme (PBS) overseas. Medicine must be for personal use, or the use of a person you are accompanying. Generally, a six month supply is OK, but questions may be asked if the supply is for longer. If you need detailed information about this you can check on the Medicare Australia web site. (Medicare)

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/travelling-overseas-pbs-medicine>

This site also has information about posting medicines overseas. If you have any doubt about the legality of your medicine in the destination country, check with their embassy before you go.

Documentation

'Planning ahead is particularly important for travellers with diabetes' says Nicholas Zwar writing for NPS Medicinewise. 'Permission may be needed from the airline to take diabetes equipment (e.g. pen needles, insulin pump consumables, fingerprick devices and lancets) on board the aircraft. In general, all the documentation required by the airline is a doctor's letter.'

The Office of Drug Control recommends that Australians going overseas carry either a prescription or a doctor's letter stating that you are under their treatment and that the drugs have been prescribed for your personal use. The doctor's letter must specify the name

and dose of the drugs. Generic drug names are preferable as brand names vary from country to country. There is a helpful pro-forma letter on the Medicare website (above) to help your doctor.

Protection

Some destinations have an increased risk of infection and so you will require medicine specifically related to your travel. This category of medicines includes anti-malarials and vaccines. Some doctors might prescribe drugs to combat jet lag, but there is a risk that these might cause confusion or even falls in some people, especially the elderly.

There are plenty of places you can get information about travellers' sicknesses, such as 'Bali belly', also known as 'Delhi belly'. One of the best ways to minimise this sort of thing is cooking. Avoid uncooked foods, even salads, and never drink or clean your teeth in tap water that has not been boiled! Australians are spoiled because our tap water is among the most pure in the world. Our tummies, however, are not used to the secret ingredients in overseas tap water.

The reason the Ancient Egyptians built a great civilisation is that early on they worked out that if you leave the waters of the Nile for the crocodiles and drink beer instead, you won't get crook. Or at least, not as crook.

There are various remedies available which claim to protect you from bali belly, however, the most reliable protection might be **wash, cook, boil**. Wash hands, cook food, boil water.

For the latest information about prescription medicine, including more detailed information about this topic, check the National Prescribing Service web site www.nps.org.au

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Zwar, N. (2018, August). Travelling with medicines in 2018. Retrieved from NPS Medicinewise: <https://www.nps.org.au/australian-prescriber/articles/travelling-with-medicines-in-2018>

Information about Medicine and Travel

By Warren Heggarty

When you travel away from home, you still need to keep up your medication routine, so it is important to get yourself organised well before you depart. This is especially important if you are going overseas! Four things you may need to consider are **supply, legality, documentation** and **protection**.

Sufficient supply

This one applies no matter where you are going. You need to organise it with your doctor so that you have sufficient supply to cover your whole trip, and make sure your medicine will not exceed the expiry date while you are away. If you run out while away from home, it might not always be a straightforward matter to get a new supply from a strange doctor you've never seen before! This is a hassle you do not need on vacation. This applies doubly if you are going overseas.

Keep your medicine in the original packaging wherever possible. Most medicines, will remain stable unrefrigerated during the short period of a flight, (Medicare) but check with your doctor or pharmacist.

GOING OUT AT NIGHT

By Grant J Everett

Going out at night is fun. That's why people do it. But many an enjoyable Friday evening has been ruined by muggers, coward punches, and a seemingly limitless amount of people who drink way more than they can handle. And while we want to stress that it's rare for a night out to end with somebody getting jumped, there are a lot of common-sense precautions we can take to greatly reduce our chances of being a target. Prevention is always easier, quicker and more effective than repair.

PRECAUTIONS

One of the biggest factors in how safe your night out will be is WHERE you go. While some postcodes are inherently more dangerous than others, you cannot say with certainty that visiting any public place or venue at night will be safe. The later it is, the drunker people will get, and the chances that someone might say or do something they otherwise wouldn't will get higher and higher.

There is safety in numbers, and a group is a less tempting target than an individual. It also makes clubbing a lot more fun! If you are on your own at night, even for just a few streets, use common sense. Walking somewhere secluded, like a darkened park or an empty lot, is a bad idea. Even if it's only a few streets from your own neighbourhood, it's best to stick to streets that are well-lit and have traffic going past. Taking an extra five minutes to get to where you're going is a small price to pay.

If you're not planning on driving, the Trip Planner site can help you figure out exactly what buses and trains will get you to your destination and back again. The less you hang out around isolated train stations and bus stops at night, the better. And don't cut it too close: if you

miss a bus at five to midnight, you might be waiting hours for the next one.

While you might not want to part with \$15 for a taxi home, if the only alternative is wandering the back streets halfway until dawn, you're better off ponying up the money. This is another advantage of going out in a group, as splitting a taxi three or four ways is much more cost effective than a taxi for one.

Showing that you are aware of your surroundings will make you a less desirable target, so pay attention to who's near you. No need to make eye contact or anything like that; just keep their presence in mind. Talking on a mobile phone can make this difficult, which is why it's illegal to drive and use a phone at the same time. Use body language that makes you look confident and bored rather than scared or unsure.



PIXABAY

It's important not to advertise anything that people might want to steal. For instance, try not to have your wallet or purse out except when it's necessary, like if you have to pay for something. If the wrong person sees you have a lot of money on you, they may try and take it if the opportunity presents itself. Same goes for withdrawing money from an ATM or with EFTPOS: cover the keypad with one hand, and don't let anyone see your PIN or receipt. If you have a handbag, secure the strap around your hand so somebody can't easily snatch it. Prevention is especially important here, because if a thief takes something of yours and bolts away, chasing them might lead to a much worse situation.

If you're going to a club, excessive drinking can lower your inhibitions and lead to making poor decisions. A situation that you might have easily managed sober could turn dangerous or violent without those inhibitions holding you back. Know what your limit is, and don't test it.

Good manners make a big difference anywhere, including clubs. Be polite, don't push in line, don't say smart-alec things to anybody, don't stare at anyone, and don't bump anybody. If you poke the bull, you might get the horns.

TACTICS

Don't do anything to escalate a situation. If somebody is having a go or generally carrying on foolishly, leave. Getting into an argument with somebody who's been enjoying too many drinks or just had a bad day can lead to violence, such as coward punches. If there are dramas at a venue, don't put yourself in the firing line: that's why all pubs and clubs have security guards.

Any martial arts expert worth their salt will tell you that the best self-defence technique of all is known as "running away at top speed". There is nothing weak in avoiding people who are out to cause trouble. Bullies and standovers rarely fight fair, and if they're with some equally foolish mates, there's a good chance that the whole group will get involved in whatever happens, too.

Sometimes running isn't an option. If you are mugged by somebody with a weapon, especially multiple muggers as is usually the case, being a hero is a bad idea. Don't try and disarm them, or attempt to use any other tricks you saw in an action movie. It rarely ends well. Honestly, your wallet, cash, cards and phone can all be replaced. Your life can't be.

If you are being chased or get into trouble and can't get away, yelling the word "FIRE" will draw more attention than "HELP".



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Recovery at Harris Park

We preview the new Physical Health and Wellbeing microsite!



By Warren Heggarty

We managed to get Jimmy Zahra to stand still just long enough to take this photo of him working the forklift at the busy loading dock of Prestige Packing, Harris Park. Lately, as Manager Mihaela Stanculescu says, it has been very busy and that's exactly what we like to see!

In fact, there was a second truck queued up behind the one in the driveway.

Kathy Te Nuku, one of the peer workers at Harris Park told Panorama that 'we are very very busy with new employees and a lot of work coming in all the time, it's hardly ever quiet. Three trucks of 6 to 8 pallets came in today. We have between 40 and 50 and up to 75 employees on any one day. I have to start at 6:30 so I can get my work done before the employees arrive!'

If you think peer work is a kind of desk job, take note that Kathy joins in with directing traffic to help with the unloading. That's teamwork. And Kathy and fellow support worker Boris [Borissov] often go into Parramatta to visit the NDIA office and see whether they can help people with the smooth flow of paperwork for the NDIS!

Work is part of the road to recovery and so Recovery Sessions are a part of the work routine. Panorama took part in a recovery session dedicated to the topic of Physical Health and Wellbeing. Kathy and NDIS coordinator Melissa Schwartz

were there.

Jade Ryall used the hour long group discussion to let employees know about our new Physical Health and Wellbeing 'microsite.'

One thing of particular interest to the audience was the side effects of medication. Jade displayed the Physical Health and Wellbeing microsite at <https://both.flourishaustralia.org.au/> on the big screen.

We saw 32 'cards' set out covering every kind of health issue. One of the most common side effects of medication is weight gain, so Jade clicked on MY WEIGHT, and voila! We find a screen with some common questions about weight such as:

- Gaining or losing weight
- Finding it hard to maintain a suitable weight
- Wanting assistance to manage your weight.

