

Flourish Australia

# panorama

A total view of growing, thriving, and living life to the full



## The official launch of Flourish Australia

Created by people with mental health issues!



## What's in a name? The launch of Flourish Australia!

*From left: Fay Jackson, Janet Meagher AM, Governor David Hurley AC DSC, Matthew Mitcham, Pamela Rutledge, Professor Elizabeth More AM, Aunty Millie Ingram*

by Grant J Everett

It's finally happened! After years of existing under a temporary name, on the 16th of August 2016 our organisation was permanently rebranded as **Flourish Australia**. Of course, Panorama was there to bring you all the big news of the day!

The launch took place at Figtree Conference Centre at Sydney Olympic Park, and was attended by people from many walks of life: employees, people who access our services, management, board members, the Governor of New South Wales, and even the odd Olympic gold medallist (be sure to read our **Taking the plunge** story about Matthew Mitcham on page 3). There were representatives from across our sixty-four locations.

This great turnout was thanks to a social media campaign we've been running for a while now (thanks Jasmin Buchal!), as well as more old-fashioned things like posters and flyers. As we'd hoped, guests came in droves from the furthest corners of the organisation.

However, we understand that physically making it to the launch simply

wasn't possible for some. Just to ensure that nobody missed out, the launch event was live streamed on Facebook. This means that anyone could watch things unfold in real-time, and all they needed was an internet connection. For those of you who completely missed out on the launch, you can check out a recording of it on the Panorama Online Magazine website.

We also held smaller launch events in a few key areas around the state to try and get as many people involved as possible. What did you do on the day?

### Old (and new) friends

There were a lot of familiar faces at the launch. As I hadn't seen many of the guests for months or even years, it was great catching up with everybody. From the awesome vibe and loud conversations, I think everyone else at the launch felt the same way.

In particular, chatting with the past and present General Managers of Inclusion (Janet Meagher and Fay Jackson, respectively) was a highlight for me. On a related note, I was able to meet and speak with Dr John Parkinson. In case you haven't

heard of him, Dr Parkinson pretty much created the organisation known as Psychiatric Rehabilitation Australia (PRA) sixty one years ago. Dr Parkinson told me how great it's been to see his brainchild grow and evolve over time. I also learned that PRA first began as a social club at the infamous Callan Park hospital, and that they actually had great difficulty in starting it up.



### First things first

Despite the fact that some of the spectators had already spent hours

getting here (a few had crossed such huge distances that they had to fly in and stay overnight), everyone seemed glad to have made it for this special event. As usual, the food and drinks provided by the Conference Centre staff was outstanding. The 8 am breakfast was an amazing spread of canapes, fresh juice, sandwiches, pastries, slices, croissants, fruit kebabs and more. We also had professional baristas on site, and they were brewing my favourite blend of coffee: free.



The guests were all treated to some traditional koori music (a didgeridoo and clapping sticks) while they ate, and there were all sorts of fancy techy decorations to make things more interesting, such as projectors and video screens.

Speaking of fancy tech, we had juice-cycles! You simply put your ingredients into a blender that was fixed to the handlebars and connected up to the peddles, pedal on the bike to spin the blades, then scull the fresh juice. Genius!

### The formal stuff

We got a start on the formal part of the day on the dot at 9 am. A professional Lebanese drummer lead the way to the largest conference room in Figtree. The walls and roof were painted with a colour of light that I'm going to refer to as "flourish green" from now on. Matthew Watson was our MC for the day, and he performed his job flawlessly. He got plenty of laughs along the way, too.

As always, we began proceedings by

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## Taking the plunge...into recovery

Olympic gold medallist **Matthew Mitcham** was kind enough to take time out of his hectic schedule to be a part of our launch. As somebody who has conquered the dual diagnosis demons of mental health issues and substance abuse and gone on to do great things with his life, Matthew was a very appropriate celebrity to have here on the day.

### Gold

When he was on his way to the Beijing Olympics, Matthew honestly thought the best he could hope for was a bronze medal. In hindsight, this turned out to be hilarious, as not only did Matthew go home with the gold for the men's ten metre diving, he also performed the highest scoring dive in Olympic history (perfect tens across the board), and became the number one diver on the planet. This was a big shock to the Chinese divers, who up to that point had swept all the other diving events clean.

### Falling

Things haven't been all gold medals and glory, though. Matthew has struggled with clinical depression (he was diagnosed at 14), anxiety, self-esteem issues and episodes of self-harm. Medication helped, but the pills also had a numbing effect. This pain led Matthew to self-medicate with pot and party drugs (LSD, ecstasy, speed). Sometimes Matthew wouldn't finish partying until 5 am on a Monday morning, and the

only reason he stopped is because he had to start training an hour later!

For a time, the drugs were winning. Matthew dropped out of high school at 18, ditched his diving career and spent six solid months partying. Thankfully, Matthew found that he missed competing, and returned to the sport that has served to define much of his life.

After the high of the Beijing Olympics, Matthew experienced a sudden crash, and he began to use serious amounts of crystal meth. Like many of us with substance abuse issues, Matthew kept this part of his life hidden from his loved ones. After coming clean about his habit, Matthew was encouraged to seek professional help. In addition to dealing with his drug issues, Matthew has also worked on the core reason he used: his depression. He's now been clean for years, and has a lot to look forward to.