Scrolling down, we found a list of resources and places to get additional information about weight issues.

Why stop there, though? With a click, Jade showed us that we can actually be linked to those other resources through the internet.

So people using the Physical Health and Wellbeing microsite can go directly to the experts, rather than getting information second hand or relying on

other people to find the information out for us. This is in line with Flourish Australia's belief that the more we can do for ourselves, the better our recovery proceeds.

For example, the My Weight card has a link to the Dieticians Association of Australia and numerous other organisations in that field. We are sure that the My Weight card will get a good workout!

'Some medications can really affect our appetites' said Jade

'Not mine' responded Gerry Connolly dryly from up the back of the room to much laughter from everybody.

'He generally eats about five plates full' in a sitting, explained Jimmy Zahra to further mirth.

Actually, most people report weight GAIN, and a stronger appetite with medication so obesity is an issue for most of us. Though obviously not Gerry who is still fairly wiry.

The Physical Health Message is already well established in Harris Park. We even saw that their selection of brochures included one entitled Monkeys Check Theirs... Do You? It's a brochure about checking for testicular cancer.

Skipping meals had been a major issue among employees. Kathy Te Nuku raised this issue at the June Physical Health and Wellbeing Community of Practice



Gerry and Dina at a weekly Recovery session at Prestige Packing Co Harris Park

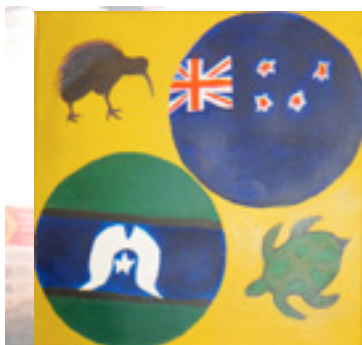
meeting. Her story is below.

There are many reasons why a person might lose interest in preparing food or cooking. Jade knew a lady who used to regularly cook roasts, but when her husband died, she lost the motivation. 'You don't cook a roast for yourself, surely?' Perhaps you could find friends to do it for. Or maybe that just brings back sad memories.

In any case, when big changes happen in your life, you have to take a new approach to meals and cooking. Then there

is the problem of living in a group home where sometimes the dynamics between residents are not perfect! So you can see how people with mental health issues might have difficulty with such a fundamental thing as meal times!

After the recovery session, tables and chairs were reorganised by the employees in preparation for today's International Cuisine Day (see below). We couldn't help noticing that Dina (from the EAP) set to work polishing up the tables in readiness for the food.



Jade (left) is talking to Sharon (right) who is one of the employee/artists whose works adorn the walls of the office of Manager Mihaela Stanculescu at Harris Park. Sharon's works explore themes about Australia, New Zealand and the indigenous people of both countries.



Development of New Physical Health Website

both.flourishaustralia.org.au

Some health issues are not easy to talk about. For example, constipation. Sometimes a person might not even KNOW they have a physical health issue. For example high blood pressure. These topics are covered in June 2018 Panorama, but obviously there is a need for the people who access our services to get this sort of information every day. This is why the team at Flourish Australia developed a new Physical Health web site.

The new 'microsite' is based upon a 'card system' (there are more than 30 cards and they exist in hard copy packs as well as online). Online, people who access Flourish Australia's services will have the opportunity to access whichever of the cards they are interested in and use them as portals to access Physical Health information. For example, if you click on the card for Obesity it opens up links to various sites where you can get reliable information about it and how you can deal with it.

The team of Jade, Mark Orr and Kian Kok Lau worked on its development for some time. They piloted designs for the cards, consulting widely with people who would be using the site. Jade said that people who access our services reported that they wanted a strong visual emphasis and that they wanted the site to be organised by health topics.

'The new web site means that they don't have to raise topics directly with a support worker. It allows you to identify your Physical Health risks early for yourself.' Jade said. Of course, support workers are always available to assist, 'It allows people to make a choice to investigate things using the cards or the web site, then get the information and decide what steps to take in their own time.'



Understanding LGBTI health and wellbeing

By Warren Heggarty

The LGBTI community is a very diverse collection of groups, each with its own characteristics. Some of these groups, for example, concern same sex attraction. Others are related to gender identity.

Dr Adam Bourne (above), a researcher from the UK now based at La Trobe University, Melbourne, says that the one thing that unites all LGBTI people is 'sharing some sense of being different.' Beyond the diversity, there are three broad points that apply to LGBTI people as a whole and which health providers need to understand:

1. There are specific health issues that have a disproportionate affect upon various LGBTI groups. Examples include the effect of HIV upon gay men and anxiety upon trans* people.
2. There is stigma and discrimination, often stemming from a lack of knowledge about LGBTI people.
3. There are certain policies and procedures which health providers can choose that can make LGBTI groups feel welcome and thus contribute to solving the above.

Disproportionate

In a training lecture held on 27 June 2018, Adam sketched some of the specific health issues. The overall conclusion we draw from this sketch is that there is a disproportionate burden of health and wellbeing issues affecting LGBTI people.

For example Lesbian and Bisexual women are more likely than average to be overweight, more likely to have type 2 diabetes, more likely to drink alcohol to excess, more likely to smoke, and more likely to have poor mental health. Bisexual women particularly report high levels of anxiety and depression. There also tends to be less attention to preventative measures such as pap tests.

Gay and Bisexual men are more likely to use and abuse drugs, to have HIV and to have HPV anal cancer. Australia has done quite well compared to other countries in terms of early detection of HIV, but some other figures are alarming. Gay and Bisexual men experience four times the level of anxiety and depression and six times the level of suicide and self-harm when compared to the general population.

"Making it easy for people to disclose safely"

People who are Transgender, Intersex and gender diverse have been the subject of much less research. However the research that does exist is alarming. In a survey of 800 people cited by Adam, 49 percent had attempted suicide and 75 percent had reported anxiety and depression. There is also the problem of having to disclose and even 'explain' their gender status over and over again, not always to empathetic or understanding.

Stigma and discrimination

Adam says that at the root of the additional ill health lies stigma and discrimination. Members of LGBTI groups are more likely to be single and less likely to have contact with family. As a result they become more heavily reliant on aged care, which raises significant challenges in its own right.

Many health care workers have a limited level of understanding of the issues relating to LGBTI people. Adam says that in the USA, only seven hours of an entire medical degree course is devoted to LGBTI issues.

Few LGBTI people are confident that aged care services would be able to understand or meet their needs. One third have never told their own GP, and

this is even higher in rural areas. The widespread existence of stigmatising views against LGBTI people among people aged 65 and over can lead people 'back into the closet,' unable to be open about their sexuality or gender identity.

Welcoming

Adam says that it is 'hard to overemphasise' the importance of making it safe for LGBTI people to disclose their sexuality or gender identity when attending health services. Here are six key points that can make a positive difference.

1. Visible signs that the service is welcoming to LGBTI people have a 'profoundly positive affect' on people. A clear policy of non-discrimination, prominently displayed will make a good welcome mat.
2. Supporting service users and their families, while keeping assumptions in check and using neutral, non-gendered language.
3. Making it easy for people to disclose safely – bearing in mind that not all LGBTI people have an identity that is 100 per cent 'set in concrete.'
4. Using inclusive language, reflecting terms the people use of themselves.
5. Having mechanisms for addressing discrimination.
6. Continuous reflection and staff development.

Outcomes

There is research on the 'economic cost of homophobia.' However, Adam acknowledged that because of ethical considerations it is not possible to conduct randomised trials to test what sort of difference these approaches make. However, two points for which we do have evidence are:

1. When the right conditions exist, the people who provide services feel more confident in working with LGBTI people.
2. LGBTI people who are LESS fearful of discrimination are MORE likely to seek help for their issues. If they feel safe to disclose, it means that their health worker can ask the right questions. A service that is welcoming and accepting towards LGBTI people will generate a good name and recommendations through the grapevine.

How Flourish Australia welcomes LGBTI people

Some of the things we are committed to, from the Board down include:

1. Making our services welcoming and working with people in culturally safe and respectful ways;
2. Treating individuals with dignity and respect and providing an environment that is free from prejudice, bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination;
3. Providing staff with the knowledge skills and training they need to understand and meet their inclusion and diversity responsibilities.

Flourish Australia provides LGBTI specific health services information on our Physical Health and Wellbeing website. We are also part of the 'Welcome Here' project <https://www.welcomehere.org.au>

The Rainbow Network

The Rainbow Network provides opportunities for people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans* or Intersex, their families, friends and workplace supporters (sometimes called Allies) to connect and share information.

The Network contributes to Flourish Australia's ability to attract and retain engaged and motivated staff who openly draw on their unique backgrounds, experience and networks and who help us attract others to work with us and to seek our supports.

The Rainbow Network also has an online discussion forum for people within Flourish Australia. This was opened in June 2017 and has proved to be one of the most popular internal discussion forums.

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and Fair Day

In 2016, Flourish Australia participated in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras as a part of the Pride in Diversity Group. For 2017 we decided to take it even further and entered our own float. We planned to do the same for 2018,

but being the 40th anniversary, places were limited and instead we participated in the Fair Day. Flourish Australia also recognises IDAHOT, International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, and Wear it Purple Day.

Social Citizenship Think Tank

'We haven't yet heard of anybody talking about citizenship in this way' said Chief Executive Officer Designate Mark Orr at the first meeting of our new think tank in December 2017. 'It is cutting edge.' Flourish Australia has taken pains to ensure this is a co-production of as many stakeholder groups as possible. To that

end, it includes representatives of LGBTI people.

LGBTI Recovery stories

Panorama and its supplements have featured the recovery stories of LGBTI people. For example, Edwina Keelan described her life as a transgender woman in December 2017 and March 2018. Chris Lunstedt told readers of ACTION that in terms of his recovery journey, being gay was one of the aspects of his life that WAS working well!

Thanks to Jade Ryall and Peter Farrugia for their assistance with these articles.



Staff members: Doris, Jodi, Daniel, Clare, Totsi, and (sitting) John, Mel and Jade before

Mardi Gras

2016



Staff members Peter (left) and Annie (right) parade their placards during Mardi Gras

2017

Links to other support services for readers:
AIDS COUNCIL OF NSW
www.acon.org.au
QLD AIDS COUNCIL
www.quac.org.au



Fair Day

2018



Good times at the Medieval Fayre

by Sir Grant of Everett

Rose O’Ryan and Kelly Cook access our Windsor service. They heard that support worker Mathew Davis has been to the Medieval Fayre several times during its five year run, enjoying it very much. So they were keen on checking it out for themselves!

Each May, The Blacktown City Medieval Fayre is held over one huge weekend at Nurragingy Reserve in Blacktown. As the goal of this event is to make visitors feel as though they have stepped back into Medieval times (though with much less Black Plague and much better toilet facilities), the fields, gardens and lakes of the Nurragingy Reserve are ideal for taking the crowds into an era before industrialisation. Better yet, when you fill the Reserve with dozens of volunteers dressed up in period-appropriate garb, having sword fights and generally acting in character, this is about as close as you can get to the Medieval era.

The Fayre offers all kinds of sights and sounds that are designed to immerse visitors in Medieval culture. All the shows,

rides and demonstrations are free, and there are no surprise costs.

- “Feathered Friends Show”, seeing trained birds of prey like hawks, eagles and owls fly through the crowd and do tricks. They also had less fearsome birds like parrots and cockatoos, too.
- All kinds of professional sword-and-shield battles.
- A traditional blacksmith who shapes glowing red-hot metal like in ye olden times.
- Camel and pony rides and.
- An archery competition where the archers fired harmless foam-tipped arrows.

The only real expense you can expect on the day is purchasing lunch and there’s even a variety of Medieval-inspired dishes! “The Company of the Staple”, who expertly whipped up assorted popular culinary treats and arts and crafts from the late Medieval period. You can also buy souvenirs from the stalls if you want mementos.

According to Rose and Kelly, the number one highlight of the day was watching the Blacktown International Jousting Competition.

Held every year, this comp sees professional jousters armour up and hop onto their decorated horses to see who will claim the prestigious title. Competition is always fierce. Like all the other fights, the jousters wore historically accurate armour and dressed their horses in house colours. The audience was encouraged to cheer along their favourite warriors. What could be better than armoured Knights thundering towards each other on magnificent steeds, lances held high, trying to knock each other’s heads off?

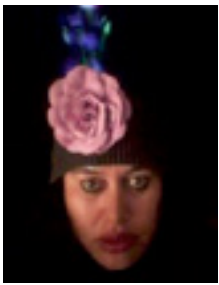
There are many dedicated historical groups who help with this huge Medieval simulation. A major component of making all this seem real is period-style combat, so the Fayre has many demonstrations that feature arms and armour from Medieval cultures like the Vikings, Normans, Saxons, Crusaders, Saracens, Byzantine and more.

There was more to the day than sword fights. Other contributors who helped to create a living Medieval time capsule included “The Order.” They brought the majesty and strength of a travelling 13th Century royal guard to life, complete with Knights and a Royal Court headed by a King and a Queen.

While all of the staff and volunteers who work at the Fayre dress up in accurate Medieval attire and really get into character, visitors are also encouraged to wear costumes. Cosplaying as Knights, Jesters and Fortune Tellers were all popular, though quite a few of the costumes were inspired by Game of Thrones and Harry Potter. There weren’t any specific rules regarding dress up, as long as people kept with the theme and had fun. Also, dressing up meant you could compete for prizes in the Best Dressed competition.

After seeing how many people had dressed up and how much fun they had, Rose and Kelly decided that they would definitely dress up when they went back to the Fayre next year. Sounds like the start of a yearly tradition!

Thanks to Laura Myer for assisting with this story.



Travel with Edwina

Te Papa Tongarewa/ Our Place Museum of NZ at Wellington

By Edwina Keelan

Wellington is the capital city of New Zealand. The centre of government 'the Beehive' is opposite Victoria University Law faculty in immaculately clean and green grounds. The air is so pure and full of oxygen! There's no shortage of café dessert bars and Kiwi fashion houses in the clean streets.

Wellington is very laid back and creeps at a slow, quiet orderly pace. Wellingtonians are ultra-friendly, from the locals to the sales assistants. The service is a very high calibre.

Wellington is the cultural hub for Arts/ Design and performance. For instance hosting the Annual Wearable Arts Show which includes a section on found objects i.e. recycling plastics paper or re-using what would turfed into the rubbish and end up in land fill.

The star attraction to many visitors is TePaPa Tongarewa a Museum translated as Our Place which is built right on the water, like Hong Kong!

The museum has free admission to all throughout and has access to persons with a disability (including high speed neon door elevators lifts and ramps with electronic boards) but it is closed on public holidays.

The smoke free rooftop level showcases the harbour of Wellington. Here you can relax in the sun and take photos.

There are a lot of activities for the



PHOTOS clockwise from top left. The Beehive, Parliament of New Zealand; One of the exhibits at Eyekonic; Lieutenant Spencer exhibit; Entry to Gallipoli, The Scale of War.
PHOTOS BY EDWINA KEELAN

children to do and café which caters to vegans.

When I visited, the current show was called Gallipoli The Scale Of War. From a design perspective it works mainly with scale. For example, the very impressive signage at the front entrance stands three stories high. Red, black and white probably suggests blood being spilt on mother earth. There was a tribute to 'Kiwi' soldiers as well as the Aussies who fought alongside them at Gallipoli in World War I.

There was a goliath sized statue of Lieutenant Spencer who lost his arm. Laying on the ground he taking aim ready to fire his pistol.

Te Maori (The Maori) collection greets you with an ornately carved dug out canoe the length of two 747 aircraft wings glued together, decorated in feathers and in ochre brown and paua (abalone) shell.

There is an impressively carved meeting house which comes from the East Cape of New Zealand in respect to Maori culture and protocol all shoes are left out the door neatly and tidily. And enjoy the beautiful golds browns and autumn colours and ochres finely detailed carv-

ings. A fine piece of Maori traditional Architecture and design dating back to the early 18th century.

The Maori Renaissance in the Paris Fashion Houses in the early 2000's saw Maori designs showcased on the catwalks in Europe.

Pacific Sisters is a celebration of cultural diversity. Pacific sisters fashion activism is a presentation of finished foundation garments, loose handwritten notes, storyboards and finished garments. There are structured, unstructured and deconstructed styles from street wear to evening wear. There are performances embracing beauty and sexuality through music song and dance. And crazy youthful colourful photographic 'exposays.'

It embraces not only Polynesian Maori but all people it screams we are all people and being part of the community in a welcoming and peaceful loving method of giving sharing receiving something noting in New Zealand's culture and heritage.

Listen to the soundtrack to Pacific Sisters on TePaPa on Spotify it is fabulon (fabulous) you will be blown away.



by Grant J Everett

Restraining people against their will is something to be avoided wherever possible. There are some cases where people consider that restraint is needed to protect people from danger **as a last resort**. Many of us, however, consider that restraint should be used far less often or not at all in the mental health units of hospitals.

Sarah Hughes from the United Kingdom shared some ideas which may encourage people to consider alternative approaches that may keep people safe without using force.

Firstly, what exactly do we mean by restraint? There are a number of different types. The least obvious is 'chemical' restraint'. This is where a person is injected with a drug against their will with the intention of making them more 'sedate.' Then there are various forms of mechanical restraint which involve restricting people from moving their arms and legs or putting them in a seclusion room.

Sarah Hughes, Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for Mental Health in the United Kingdom, had a very encouraging story to share about alternatives when she spoke at the TheMHS (Mental Health Services) Summer Conference in February 2017.

Sarah used to work at a mental health unit that was able to slash its use of mechanical restraint from several times a day to ZERO over a short time. They did this with the best solution to all

problems: prevention.