### The future?

As an Olympic career can only last so long (especially with the crippling injuries many divers will suffer), Matthew has more irons in the fire. For starters, during the Rio Olympics Matthew had his own television program, **Buzz From Brazil**, on Channel Seven. This show collected all the best (and funniest) Olympic material from all over the web - both from athletes and fans - such as videos and social media posts. Beyond that, Matthew is also hard at work studying linguistics at university. Hey, maybe we have another JRR Tolkien on our hands!

Matthew proved he can sing and dance, too, when he performed in the **From Sydney With Love** benefit concert for the victims of the Pulse Nightclub massacre. The show raised over \$70,000 for the survivors and those who had lost loved ones.

You can get Matthew's autobiography, **Twists and Turns**, from all good bookstores. It's published by Harper Collins.

*Struggling with depression? You can always contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.*

Sources:

[goodmenproject.com](http://goodmenproject.com)

[gaynewsnetwork.com.au](http://gaynewsnetwork.com.au)

"Falling with style," Benjamin Law, The Sydney Morning Herald, 12th of November 2012

# Flourish Australia

## About us

Panorama is the quarterly magazine of Flourish Australia. Flourish Australia is committed to walking alongside people with a lived experience of a mental health issue as they progress along their recovery journey.

We passionately believe in mental health recovery. We are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement for people to achieve their recovery goals across all of our 64 services in NSW and Southern Queensland.

Flourish Australia

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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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### Disclaimer

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Pictured: Steig is one of our valued conference centre assistants at Figtree conference centre



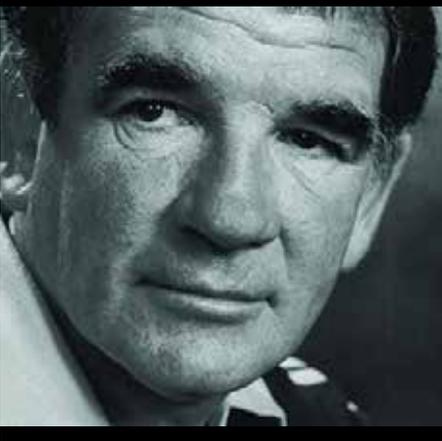
## Like a true LEGEND

**Jack Gibson (below) may have passed away eight years ago, but he's still inspiring and motivating people...including Steig (above).**

**During the May PreEmploy Recovery Day, some participants made a presentation about what motivated them. Steig's talk was about Footy Legend Jack Gibson, who left an indelible mark on the world.**

Steig is doing his work experience with Figtree Conference Centre, and by the sheerest coincidence, so too is his sister Kim! He does three days at Figtree and one day each fortnight at Surry Hills working on

Pictured: Jack Gibson is a huge source of inspiration for Steig



the "theory" of PreEmploy, if you like.

Jack Gibson turned out to be the perfect choice for motivational subject.

"The way he taught inspires me," Steig told the group. "He taught people discipline. He taught that if someone starts a fight, you walk away. He said that the blokes who mouth off are the ones who can't play."

Jack Gibson was the legendary coach of Eastern Suburbs who led the Roosters to premierships in 1974 and 1975. Later, he coached Parramatta Eels who, after what seemed like an eternity with no premierships to their name, came up with three in a row in 1981, 1982 and 1983.

Jack Gibson and his assistants had a big workload because they took care of all three grades, rather than just first grade. After all, the lower grades would be providing the first grade players of the future. Likewise, Gibson didn't want the younger players to be daunted when they finally made it to the top, so giving them a taste of what was in store makes a lot of sense. Jack Gibson was rightly called a super coach.

Gibson's son Luke was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and also took drugs. This is a common

combination, unfortunately, and more often than not it causes problems to escalate. Luke died in 1988, and Jack Gibson decided to go on the offensive against such tragedy by helping to found the **Mental Health Sports Network**, which aims to promote recovery through engagement with sport.

Jack Gibson developed Alzheimer's disease towards the end of his life, and died a couple of hours before the 2008 Centenary of League match was due to kick off on the 9th May. As usual, Gibson's timing was spot on, because it allowed the announcement of his passing away to be made to the crowd just before the match. So, in a way, the centenary match was also a remembrance of what Jack Gibson had done for the game - and beyond- as a true legend of sport.

When we asked Steig how he felt during the presentation, Steig said that he had been really nervous (and his sister Kim confirmed this) but those present "Played strong, done good," as Jack Gibson would have said.

- WH

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# Angela:

## The face of our organisation

By Grant J Everett

**It seems that behind every one of the people who access our services there are hidden talents and achievements as Grant J Everett discovered when he spoke to Angela at Newcastle...**

Angela works as a receptionist at Flourish Australia's Hunter Street branch in downtown Newcastle. Angela's position is a supported employment role that she's been provided under the Work Incentive Scheme. This makes Angela the face of Flourish Australia, as she'll often be one of the first points of in-person contact that somebody new will have with our organisation. As you'd expect, the main part of Angela's job is to meet people as they arrive and make them feel welcome and at ease. However, like many of our employees at Hunter Street, Angela's specific duties can change from day to day and hour to hour, but she's always happy to chip in whenever she's needed.