Sarah worked at a very volatile unit, and her fellow staff members restrained people who showed aggressive behaviour a lot. For some of the residents, mechanical restraint had become a daily occurrence. This understandably caused a lot of tension, stress and bad feelings all around. It is hard to regain the trust of a person after you've strapped them down and injected them against their will. This causes a snowballing effect which makes the problems become larger and larger.

"Mechanical restraint is bad for everyone" Sarah told the conference: "it's inhumane for the patients, and it poses an injury risk to the staff members. Trying to hold down somebody who's "going off" is a good way to get punched in the face or break a finger."

Something different

Having to hold the same people down day after day was about as far from ideal as you can get both for staff and patients. So some of the staff members decided that enough was enough: it was time to do something different to end this spiral.

Logically, preventing a bad situation from forming in the first place is always far more effective than de-escalating a bad situation once it has already begun. So the staff members knew the solution must lay in somehow stopping things from hitting boiling point to begin with.

They decided to test out a novel, yet simple tactic: focusing on how they woke the people up in the morning.

Like mental health units in general, there was a set time for the residents to start their day, and every single morning the staff would do the rounds, banging on all the bedroom doors shouting "Medication!"

If you wanted somebody to start the day grumpy, yelling at them would be highly effective. So, rather than giving the patients a rude awakening, the plan was for the nurses to rouse them in a more gentle way by bringing around a hot cup of coffee or tea.

The logic behind this was to try to start the day fresh, on a good note, with no baggage carried over.

Resistance

Some of the staff members, however, were highly resistant to this idea, citing that they "weren't running a bed and breakfast service." The psychiatrist in charge of the unit decided to give this technique a go, and it worked brilliantly.

This tiny change had a massive impact, and the incidence of mechanical restraint in that ward each day quickly went down to zero. This had a lasting effect on the dynamics of that unit. "Compassion needs to be at the very core of dealing with people who are in distress" said Sarah. "We need to find what the people who access our services love, live for, and get out of bed in the morning for."

Sarah Hughes is the CEO of the Centre for Mental Health in the UK. She says she 'has lots of mental' health issues in her family, which has served to fuel her career. Initially trained as a social worker, Sarah has worked in mental health and criminal justice for the last 25 years. She has managed a range of innovative community and secure services in the United Kingdom, most recently at Mind in Cambridgeshire, known for high impact campaigns including 'Stop Suicide' and 'StressLess.' She also led the research and evaluation of a pioneering 'First Night in Custody' project in a prison .

www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sarah-hughes



How to slash your energy bills

By Grant J Everett

Unless you like cold beans and icy showers in the dark, your home needs energy. And while electricity and gas prices are rising significantly over time, there's a lot we can do to slash how much we use, leading to lower bills. Using less energy also helps with climate change, making it a wallet-friendly way to help the planet. It can be as easy as using your clothesline more often than your dryer.

Our energy expenditure depends on many factors, and while every household is different, most of our energy use will be spread between heating water, warming and cooling your home, on appliances like fridges and washing machines and televisions, cooking, and for lighting.

Appliances

Air conditioners, televisions, computers and fridges and freezers use a huge amount of power, and their age and

power efficiency plays a major role in how much. It's best to turn appliances off at the wall once you've finished with them. Note that plugged-in items on standby are still using power, such as blank screens, printers, speakers and mobile phone chargers. Buying smart power boards will give you more control.

Install appliances so they can run at an optimum. Fridges, for example, shouldn't be placed next to ovens, as they'll need to work harder to stay cool. Proper care is also important, so cool food before refrigerating it, and repair busted seals so cold air doesn't leak out.

When the time comes to replace any major electrical appliances, energy-efficient models are a worthwhile investment. As appliances take up around a third of our energy bills, taking their running costs into account will save a considerable amount of money over time. To compare efficiency, check the number of stars on the appliance's rating. Also, avoid the lure of upgrading to appliances that are too big.

Note that gas appliances are not regulated for energy efficiency by the Australian government.

Water

Hot water can be the biggest energy

drain in our homes. Wallet-friendly options include solar hot water systems, heat pump water heaters, and off-peak storage hot water systems. Install water-efficient showerheads (which pay for themselves quickly), take shorter showers, wash your clothes in cold water, and only run full loads when using a washing machine or a dishwasher. On top of this, use cheaper "off-peak" power between 10pm and 7am.

Hot and cold

Every degree of temperature control guzzles heaps of energy. In Winter, you can keep cozy on a budget by closing all internal doors and only heating the rooms you are using with an energy-efficient heater. Use warmer bedding and seal draughts with tape. As heat leaks out of your windows in Winter, open curtains to let the daytime sun in, and close them before sunset.

In Summer, close your curtains during the day, and open the curtains and windows at night for the cool breeze.

Make every kilowatt count

Energy bills spell out how much power you use at set times. Comparing your bills will form a picture of your energy consumption in different seasons, allowing you to see where your money is going. Energy prices also vary from provider to provider, so be sure to compare them. If you've been on the same contract for some time, ask them if you can get a better price.

You can set up regular payments towards your bill, making it easier to budget on a fixed income, or pay monthly instead of quarterly. Check there's no increase in your rate with this option, though. Also, if you're on the pension, you are eligible for a special rate.

EnergyMadeEasy.gov.au is a free guide that compares energy contracts and estimates costs.

There should be discounts for prompt payment, so always pay on time.

Source:

yourenergysavings.gov.au/guides/reduce-your-energy-bills

Advocacy within Flourish Australia

By Warren Heggarty

People who access Flourish Australia's services also have access to an independent advocate who will work collaboratively to resolve problems and achieve a positive outcome.

Annie Sykes, Senior Independent Advocate reports directly to the Flourish Australia Board of Directors through its Service Quality and Risk Committee. This allows her to act independently of Flourish Australia's management. 'It's all about achieving justice and fairness and a voice for people with honesty and integrity.'

Annie has two important qualifications. Firstly, she has lived experience of mental health issues. And secondly, she has needed advocacy herself.

'That's why I decided to go into this sort of work. I understand the feeling of being disconnected and not having a voice and feeling that my needs somehow don't matter. But then a situation arose where someone advocated on my behalf. This caused a profound change to my outlook. I had been wronged by the system, so to speak. After someone stepped up on my behalf, I obtained an acknowledgement of wrong-doing and a written and verbal apology.

'Up until that experience, I had no belief



Above: Annie Sykes at a youth forum in Olympic Park last year.

Contact the Senior Independent Advocate on Wednesdays, 9:30am to 1:30pm, on (02) 9393 9029

advocate@flourishaustralia.org.au

that it was possible, and because of that I know what it takes to achieve a positive outcome. Since then it has been my passion.'

Annie realises that many people with a complaint (for example) start from a position of perceived powerlessness. Her job will usually be a very simple one of helping people move from 'having no say' to 'having a plan.'

'You might consider something that you might not even think warrants advocacy. But there is no good allowing some problem to 'slow burn.' So in the past people have said "why don't you have a word to Annie about that?" That allows a person to realise that they do matter and that we can just sit together and talk and then put a simple plan together. You have to come forward in the first place but if need be I can go to you as well. Sometimes we might decide to meet up with other people involved as well. It's about laying the groundwork for a resolution.'

'There have been occasions when a complaint does lead to a formal com-

Direct or indirect advocacy, clarity is important

By Annie Sykes

At present, business services employees and other people who access our services are 'knocking at the door' so to speak, but I have also found peer workers need support too.

If you are a person who accesses Flourish Australia's services, then I can provide direct advocacy. If you are not a service user, then I can still

support you in other 'indirect' ways.