Like all good receptionists, Angela is a real people person by nature, and one of the greatest pleasures of her job is seeing newcomers reach the point where they feel safe enough to let their shields down. Angela loves spending time with the other regulars at Hunter Street, and she's passionate about encouraging them to believe in their own potential and to reach for their goals and dreams. As our organisation prizes

acceptance and inclusion, Angela is doing a great job of upholding our ideals.

Angela is involved with a lot of stuff beyond her day job, too. She recently joined a committee for inpatient and community mental health for the Lake Macquarie Region, she's an advocate for Hunter New England Mental Health, and she's also a part of an ISMHU (Intermediate Stay Mental Health Unit) committee. To top it all off, Angela is also reconnecting with her career as a professional house DJ.

### Remixed and Remastered

Angela has achieved an impressive amount of success in her twelve years as a DJ, and so far she's been able to spin her turntables as far as North America, South America and Europe. She's performed at high profile parties and other events, and one of her most unique sets was at an old French castle. A big highlight of Angela's many notable achievements was being accepted into the elite Red Bull Music Academy in Brazil in 2002 to represent Australia. The RBMA is a prestigious institution that specialises in finding and nurturing the trend-setting musical pioneers of tomorrow.

Angela started her career in the backrooms of Melbourne clubs. Unlike the deafening, high-octane doof-doof music that most places were playing around that time, Angela was one of several DJs who helped to pioneer "deep house", a slower, more ambient kind of house music. Over time Angela's style evolved to become a type known as "universal love", a unique sound of her own creation. Angela made a lasting imprint on the local clubbing landscape with universal love, and as her star was rising she arranged music nights and other events to help local artists make their own mark.

Things have changed a lot over Angela's career as a DJ. For starters, being a part of the industry nowadays means that you'll have to actively promote yourself with Facebook, YouTube and SoundCloud, as it's a fact that no modern DJ could hope to make it without a major social media presence. So, rather than just keeping up with friends and sharing cat memes like the rest of us, Angela uses social media as a platform to create, share and promote herself (and other artists).

### Angela & Alana

Like many of us who have

experienced a successful recovery journey, Angela had somebody who believed in her and encouraged her when she needed it the most. In Angela's case, this role was filled by Alana Mondy, the Senior Peer Worker from Hunter Street.



Angela

Angela's first visit from Alana was while she was an in-patient at the Intermediate Stay Mental Health Unit at James Fletcher Hospital (ISMHU). Alana had already visited this unit on many occasions, as a part of Alana's role as a Senior Peer Worker is to encourage people who are in-patients at ISMHU to reconnect with the community. Angela was a bit reclusive and hesitant around the time they met, but Alana could clearly tell that Angela would benefit from getting out and about more, and Angela eventually made the choice to trust her. It soon became clear that they had a lot in common and shared many of the same values. Over the following weeks Angela would stray further and further out of her comfort zone, and this time of transition gave Angela a great opportunity to redefine who she was and what she wanted from life. Soon, she began to work towards her goals and dreams again.

As Alana is a musician herself (in the folk punk genre, to be exact), she has continually encouraged Angela to reengage with her passion for music. This has mostly involved performing in small clubs and local cafes, but Angela recently took part in the Newcastle Fringe Festival, a

huge multi-day event for musos, dancers, singers, poets, artists, directors, performers, entertainers and other creative types. Angela's venue at the Fringe Festival was the Newcastle Cathedral, and she told a story from Greek mythology titled "Artemis Cocoon" as a soundscape.

**In case you haven't heard of it, SoundCloud allows musicians, singers and DJs to share their material with a worldwide audience for free. In fact, some of the artists on SoundCloud are household names**

## The Future?

Twelve months on, Angela is still learning who she is and where she fits in the world, but she's amazed with how much things have already changed. Alana continues to provide her with structured one-on-one support as a part of her personal NDIS plan, and also assists her with organising her creative endeavours. They continue to be a source of encouragement and inspiration for each other.

Next time in Panorama, we'll be talking to Angela about a little project of hers that may just be a ticket to success in a whole new field...sorry, no spoilers!



Angela

image from adm.monash.edu

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# The Centre



Flourish Australia Newcastle  
627 Hunter Street  
Newcastle  
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(02) 9393 9180

by Grant J Everett

Kim Jones (Project Officer Inclusion) and I were invited to visit a Flourish Australia location affectionately known as The Centre, which is located on Hunter Street address in downtown Newcastle. The Centre is a popular hangout spot for Hunter Region locals who want a game of pool, a workout in the gym, to express themselves artistically, have a bit of social contact, or take part in any of the other structured activities that make up their **Day 2 Day Living Program**. The Centre runs a range of leisure activities on weekdays, providing plenty of opportunities for personal development and ways to connect with the wider community.

The Centre operates from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and is usually attended by around 40 to 45 people each day (but there have been instances where there were as many as 60 participants). Out of the regulars, there's a core group of people who have been attending for years, as well as some more recent additions, too. People are welcome to come and go as they please.

Alana, the Senior Peer Worker of The Centre, met us as we arrived, and she was good enough to give us a guided tour.