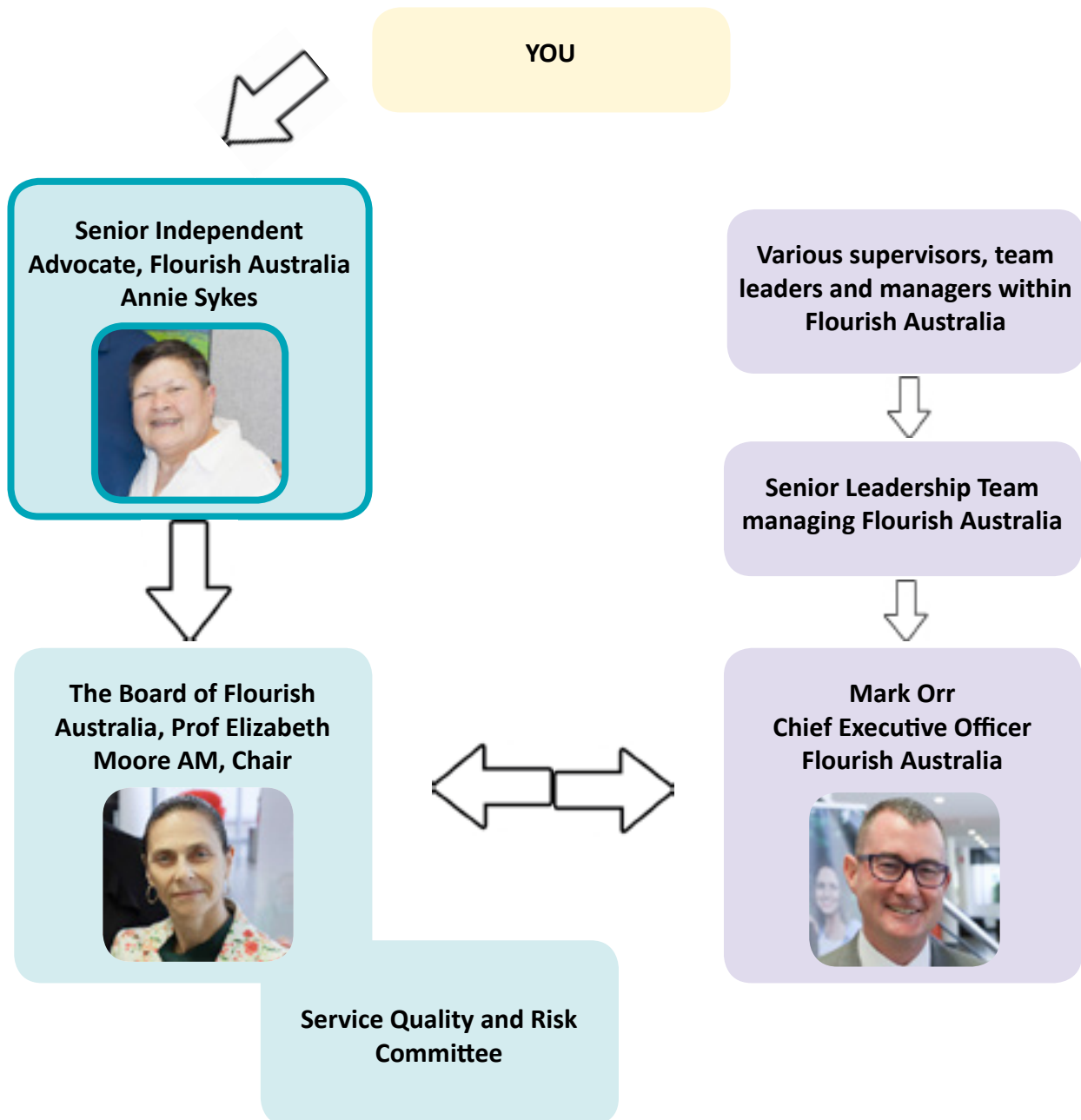
We are a fairly large and growing organisation. We need to be sure that people are always confident that there is a just, fair and supportive process available for their issue to be aired. I believe my experience helps me sense when a little confusion about processes might be present.

Because of people's different circumstances, we need to tailor our response to the individual circumstances, but I will always arrange a suitable time for both of us to meet. Usually an hour.

This meeting is to help us connect, to engender a feeling of trust and to hear what has caused the person to come forward. I will then be able to advise them about appropriate channel for them to take it further, if need be.

Overall, it is important for our organisation, all our managers and workers on all our sites to be aware of the best way to handle issues, to foster a safe, co-operative and transparent process.

Senior Independent Advocate



Governance

plaints process and in those cases I have accompanied the person through every step of the process. "Are you ready for this?" I'll ask them before each step and if people prefer to stop the process we can do that too.'

The Board of PRA (a predecessor of Flourish Australia) first created the role of Independent Advocate in 2001. It had been the vision of PRA CEO Phil Nadin and senior managers Sacha Maller and Janet Meagher AM. Annie was the first appointed to the role and has continued up until now, as Senior Independent Advocate for Flourish Australia.

From its inception, the PRA board deliberately chose that the advocate be independent of company management. This was so the position could act without fear or favour and without the influence of management. The board had anticipated that senior managers might themselves be involved in issues brought up with the advocate. By reporting directly to the board, the advocate was less likely to be inadvertently influenced.

'The idea has not changed since 2001. Without this autonomy I'd be compromised,' Annie told Panorama. 'I'd be managed and I'd be governed.'

Management

'So there is no chain of command involved' said Annie. 'No red tape. You can contact me about ANYTHING. If you have an issue to resolve and a desire to reconnect and re-engage, I'm not restricted by a hierarchy. I have great autonomy and freedom to be able to sit down with you and move things along at your own pace. It is very much a person led, recovery focused experience in which you're the boss, but I've got your back!'

Up until now we have relied largely on the grape vine and word of mouth, but the organisation is now much larger so I am looking at how the role can grow along with the organisation as a whole.

Your Physical Health and Wellbeing

Contact Jade Ryall, program manager, B.O.T.H. (02) 9393 9009



All around the world you will see people practicing Tai Chi out doors. These people are outside the Temple of Heaven, Beijing, China.

Photo by Craig Nagy creative commons.

daily life.

Always wear loose fitting clothes and comfortable shoes when you attend a class. Some centres allow a free trial session. Cost is around \$20 per hour. The benefit of going to a live class is that the instructor can tell you if you are doing the movements properly. This could be beneficial especially when you first begin. It's also a chance to meet new people! Later on when you become more seasoned you could buy or borrow a DVD of Tai Chi lessons from your local library. You could even go on YouTube (for free) to become acquainted with the movements to see what you're getting into.

Tai Chi for Physical and Mental Health

It's great for people of a more mature age

By Meredith

As many of us reach our mature years, the thought of vigorous exercise becomes less inviting and sometimes even impractical. High intensity exercises can be damaging to fragile bones and may strain weak muscles. That's why Tai Chi can be a much more agreeable alternative!

Tai Chi is often described as meditation in motion. It is a series of slow motion, low impact movements, often with artistic names such as "wave hands like clouds" or "swallow skimming the pond" that evoke the natural world. As you move you breathe deeply and naturally focusing your attention on body sensations. The movements are usually circular, never forced, and muscles are relaxed rather than tense. Joints are not fully extended or bent and connective tissues are not stretched. It can be easily adapted for anyone including those in wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

Research from Harvard Medical School has shown that Tai Chi can improve balance and reduce risk of falls which is beneficial for an aging population. Another study showed evidence that it can increase bone density for women with thinning bones.

Other health benefits for Tai Chi are said to be :-

- reduction of stress, anxiety, depression and enhancement of mood
- increased aerobic capacity and muscle strength
- more energy and stamina
- enhanced flexibility, balance and agility
- lower blood pressure and improved heart health
- reduced inflammation

Because of the need for careful attention when doing Tai Chi, regular practice may be beneficial for people at risk of Alzheimer's Disease. A study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine indicated that Tai Chi can assist people living with type 2 diabetes.

The goal of Tai Chi is to bring the mind and body back to a total state of relaxation and calm or in "total balance", so it can function smoothly again. If you have limitations in your musculoskeletal system, have a serious illness or take medications which make you dizzy check with your doctor first. However, more than likely your doctor will encourage you to take up these gentle exercises. It may take a few months for the benefits to be felt but many have found it causes them to become more active in their

So why not give Tai Chi a try? With perseverance and practice it may give you the lift you need.

Sources :

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-health-benefits-of-tai-chi> <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,332063,00.html> <http://harvardmagazine.com/2010/01/researchers-study-tai-chi-benefits> <http://www.prevention.com/health/brain-health/health-benefits-tai-chi> <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/265507.php>

BACK ON TRACK HEALTH

Recommended health screening tests- talk to your GP

- Annual Health Check
- Self checking (skin, teeth, breasts)
- Skin exams
- Dental checkups
- Testicle checks
- Cervical Screening
- Pregnancy
- Blood pressure
- Blood tests
- Obesity tests
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Diabetes
- Mammogram screening
- Prostate check
- Bowel cancer screening
- Vision and hearing tests
- Bone density
- Sexual Health Check

BACK ON TRACK HEALTH Your Physical Health and Wellbeing

Contact Jade Ryall, program manager, B.O.T.H. 02 9393 9009

Diabetes is very common among people with mental health issues. That's why we need

A three pronged attack on diabetes

By Grant J Everett

I wasn't surprised when the doctor diagnosed me with Type-2 diabetes. After all, I had a tonne of risk factors: eating treat foods too regularly, minimal exercise, taking certain medications, family history, being overweight, and having mental health issues. The first clue was a blood count showing my bad fats were too high (diabetes isn't purely about sugar). The test to confirm it was simple: they took blood, I drank some sugar water, and I waited two hours for a second blood test. My blood sugar levels (BSLs) had tripled as confirmation.

As diabetes is chronic, this diagnosis spurred me to get my health in order. I manage it in three ways: exercise, a healthy diet, and medication.

EXERCISE

By being more active I'm also hoping to lose weight from my midsection, increase my lung capacity and endurance, and generally get fitter. Exercise also allows your insulin to work more effectively, lowers your blood pressure, and reduces your risk of heart disease.

DIET

Food-wise, I've been reining things in. No more ice cream binges or inhaling entire meat-lovers pizzas. Sugary drinks are a thing of the past. I have one alcoholic beverage once a week, but I use diet mixers.



Rather than ditch my cookbooks on a bonfire, I just made a few adjustments. A good example is fettuccine boscaiola, a creamy pasta dish with bacon and mushrooms. As you'd assume, it's not the healthiest of foods. My kinder version substitutes light thickened cream (half the fat) and lean shortcut bacon rashers. A mega-healthy alternative is a tomato-based sauce. Eating out has changed, too: instead of cheesy bacon fries as an entree followed by a rack of razorback ribs with mashed potato, I get steak with vegetables. I'm glad I don't have to live on steamed celery and mineral water.

In addition to eating right, I also need to eat regularly, or my BSL can go so low that I have a sugar crash. Before I learned about sugar crashes, I thought these unpleasant experiences I'd been having were anxiety attacks. I would get lightheaded and dizzy and shake, and my body and mind would feel horrible. Now, all I need to do is have some delicious medicine: jelly beans. Chewing up half a dozen works wonders in minutes. If only all meds were so tasty... The problem is, they only work as medicine during a sugar crash. At all other times jelly beans are lollies. Orange or apple juice will also work.

MEDICATION

I'm taking medication to manage my glucose levels. While this should minimise complications down the track, meds are to be used in conjunction with healthy

eating and physical activity, not as a substitute. The GP warned me this pill could lower the effectiveness of some medications like the ones that I take, so I need to stay vigilant in case my mental health slides. Alternative medications are available.

MANAGING MY DIABETES

And how am I supposed to know if the medication and lifestyle changes are working? Getting my blood sugar levels (BSLs) checked is the best way to confirm that my lifestyle changes are having an effect. The desired blood sugar level range is between four and six, and staying around this level will help prevent many complications. Your healthcare provider can help with blood sugar level monitoring, or you can purchase your own testing kit.

Another way of telling if something is up is that if my blood sugar level is through the ceiling, my body will crave water to dilute the glucose in it. So if I get dry-mouth that won't go away no matter what, I'll review what I've eaten and keep an eye on it in future.

DISCLAIMER: Everybody is different, so it is important to consult a doctor to discuss diabetes and any major changes you may need to make to your lifestyle.

Sources:

www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/managing-type-2

BACK ON TRACK HEALTH Your Physical Health and Wellbeing

Contact Jade Ryall, program manager, B.O.T.H. 02 9393 9009



New Deals for Meals

By Kathy Te Nuku

At Harris Park Prestige Packing Co, a business service of Flourish Australia, we noticed that a lot of employees were not bringing or buying their lunch. A lot of people would actually be skipping meals. We talk a lot about obesity, but less about not eating and skipping meals. This is also a widespread problem. It's hard to watch, too. We worked out a way around that.

I found out just through interviewing people that there are companies like Cave Man Kitchen or Tender Loving Cuisine that can help people with meal preparation. NDIS core supports funding will pay a certain amount for meal preparation and employees pay for the ingredients.

We have 15 to 20 employees who go through Tender loving Cuisine. They do all sorts of very healthy meals. 'They love the meals, which get delivered to home every fortnight. It also helps people with budgeting. You get 14 meals and 8 desserts and I think it costs \$50 to \$70.

It takes a little pressure off people and actually encourages them in the long run to take an active interest in doing their own food preparation. There can be a number of barriers to that to begin with, not just the motivation and the knowl-

edge, but the need for cooking and food preparation utensils, and a working oven.

We tried a canteen concept here, like they have at Prestige Packing Co. Marrickville, but it didn't last long. We often have a fruit box where we bring in fruit for everybody. There are some companies that actually will donate fruit for this purpose.

Once people are eating regularly, we can make an event out of meal time. That is where International Cuisine Days comes in, once a month at Harris Park. It pushes their confidence up.

Eating is a social thing and meal time is very important.

Healthy Fruit and Veg Box at Embark Cottage

By Narelle Passlow

At Flourish Australia's Embark Cottage in Blacktown, we have a connection with a farm called Scibberas produce. This is at Freeman's reach in the Hawkesbury River valley just outside the Sydney metropolitan area.

People who access our service reckon it's a good deal.

For \$10 they get a box which is half fruit and half vegetables. It's picked that morning, so it's fresh and they don't overdo it with chemicals like some places! It just happens that I live out that way, so members make their orders through me. We use those veggies in cooking at Embark cottage which we do every weekday except Monday.

There is one member in particular who is heavily involved in the preparation, that's Adah Sedakah. Where there are leftovers, we fill containers and charge \$1 for people to take them home with them. Like a lot of members at Harris Park, some of our members have provision for meal preparation in their NDIS packages so that makes it an even better deal.



Reading Writing **Hotline**

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Women's Health at Windsor a Priority

Promoting women's health at Flourish Australia's Windsor service

By Grant J Everett

The George Street branch of Flourish Australia in Windsor holds regular get-togethers for the people who access their service, and their morning teas are especially popular. The people who are supported at Windsor will often come up with new ideas for social groups that will help promote social inclusion and interaction, so the staff members are always sure to listen.

As a part of the Quarterly Health Promotions that Flourish Australia locations have been running for a while now, George Street decided to host a high tea that would specifically focus on promoting good health for the female gender. As more women access our Windsor service than men, tailoring a group towards this demographic makes a lot of sense.

This special event was arranged by Mental Health Worker Sandra Skara and Peer Worker Maddie Campbell.

The women's high tea primarily aimed to break down the barriers surrounding female physical health in a safe, supportive environment. They particularly

"We are very grateful to be able to spend our time with these ladies, and they've all shared their appreciation for the staff they get to work with," Laura Meyers, Manager, Windsor.

"It was a good afternoon where lots of useful information was shared. The group of ladies were very open and we enjoyed each other's company," Kelly Cook

focused on illnesses and other relevant health topics that might not come up in general conversation all that often. The health content of these discussions covered mammograms, menopause and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as physical demonstrations of both aerobic and anaerobic exercises. As breast cancer is one of the biggest killers of Australian women and everyone in the group fell into the age bracket where self-checks and regular mammograms are essential, breast health was the core topic of the day.

In order to get everyone involved, Maddie and Sandra used an interactive approach that encouraged participants to ask questions and share their knowledge. And while this group was specifically tailored towards the women who attend George Street, its content would be relevant to any women in the community over the age of 40.

Goals of the women's health high tea

1. To create an informative discussion about women's health issues, especially concerning the topics that may not come up in everyday conversation
2. To help the participants build on their existing friendships with one another
3. To enjoy a delicious high tea prepared and served by the staff

Left to right: Angela Coppack, Chrissy Gibbs, Liz Jones, Claire Henderson and Rose O'Ryan

As all the women who attended this event were already friends, Maddie and Sandra used this event to build even stronger bonds between all of them.

Follow up

Sandra and Maddie measured the success of their informative morning tea by phoning all of the participants and simply asking them what they thought. This is a very important part of the process, as honest feedback helps our staff members to do an even better job next time. When it came to finding out what everyone had enjoyed the most and were likely to remember, there were two highlights: first, the delicious afternoon tea that had been prepared the day before in Maddie's art group, and the free-flowing discussions that took place throughout the day came a close second. All the women agreed that they had learned a lot from Sandra's interactive approach and that the process had been effective. In addition to great refreshments and learning important facts about their health, the participants felt socially fulfilled by being able to build on their existing friendships.

Success! Looks like combining a popular event with an informative group was a great idea!

**Flourish Australia
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WINDSOR NSW 2756
02 9393 9399
1300 779 270**



LEFT: Mark Anackie created his own look. If you feel you have the knack for something, why not follow where it leads? PHOTO BY MILIN THAKER

The difference between goals and dreams and the great value of both

By Grant J Everett

Goals come in all shapes and sizes. They can be small, like getting out of bed before 1pm on weekdays, doing the washing up instead of leaving dirty dishes on the sink, or learning how to pay bills online. They can also be much bigger, like completing a TAFE course, finding employment, or living independently. But one thing that ALL goals have in common is they need to be attainable. Not necessarily easy or quick, but attainable.

Dreams, on the other hand, have no limit. You might dream of living to 145, or to becoming a best-selling author, or emigrating to Mars. And while dreams don't have to be realistic, their key benefit is that they can be used to work out what goals you need to attain along the way. So if you want to live to 145, quit smoking, eat right and exercise. Want to be a major author? Read lots of books and practise your writing. Want to move to Mars? Become friends with Elon Musk. Just keep moving forward one step at a time, and opportunities will naturally unfold.