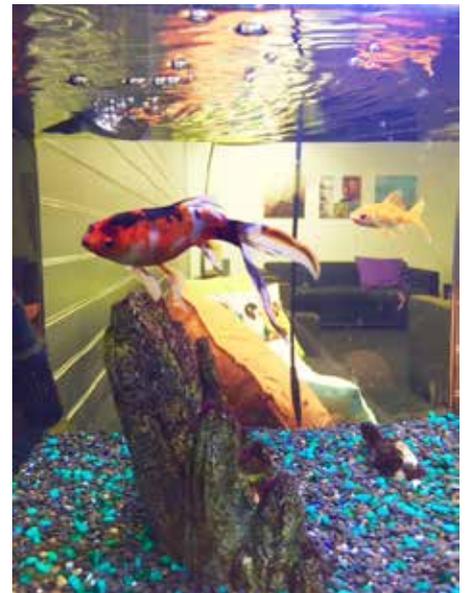
## Welcome

Kim and I were immediately impressed as we walked through the front door. Our tour through this massive, well-lit space started in the pool room, went past a well-stocked and orderly art room, and into a serious gym. You can tell straight away that the staff and participants obviously take pride in their surroundings.

Like the other Flourish Australia centres I've visited, there were ample computer facilities for anyone who needs them for studying, doing research, job hunting, putting together a resume, or just watching funny goats on YouTube. As many of the people who access our services don't have a computer at home, let alone internet access, this

is essential. The Centre also runs a computer class each week in order to encourage people to enter the information age. These classes teach essentials such as how to set up an email account, perform research, or pay bills online.

The Centre provides other kinds of on-site training, too. Their inclusive work incentive scheme is used to employ kitchen hands, baristas, cleaners, receptionists and group facilitators, among other roles. As you'd expect, this program primarily supports people with a lived experience of mental health issues in order to provide them with the confidence and skills they need to get to where they want to be in life.



## Shifting

This service was previously located on King Street (which is why it used to be called PRAonKING), but the staff left those premises behind back in November 2015. The old location was an ancient building that had seen better days, and it was definitely time for a fresh start. Although PRAonKING has ceased to exist, all of its best parts (and people!) have moved to the new location...and that includes the fish. They might not have names, but Goldfish One and Goldfish Two have been with the organisation for a long time.

## A chew and a brew

Hunter Street has a dedicated bistro area towards the back, and once lunchtime rolls around there's always an assortment of affordable hot meals. I had the satay chicken with rice and veggies, and it was well worth a \$5 note.

To top things off, you can even get a professionally-brewed cappuccino on site for a lot less than what you'd pay at a cafe. The Centre has a proper espresso machine (Alana isn't a fan of those environmentally-unfriendly pod machines), and it's used to teach basic barista skills to anyone who's interested. In fact, this barista skills lesson has become one of their most popular classes. After all, being able to make an awesome cup of coffee is a skill that will be just as valuable a decade from now as it is today. Although the old machine still works pretty well, there are plans to upgrade to an even more awesome rig.



### Nerve centre

The upper floor of Hunter Street serves as a hub for the dozens of peer workers and other dedicated staff members who tirelessly look after the large Hunter Region. Alana told us that no fewer than forty-two peer workers share the top level of the building, though the nature of being a peer worker means that they are usually out in the field rather than cooped up in a cubicle. Alana also mentioned that quite a few of them spend a lot of time at Morissett hospital's many wards and units. Helping people to get out of hospital and return to the outside world is one of the core duties of being a peer worker.

### A class of their own

Many of the peer workers and mental health workers situated on the top floor of The Centre run the Youth Community Living Support Services (YCLASS) program. The YCLASS program is managed by Kirby Lunn, and provides non-clinical support for people aged between 12 and 25. As we know for a fact that early intervention is crucial when it comes to lessening the long-term

impact of mental health issues, it's good to know that YCLASS is there to help out the adults of tomorrow.

### Alana

Alana has been with our organisation as a Senior Peer Worker for two years now, though her role is split between Hunter Street and ISMHU (the Intermediate Stay Mental Health Unit at James Fletcher Hospital). Her day can start as early as 8:30am and go until well after sunset, and Alana's role can vary greatly from day to day. Her duties can range all the way from admin work to serving food in the bistro. For instance, Alana runs many different kinds of structured activities, engages in a bit of relationship management if things get heated, and buys ingredients for the popular cooking group. Thankfully, she LOVES the diversity.

### The main event

Alana told us that one of the biggest events on the Hunter Street calendar is the quarterly social night. It started because a lot of the people who come to The Centre during the day also wanted a place to socialise at night, and it's grown so popular that Alana has started involving local garage bands (see page 5 for more info).

On the subject of live entertainment, The Centre also runs a talent show at 11am every Friday, and this provides an opportunity for some of the more creative members to read poems, sing songs, play instruments and dance. They're doubtlessly rehearsing their acts at the moment, so be sure to come and check them out!

### Come on down!

Does any of this appeal to you? Well, The Centre is always happy for new people to come and get involved, and they're only a phone call away! If you aren't 100% sure, then you're welcome to come check it out in person.

Note that because The Centre is a recovery service and Day2Day Living Program, if you decide to join the service you'll be supported to put together a plan to show what you want to do to improve your life and what you will gain by attending, but the staff can help you with this.

## Panorama Online Magazine is now live!

All the staff at the publications department (both of us) are very proud to announce the official launch of Panorama Online Magazine! We've cherry-picked the best consumer recovery stories, watershed events and other seminal articles to live on in digital form. Our clean, easy-to-use, attractive website will keep our finest material in circulation for many years to come, and this is truly the start of a new era for our magazine. The issues we deal with will continue to be hot topics for the foreseeable future, and Panorama Magazine will continue to be there for all the people who access our services tomorrow, just like yesterday.

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(one word)

[panoramaonlinemagazine.com](http://panoramaonlinemagazine.com)



## People are people, not diseases or disabilities

**Panorama spoke to SHARON HOLZ, a Community Connector with the Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) about what made her interested in Mental Health First Aid. We discovered that people with a lived experience of different categories of disability have a lot more in common with one another than they might think!**

**SHARON:** "I never stop learning from the people I have met. I am in awe of what people can achieve. It is important that people with different types of disabilities come to know each others' challenges."

"As a community connector I work with people who have physical disabilities and also with people who have an intellectual disability. I also come across people with mental health issues, too. That is one reason why I recently did the Mental Health First Aid course. You never know; one day you might have the opportunity to help!"

### **Self-Belief**

"Everybody has a gift or asset, something they have that they can teach the world. Though it might take some time, you can have a life you're happy with."

"People cannot be defined by disability. To me, the person comes first. Disability is an afterthought. Lack of confidence and self-belief

can be a big barrier to flourishing. At PDCN, we aim to foster self-belief so that people can move on with a fulfilling life. Just because a person has challenges doesn't mean they don't have the same hopes and dreams and wishes as others. So why not build their capacity so that they come to believe in themselves?"

"I was born with Cerebral Palsy due to premature birth. I have mobility issues, and my coordination is also affected. That's never stopped me having goals, dreams or aspirations."

### **Community Connectors**

"The National Disability Insurance Agency has funded the PDCN to establish peer support groups in regional areas. My job as a community connector is, firstly, to establish the groups, then to facilitate them within the Illawarra area. I have four groups altogether: two groups in Nowra and two groups in Wollongong. The best number within a group is less than ten, because you get better engagement and people are more comfortable with a smaller group. The meetings take place once a month."

### **So why be in a peer group?**

"Firstly, it is a chance to build peer networks, with other people with disability. You have an opportunity to build both individual capacity and group capacity, by learning from

each other. It is a space to understand and engage with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) through the provision of information and resources.

"It's a collaborative approach to engaging with and educating the local community to enhance community inclusion."

"Eventually it's hoped that facilitators will take over from within the groups so they can become self-managing. It's about community inclusion, building up peer networks, and building up people's capacity. It's about living life your way. With the people in these groups, I see so much growth in their confidence to speak up. Some of them would not even speak before. As a facilitator, this is inspiring to witness. Eventually they will come to flourish in other areas of life, too."

### **The peer-to-peer connection**

"As a facilitator of these groups, my lived experience of a disability is an asset. The group members trust me because they know I've had a similar situation. 'Sharon's been there, done that, Sharon understands.' The groups give people a chance to hear the stories of like-minded people. 'If he can do it, I can do it!'"

"I have always had help to do things. My parents tended to be very protective, which is understandable. However, this had the unintended consequence of my becoming quite withdrawn and shy and always requiring help. When my mum died, I found myself in a situation where I realised I had the freedom to try something different. I started with baby steps."

"Empathy isn't about feeling sorry for people. Pity is the worst form of patronising."

### **Getting a paid job**

"I am a client of **Essential Personnel and Training**, an organization that assists people with disabilities to find employment. They suggested I update my computer skills, so I enrolled in a course at TAFE. While at TAFE, I received an email from The Physical Disability Council of NSW. I wasted no time in sending my resume to them. I was granted an interview and eventually received the best news: Sharon is now employed! It was like Christmas, birthdays and all the great occasions in my life put together a thousand

times over! I got my first job at the age of 56 and I felt amazing!

"If you are told something negative often enough, you start to believe that your life will amount to nothing. If you have determination and drive, you'll get there. Never give up. Never listen to people who say NO YOU CAN'T. They have no right to say that. It's your life. I have advice for professionals out there: SEE THE PERSON FIRST. You can't rely on a textbook to give you all the answers. If I know a hundred people with Cerebral Palsy, then I know a hundred people each with their own different condition. Don't focus on disability, get to know the person and then you will learn so much more.

"I'm content with my life. Yes, there are still challenges, but they have made me stronger, and more determined. I wish to thank all the people who have been on my journey to this day I couldn't have achieved my goals without their belief in my ability, and for their unwavering help I will be forever thankful."

### **Some tips for working with people who have other types of disabilities**

"People are well-meaning. Sometimes they will offer help to a person with a physical disability when it isn't really required. I accept help or I thank them for offering and say I'm OK I can manage. By and large people are very capable because they have adapted and nine out of ten times they will ask you if they need help.

"Be careful about language. E.g., cerebral palsy not "spastic." A person with an intellectual disability is not "retarded." Language is powerful and can cause lots of damage if used incorrectly. Don't judge people, get to know them.

"People are people, not diseases or disabilities.