Say your dream is to be a make-up artist

for major Hollywood movies. While it might feel unrealistic to become the one who applies Jennifer Lawrence's eye liner or crafts convincing bullet holes on Tom Cruise's forehead, this dream would lead to learning bankable skills and pave the way towards possibilities you might not have expected. Remember there will always be a demand for make-up artists, and the amount you can earn dolling up a bridal party would make your eyes spin like a slot machine.

Here's an example of plotting your way towards becoming a film make-up artist.

WHAT IS IT?

A film make-up artist helps bring movies to life in all sorts of ways, like beautifying actors, making them look older or younger, and working with prosthetics and masks.

WHERE DO I START?

Learn the basics of applying make-up, research the tricks that make-up artists use, and learn to have an eye for shades, colours, textures and products. Practise as much as possible by trying out new techniques on yourself and on friends and family, continually aiming to improve your speed, accuracy and detail.

IS THERE ANY FORMAL TRAINING I CAN DO?

You could start with an accredited course like a Certificate III in Make-Up at TAFE. If you really want to take your beautician skills to the next level, you could also learn to do hair and nails. However, film make-up artists need accreditation from a specialised school, as they have to learn things that the average make-up artist isn't trained in, like latex masks, prosthetics, Terminator-with-his-face-half-burnt-off effects, that sort of thing.

HOW CAN I GET MY FOOT IN

THE DOOR?

Film make-up schools may provide apprenticeships and on-the-job training, and might be able to help you gain work after graduation. Learning on a film set is an invaluable opportunity, and definitely one worth taking if it's offered, even if it's only an unpaid internship. You need to start somewhere! As getting anywhere in the entertainment industry is all about who you know, begin networking immediately. There are unions and groups for professional make-up artists who can help you get in contact with the right people. Also, hang out where people in the industry go, and make the most of email and social media.

DO I NEED TO KEEP ANYTHING IN MIND?

Film make-up artists work with famous people, so you need to be discreet. Avoid the urge to share what you see on set, especially with the media. Your clients need to know you can be trusted, or you're out of the circle of trust for good. When dealing with stars, be polite, level-headed, patient, and adaptable. There's also the usual expectations of any job: have a good attitude, arrive on time, always be willing to learn, and don't pretend you know everything.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD DO?

- Working as a professional make-up artist is like any other for-profit business: you need to balance your finances, keep track of accounts, use time management skills, return phone calls and emails in a timely manner, and conduct yourself in a professional way.
- Record your best work in a portfolio to demonstrate your skills. You should also have a digital portfolio, like a slideshow or a YouTube video. Be sure to include pictures that demonstrate a wide range of abilities and techniques.
- Always strive for excellence. Do your best work every time. Celebrities don't tolerate it when somebody isn't giving their all, and word will get around if you aim for average. Aim high and you might surprise everyone, including yourself.

Source:
www.wikihow.com/Become-a-Film-Makeup-Artist



“Peer Work in Australia: A new future for mental health” book launched

The best way to understand the future, they say, is to understand the past. When you read through the 350 page book *Peer Work in Australia*, you will realise that the development of peer work has been a tough struggle. Having passed successfully through many trials, peer work is now in a strong position for the future.

At every turn in its development there were obstacles. The traditional view of people with mental health issues has been centred on weaknesses, vulnerabilities and inadequacies, and maybe some of those opposed to the rise of peer work thought that such people would just drop the idea.

Some people in the mental health sector even saw peer work as a kind of threat. But the people who championed this approach (‘Legends’ as pioneering peer worker Lilly Wu described them) would not be deterred. So today, having a growing peer workforce is something to boast about- it is a selling point. It has become the future of Mental Health

Services.

‘Peer Work in Australia’ is a new book edited by people from both Mind and Flourish Australia. It was the brainchild of former Flourish Australia General Manager Janet Meagher AM and former Mind CEO Dr Gerry Naughton. The book was launched in Canberra on 12 September 2018 by the Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health.

“The book is the culmination of months of amazing work’ said Flourish Australia CEO Mark Orr, “undertaken by an Editorial Working Group made up of Janet Meagher AM, with Anthony Stratford and Erandathie Jayakody from Mind Australia; and Fay Jackson, Tim Fong and Kim Jones from Flourish Australia. The group provided leadership and guidance for this project, as well as contributions to the book, on top of their day to day work.”

It contains a very ‘eclectic diversity of voices’ Mark says. The book is a great contribution to our reputation in the mental health sector.

The first three sections look at the overall scope of peer work in Australia with overviews of how peer work has changed the culture of Mind Australia and Flourish Australia.

There follows a review of the experience in four states and territories. Section five has three chapters on values and peer work (there’s even a chapter on Peer Work and climate change, by Tim

ABOVE: Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for Health at the launch as Anthony Stratford and Fay Jackson look on.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JANET MEAGHER AM

Heffernan!).

Section 6 looks at the specialised developments within peer work, like ‘peer supervision,’ youth peer work. Also in this section Michael Burge discusses the shaping of a national qualification for peer workers. Flick Grey tells the story of the ‘roller coaster ride’ of Intentional Peer Support.

The seventh and final chapter ‘A force for change’ looks into the future. Its two chapters relate to the peer worker workshop reported in June 2018 Panorama (Heggarty, 2018). On 23 March 2018, 41 peers gathered to thrash out the question of the future of peer work in Australia. Leanne Craze and David Plant distilled the proceedings into their final chapter, “A force for change” (Craze & Plant, 2018) .

All of the authors and editors are people who have personally taken part in the story they tell. This is what we call being experts by way of experience.

You can buy a copy of the book here:

<https://www.flourishaustralia.org.au/peer-work-australia>

References

Craze, L., & Plant, D. (2018). A force for change. In J. Meagher, A. Stratford, F. Jackson, E. Jayakody, & T. Fong, *Peer Work in Australia: A new future for mental health* (pp. 297-332). Sydney : RichmondPRA and Mind Australia.
Heggarty, W. (2018, June). Lived Experience has come a long way. *Panorama*, p. 51.



Employment Panorama

Working in Water!

An employment pathway
that will have you in the
swim!

By Warren Heggarty

It may surprise you how many employment opportunities there are in the field of sport. Leisure and Recreation is a major employment category and to give you some idea of what is out there, we will zero in on just one activity: SWIMMING.

The ability to swim and to be safe in water (pools, inland waters and surf) is crucial in this country, especially as 90 per cent of the population live near the coast. Further inland though, you have the 40 degree plus summer days that are a regular feature of the bush and the outer Western suburbs of Sydney. Besides, swimming is fun and so learning to swim is something with a high demand. Older people too can benefit from swimming because it is a low impact physical activity that gives a good workout for the muscles without wrecking your knees, for example.

It's not just summer, though. Penrith swimming pool was a bit quiet when we

photographed it above in the middle of winter, but there are plenty of indoor swimming centres that go year round and people who go fishing really ought to learn to swim.

Some of the roles which attract reasonable pay include the following which we located by looking at the AUSTSWIM site:

- [Swimming instructor](#)
- [Seasonal pool lifeguard \(Summer work\)](#)
- [Lifeguards in indoor pools](#)
- [Surf life savers](#)
- [Swimming centre manager](#)
- [Water safety instructor](#)
- [Diving coach](#)
- [Volunteer worker at swimming competitions](#)
- [Fitness centre worker/manager](#)
- [Squad coach for elite swim-](#)

[mers, rowers or synchronised swimmers](#)

And then there are positions such as hydrotherapy or physiotherapy workers, some of whose time might be spent in the pool. Not to mention Aqua/ Water aerobics!

All of these jobs have one thing in common. You need to get a qualification that says you can handle yourself in the water and perform necessary first aid if someone gets in trouble. Two of the qualifications that employers ask for include:

- [Teacher of swimming and water safety \(Swim Australia\)](#)
- [First Aid Certificate, including Cardiopulmonary resuscitation](#)

Then there are some specialist qualifications depending on the type of person you are working with, for example, Infant and preschool aquatics.

How do you get such qualifications? AUSTSWIM teacher of swimming and water safety qualifications are run over 16-20 contact hours and equip you with knowledge suitable to gain a licence. There are NO PREREQUISITES other than a reasonable level of fitness. Read more about it at NSW Royal Lifesaving's web site. It is packed full of interesting information for the aquatically minded.

So what are you waiting for? Summer is coming. Make a splash!

www.royallifesaving.com.au/training

www.austswim.com.au/Teachers/Employment/JobBoard.aspx



Employment Panorama looks at a profession where you can make some serious money. And work some seriously long hours...

Not all work in the legal field requires that you have a law degree. Solicitors and Barristers require double degrees, Paralegals require TAFE or University qualifications, Secretaries do not necessarily have to have qualifications, though it would be a help.

Lawyers

In NSW and Queensland the roles of Solicitors and Barristers are quite separate but this is not so in some other states.

Australian Department of Education's job guide for NSW and ACT lists the following personal requirements as essential for a legal career.

- Good oral and written communication skills
- Able to understand, analyse and use facts quickly and logically
- Able to work under pressure and deal with a variety of people
- Integrity and good character.

Solicitors

Most new lawyers begin their careers as a solicitor, working in a legal office then work their way up the legal ladder (see Legal Partner box). Solicitors usually, but not always, work in firms, ranging from two people to hundreds of people in size.

Lawyers can also work as in-house legal counsel for companies, or for government departments, or in the community services sector. Some lawyers become judges associates which leads us to the other main type of lawyer, the barrister.

Jobs in the field of the law



Barristers

Some lawyers choose to become members of The Bar. Barristers receive work by referral from solicitors and are engaged to represent clients in court. Barristers must have a sound knowledge of the rules of evidence and court procedure. They need to work out the appropriate strategy and arguments to present in court and also to give advice in matters of law. Barristers generally operate independently rather than in partnership. And yes, in some jurisdictions they wear wigs and gowns!

Magistrates

Magistrates and Judges preside over court cases and have usually worked their way up through the ranks as solicitors and barristers.

Magistrates hear criminal matters to determine whether defendants will be committed for trial. They also judge criminal offences without a jury.

Judges

Judges preside over civil and criminal proceedings in courts. They make sure that trials are run fairly and according to the rules of law and evidence.

Legal Secretary and Paralegal jobs

While waiting to complete your law degrees you will need to earn money so why not look at jobs that do not necessarily require legal qualifications!

In the advertisements that Panorama looked at, there were a number of things that recurred time and time again. Law firms often stipulate that their employees be hardworking, well presented and have attention to detail. Actually, these qualities will serve you well in ANY sort of occupation.

Legal Secretary

A law firm in Tamworth NSW recently advertised for a 'Legal Secretary and Personal Assistant to Partner.' Essential requirements were:

- A Fast and accurate typing and dictation transcription
- B Interpersonal skills
- C Oral Communication skills
- D Written Communication Skills
- E Organisation skills
- F Attention to detail
- G Able to work autonomously/initiative
- H Teamwork
- I Microsoft Word and Outlook
- J Well presented
- K Hard working

Legal Office Junior

In Sydney, a firm advertised for an Office Junior to do reception, mail and court filing, set up meetings, do photocopying and printing, take care of office supplies and do other secretarial work. The following were essential requirements:

- B, C, D, E, G, H, J and K above plus
- L Eager to learn
- M Honesty and Integrity
- N Time management
- O Multi tasking
- P Confident communicator

Family Law Secretary

In Wollongong a firm is advertising for a Family Law Secretary and they require that you have a general experience across all family law matters- so you would need some previous legal office experience. The other essentials emphasised are:

- F, H and J above, plus
- Q Take ownership of tasks as signed to you
- R Focused on quality service to clients

Paralegal

A law firm in Parramatta NSW was looking for a Paralegal to work on motor vehicle accidents and possibly later move into family law. The work involves drafting particulars and applications, and handling personal injury and liability claims, so you will need some knowledge of legal processes. There would seem to be a lot of sensitive communications in this job because it stipulates 'working with other solicitors, insurance companies, barristers, doctors by managing challenging conversations.' Other

essential requirements were:

- B, C, D, I and R above plus:
- S Knowledge of LEAP (a legal practice management software)
- T Able to apply compassion and empathy with clients

Notes

What is a Legal Partner?

The usual career path of a lawyer looks like this: training, employment as a solicitor, promotion to associate in a law firm, promotion to a senior associate, promotion to partner. The term 'partner' in a law firm, accounting firm, consulting firm, or financial firm usually indicates co-ownership of a business partnership in which the partners get a share of the profits ("equity partners.") The top of the ladder is 'principal' or 'principal partner.' To become a principal (partner) of a law firm or a sole practitioner, you may need to undertake a Legal Practice Management Course (The College of Law).

Multitasking

You will often see 'multitasking' in job ads, especially in ads which involve secretarial or reception work. No one can really do two things at once. What they mean by 'multitasking' is the ability to be interrupted, to determine the relative priority of the interruption, and to choose whether to go ahead with the interruption or continue with what you were doing until completion. If you constantly reassess your priorities you can certainly give the impression that you are doing several things at once.

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The College of Law. (n.d.). Career options for lawyers. Retrieved August 6, 2018, from The College of Law: <https://www.collaw.edu.au/your-career/career-options-for-lawyers>
Australian Department of Education Job Guide for NSW and ACT





Driving Buses



By Warren Heggarty

Right now in Sydney, there are recruitment campaigns to try to get more bus drivers. You can tell the transport companies are having trouble getting enough drivers because their advertising is trying to SELL the very idea of driving a bus, making it look a little more glamorous than perhaps you thought it was!

Take Transdev's Be a Journeymaker campaign. Hannah is not your typical bus driver. She used to be in retail. But now she says 'I am a journeymaker.' A 'depot lead driver' to be precise, which implies she has had some career progression beyond the position of a mere bus driver.

'At Transdev,' the advertising says, 'we believe public transport plays an important part in how a city comes to life. Our day to day work influences our families, friends and future generations where they live, work and play.'

Transdev CEO Rene Lalande says "Journeymakers are people who make trips

memorable. They share their spirit, personality and enthusiasm with everyone they encounter," If that is what the new breed of bus driver is all about, it makes you want to top up your Opal card and make journey, or better still, check the local bus company for job vacancies.

"Do you want a new job?" asks State Transit, the government bus company. "Paid training? \$70k starting salary? State Transit is hiring bus drivers."

So even the government is trying to sell the idea of being a bus driver.

You're IT

Why would people NOT want to be a bus driver? One of the reasons is stress. That is, at least on inner city runs you have the problem of traffic snarls plus a million things going on at once. On a bus, the Driver is both front desk receptionist, back room functionary, mechanic, cleaner and CEO. You're it.

On the other hand, with better commu-

nications systems these days, drivers have better back up than previous generations. Still, when it's a rainy day (that's every 2.5 days on average in coastal Sydney) and the passengers are all bad tempered, wet and out of credit on their Opal cards, it can be a challenge. And when you're late, don't worry they'll let you know about it!

A more serious problem with the profession is safety on certain runs in certain areas. I remember a passenger randomly hit me on the back of the head. The driver was alerted and confronted the pugnacious commuter, who denied it. 'He did it!' the other passengers said in unison. When ordered off the bus, he spat on the driver. It could have been worse, but he knew he was outnumbered.

What bus drivers are responsible for

Keeping the network moving by reporting incidents and traffic delays (this is part of the communications 'backup' mentioned above)

Delivering great customer service (when my mother had dementia, the local Bankstown bus drivers would always take her to her stop when she got lost)

Getting our customers to their destination safely and on time.

Helping customers to use the Opal ticketing system. Many bus passengers are old people who have had to give up driving. It is hard for younger people to understand how unnatural or even suspicious modern technology is to some elderly people who prefer cash and paper tickets.

What you need for the job

State Transit outlines the following



essential requirements for driving the blue buses.

A: You need to be a permanent resident of Australia or citizen of Australia or New Zealand

B: You need to have held an unrestricted Australian Driver's Licence for the last 12 months

C: It goes without saying you should have a good driving history. You will really need to enjoy driving and people.

D: You must be willing to work all the shifts required of the position. Buses are not 9 to 5.

Physical Requirements

E A requirement which you might consider a little unusual is that you must maintain a weight below 130kgs and

F: You need to have a standing reach of at least 210cm.

G: You'll need to get clearance from a

medical practitioner to obtain a bus driver authority card. This authority allows you to drive a public passenger vehicle.

H: You also need to obtain a Working with Children Check clearance, although State Transit will help you out with this.

It's big

One of the advantages of working in public transport is that it is big and likely to get bigger. That means once you are in the door, a competent employee can have a wide range of opportunities to pursue.

Transdev, for example, boasts a 'global network of 83,000 colleagues in 19 countries.' And the company is growing. "To support this growth we look to the dedication, pride and passion of our people, and the camaraderie of our teams on the ground. In return we offer

ABOVE : The advertising says it all. Hannah, whose image has appeared in Transdev buses as part of a recent recruitment drive, doesn't look like a stereotypical bus driver. They are trying to attract new people who might never have thought of themselves as bus drivers. Perhaps you are one of them?

diverse career experiences in an evolving industry that's moving faster than ever before."

Remember with an ageing population, there will be more and more elderly people, many of whom have given up driving -or can't afford a private car. To them, the local bus driver is a lifeline!

Sources

State Transit: <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/drive-state-transit/bus-driver>
Transdev: <https://www.transdev.com.au/careers/work-with-us/>

Buses are vital in helping people overcome isolation in suburbia





Community
Businesses

EMPLOYMENT & YOU...

Are you living with a mental health issue?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**We
support
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OUR CURRENT JOBS AVAILABLE

Prestige Packing Harris Park:

Supported jobs in packing and light assembly.

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

Flourish Maintenance St Marys:

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

Flourish Maintenance Warwick Farm:

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

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

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