*Sharon spoke to Warren Heggarty*

### **Contact**

Physical Disability Council of NSW,  
St Helens Community Centre,  
3/184 Glebe Point Road Glebe,  
NSW 2037

Within Sydney: (02) 9552 1606  
Outside Sydney: 1800 688 831

Email: [admin@pdcn.nsw.org.au](mailto:admin@pdcn.nsw.org.au)  
Web: [www.pdcnsw.org.au](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au)



Hisashi-san addressing the PreEmploy Recovery Day (PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY)

**Flourish Australia had a special visitor from Japan Recently, Mr HISASHI HIGA, who is Care Manager at a mental health welfare service in Okinawa City, Japan. He is interested in introducing peer work to the mental health system in Japan, so he embarked on a study tour of three countries - Denmark, Italy and Australia - in order to observe how other systems do peer work.**

Hosted by Janet Meagher AM (Flourish Australia's former General Manager, Inclusion) Hisashi-san travelled extensively along the east coast of Australia, visiting places in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. Accompanied by Fay Jackson (our current General Manager, Inclusion), he visited our operations in the Hunter area, where we have our highest concentration of peer workers due to the NDIS pilot program. He also went to Brook Red in Queensland, which is a service familiar to many of our peer workers.

"In Japan, the medical approach is still dominant," says Hishashi-san. "My colleagues are very well trained and good at what they are doing, but I feel that there is something missing. I think that peer work has a lot to offer."

His own lived experience has pointed him in this direction.

"I said to myself, Hisashi, you have an experience. Are you going to use

it?"

His friends have also motivated him to take this path.

In Sydney, Hisashi-san visited PreEmploy, had lunch at Buckingham House's Restaurant, saw some of the work being done in Prestige Packing and Enterpraise at Marrickville, spoke with Panorama staff, looked at Figtree Conference Centre, and even had a little bit of time left to speak to our General Manager of Human Resources, Tim Fong.

"What I have learned about peer work does not translate directly into the Japanese situation. So I will need to modify it."

Hisashi-san's study tour was very hectic and demanding. There was very little time for sight seeing.

"They told me there were lots of Japanese people here, but I have seen very few!" he lamented, probably feeling a little home-sick, with only one day to see the sights of Sydney Harbour. That shows you his dedication to concept of peer work!

It is wonderful that we are able to share our experience -including our LIVED experience- with people in other countries in the hope that what we have learned can improve the lives of people with mental health issues all over the world.

*-Article and photos by Warren Heggarty*

# Freestyle swimming in red tape Part 2:

## Did Grant get a home of his own?

By Grant J Everett

It's been three months since the first part of this article, and a lot has changed. In fact, I've discovered first-hand that just a handful of hours can flip your life upside down. In this case, I'm talking about my wedding day. Obviously this was all about my fiancé becoming my wife, but my wedding day was also the exact point I'd set for when I needed to be out of share house accommodation and in my own place. It goes without saying that there was no way I'd have the gall to think my wife would want to start our marriage by living with four bachelors! Thankfully, by the time my wedding day arrived, I'd already been in my own place for weeks and weeks.

If you read the first part of this story in the June issue, you may remember that my attempts at getting subsidised housing (a private flat for a fraction of private rates) from community housing providers had been officially knocked back due to my work situation. Of course, subsidised housing is still worth pursuing, and I'd definitely recommend it if you're on a low income (check out the HASI numbers at the end of this article). So although the subsidised housing path was out of the question for me, I'd also applied for a housing commission property around the same time. Housing commission is by far the most affordable option (costing between 25% and 30% of your income) and it turned out that I was actually eligible for it. However, this particular plan fell through for a different reason: I didn't want it. Housing commission had offered me a few places within a couple of months,

but they were all situated ages away from where I wanted to be and they simply weren't what I wanted. Call me a snob if you want, but keep in mind that I grew up in housing commission from a very young age, and I really, really didn't want to go back if I could avoid it.

Thankfully, my fiancé and I both work (and she receives a part pension, too), which means that private rent was an option. So after all that mucking about with subsidised housing and reams of forms, we ended up taking the easier (if more expensive) route, and got a private flat in the area we wanted.

### The process

Rewind a few weeks...

One of the most important people in this whole process was my mate Col. Col had recently helped his newlywed son, Ben, get his own place, so he had a lot of practical wisdom to share. First off, we created a list about what I (and Linda) wanted in a home. Next, we drove around my suburb of choice to decide what streets would be ideal (as well as places I'd accept if things got desperate). I then researched a few places on the Domain website, but there are plenty of other sites out there that do the exact same thing (RealEstate and Gumtree, for instance). Domain's site allowed us to ask questions and arrange inspection times without having to move an inch. Best of all, these services cost nothing.

Soon, my fiancé and I were ready to check out some places that were

within our price range. Unfortunately, we found that the cheapest flats were cheap for a reason: they were dirty, tiny, old and run down. However, we ended up finding a big, well-kept three bedroom place situated directly above the local shops, down the street from Westmead station, and just a few doors away from the bus stop. As neither of us have a license (yet), having access to public transport was important. Yes, there was no car space, but that wasn't an issue for now.

Linda and I assumed that we'd be competing with a tonne of other potential tenants, so we knew there was no time to waste. We filled in the paperwork, sent it off by post, and **the very next day** I was contacted by the real estate people. I went into their office that afternoon, paid a holding fee, got all the necessary paperwork prepared, then went back a week later to sign a 12 month lease and pick up my keys.

Done! I had a home of my own!

### Centrelink Online Estimator

Would you like to quickly and easily find out how your Centrelink benefits might change if some factor in your life got shifted? This link allows you to find out exactly what to expect.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/online-estimators](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/online-estimators)

### The catch

A big chunk of my rental history has been in share house accommodation and other supported places. I really wanted to avoid talking about my mental health history with the real estate people (after all, it's irrelevant), but in order to get my foot in the door I needed to provide some good references and official paperwork that proved I could pay my rent. After consulting my social worker, I was able to arrange a letter from the Trust office (the department in Cumberland hospital that deals with rent and other money-related issues). This letter confirmed that I'd been paying rent to Western Sydney Area Health Service for the last six years, as well as stating the

maximum amount I'd paid in that period.

To take the focus further away from hospitals, I was sure to include lots of positive facts from other parts of my life: how I was currently working two jobs, the state of my savings, and I also provided glowing character references from two of my bosses (one from each job). I also mentioned that my wife-to-be would be moving in with me at some point after the big day. Thankfully, the issue of mental health and hospitals didn't come up even once, which was a great relief.

## Pluses & Minuses

There are some major advantages to private rent that can help justify the high price. The biggest one is CHOICE. For instance, if you see it as important to have close proximity to public transport, your doctor, local schools, your place of employment or something else, that's something you can specify. Also, unlike housing commission, you can see as many places as you like without any detriment (note that knocking back two offers from housing commission will either move you back down to the bottom of the list, or get you kicked off it altogether).

On the downside, expect your bond to be \$1,500 or more, and you need to cough this up before you can sign the lease. Your bond will generally cost the same as 4 weeks of rent, and you don't get this money back until you move out. If you trash the place or don't pay the real estate people as specified, your bond may be gone for good.

I also had a lot of other costs to consider before taking the plunge and signing the lease, such as electricity, gas, water and other things like that. As this isn't the 1990s, I didn't feel the need to get a landline phone connection. I also decided against getting Foxtel, as I'd probably never leave the lounge again.

## Hic!

There was a bit of a hiccup with this process, and that hiccup was me. See, funnily enough, the idea of choosing to pay eight times as much rent was almost a physically painful decision to make. It would mean parting with tens of thousands of dollars every year, and that kinda sucked a lot of the fun out of the search.

However, if this was just a money

issue then I would have gone with houso. But getting my own place was about more than numbers: it was about grabbing hold of that final rung of independence, of reaching that level of freedom that had been hovering out of my grasp until now. Seeing as though I'd completely ditched the pension some time ago (expect an article on the subject), this would be the point when I was officially free of government assistance altogether.

And hey, rent is MEANT to be expensive.

## Move it, move it

Col strikes again! Once he got back from long service leave, Col helped me move my stuff from the share house to my new flat. It took half a dozen trips thanks to the ridiculous amount of useless things I've gathered over the years. For the most part, though, it was just a matter of dragging around boxes and bags.

We encountered a couple of problems, along the way, though: some of my existing furniture was too big to get through my new front door, and it was too heavy for two of us to drag up the stairs, anyway. Thankfully, we figured this out *before* bothering to get it out of the group home.

If you don't have too much stuff, then it might be a good idea to get your friends to help you with this part of the transition, as a professional moving crew will set you back hundreds (or more). Honestly? I felt slack for getting Col involved in such a massive ordeal, even though he was happy to help. Cheers, Col!

## Furniture

I've saved some money over the years for the specific purpose of furnishing my future home. Sure, Fantastic Furniture was the cheapest option, but I could afford to go a little better: Super Amart.

Surprisingly, not only was I able to stay within my budget, but I spent less than half of what I'd expected, and only a third of what I was prepared to part with. Success!

Better yet, delivery was a flat \$90, even if you buy half the store. The items all arrived in good condition, as promised, and the delivery guys even placed all the boxes where I wanted. Besides the seven hours of wall-kicking frustration it took to assemble everything, my experience

with Super Amart was a good one.

## Adjusting

When it was all over and I'd formally moved in, I only had one more obstacle to overcome. You see, for the last fifteen years I've had heaps of people within a matter of metres. I was never alone. So I have to admit that the first few nights were a bit difficult. Thankfully, my mates were only a phone call away, so it's not like I was living in an igloo in the Arctic. Plus, my wedding was getting really close by this point.

It took well over a week to get everything unpacked and arranged and sorted, and over that time I'd gotten used to the solitude. It's not like I was starved for human contact: I work five days a week with a bunch of people who I like, and I'm involved with numerous community groups. So although living alone took some time to accept, it wasn't insurmountable. Now, three months in, it's just business as usual.

## Many options

Although I wasn't able to qualify for it, it's definitely worth applying for subsidised housing before you go the private route. Flourish Australia is one such housing provider. If you have any further questions about HASI and getting your own home for below private rental rates (in addition to other forms of support), please contact the HASI team at:

Nepean: (02) 9393 9350

Queanbeyan: (02) 9393 9213

Newcastle: (02) 9393 9745

Dubbo: (02) 9393 9555

Tamworth: (02) 9393 9433

[www.housing.nsw.gov.au/social-housing/partnerships/housing-and-mental-health/housing-and-accommodation-support-initiative](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/social-housing/partnerships/housing-and-mental-health/housing-and-accommodation-support-initiative)

## Hey, you!

**Do you have a story about applying for housing, moving house or something else along those lines? We'd love to hear your story, so contact us today!**



PreEmploy Institute  
37-41 Buckingham Street  
Surry Hills  
NSW 2010  
02 9393 9260

**The PreEmploy program at Surry Hills includes "Recovery Days" every so often, and Panorama was lucky enough to be able to sit in on one. Warren Heggarty asks the group...**

## "What motivates me?"

As many of you know, PreEmploy is a program in which people can gain work experience and training to help prepare them for life in the open workforce. As well as doing three days a fortnight on-the-job work experience, they have one day a fortnight which they dedicate to resume building, learning interview techniques, and other aspects of job seeking. They also look at RECOVERY, what it means to them, and how it works. Recovery Days are devoted to the latter aspect of the PEI program.

To start off, and to get everyone's brains warmed up, Patricia Dell'Olio facilitated a word puzzle session. Later on, Jade Ryall, Manager of Back On Track Health, made a presentation. There was also a Visual Arts group with Jane Miller and a drumming group with Bek the music therapist.

What really excited Panorama was the "What motivates me" session, because it allowed each participant to make a presentation before the whole group (this was all voluntary, by the way). It is a pity we don't have room to include the entirety of everybody's presentations, but

for now here's a summary (note that we've used made-up names for most of the participants, as indicated by a \* symbol).

Tanya\* frankly said there were good things about her and some things that needed improvement. She had a good education but with mental health issues, over time she had acquired a lack of self discipline. She spoke about a work experience opportunity where she found it difficult to come in on time. Even though the job was easy and she was quickly able to get it done, still she managed to come in late! She questioned herself "why would I jeopardise my job in this way, just to stay up late?" So she knows there are things about herself which she wants to change. And she knows there is no going back along her recovery road. "I am motivated by a fear of ending up back on the rock bottom again!" she told us.

Harvey\* spoke about the importance of friendships and sympathy, but he also recognised there were things that he wanted to change about himself.

Michael H\* spoke about how in different stages of his life, he had been motivated by different things. For example, when a young man he was motivated by "saving the world". As time went by, the things that motivated him changed. More recently he had been motivated by Recovery, although at present, he felt like he was in a kind of "limbo" state. A crossroads of opportunity, perhaps?

Rajiv\* was also fairly analytic in describing his motivations. Instead of dividing his life into separate time frames like Michael, he divided his life into different fields, such as family, friends, work, social life and recreation. He recognised the very

positive contribution of his family, especially his Mum's "never say die" attitude.

Kelly\* spoke about the very nature of motivation itself; about purpose and reason in life, and about how motivations can be from outside of you or inside of you. She noted that the more highly motivated you are the higher your self-esteem is likely to be. She said that on the one hand she had schizophrenia, but that was not the important thing. The important thing was whether, on the other hand, she had motivation or a lack of motivation. She spoke about how if you look at the passengers on a bus, each one of them will have some apparently negative factors – a disability, a bad experience, a disadvantage. She just happens to be the one with schizophrenia – but she knows that she has much more to offer the world than THAT!

-WH

**Turn to page 5 for Steig's motivational presentation!**

*Photos by Warren Heggarty*



Peer Worker **Christine** and Project Officer **Kim** were at the Recovery Day

Below: **Warwick** shows us the massive cabinets of catalog cards waiting to be scanned



## What's new in our business services at MARRICKVILLE?

### Mechanical Maintenance work at Marrickville

Flourish Australia takes pride in the fact that we support our employees to develop valuable vocational skills. In a previous issue, for instance, we saw how employees at St Marys Enterprise were looking at studying horticulture. Meanwhile at Marrickville, humans and machines are getting to know one another better!

One of the most important - but sometimes neglected - facets of running a business that involves machinery is the care and maintenance of those machines. It's too easy to take your machines for granted...until they break down, anyway. You can avoid this issue and save both time and money by keeping your machines in top shape all the time.

At Enterprise Marrickville, Panorama found the team working on their lawnmowers. There were three or four up on the benches while team members detailed them. Earlier in the day the team had been given a bit of training in mechanical maintenance, and now was their chance to put what they had learned in theory into practice.

The enthusiasm was palpable: it proves that the more you understand about your work and the tools of your trade, the more interesting it becomes and the more accomplished YOU become at it.

### Scanning the past for future records

On the other side of the Enterprise depot at Marrickville, a very differ-

ent type of human/machine symbiosis is taking place: a large government department has brought in their stockpile of four million handwritten catalogue cards - a wealth of transaction information that stretches back half a century - so that these paper records can be transferred onto a couple of computers in electronic form. This will save the government department a lot of rent and inconvenience over time, but it goes without saying that this is a major job.

Enter Prestige Packing Co to the rescue!

We found **Justyn Warren** taking time out from his usual sales routine so he could help out with the massive task of transferring this catalog from the Stone Age to the Information Age with help from a couple of Kodak i4200 scanners. Once this scanning job is done, the obsolete cards will spend the rest of eternity

at the Government Records Repository.

Although they're laughably old-fashioned nowadays, at one point these filing cabinets were so common that just *seeing* them may bring back fond memories for any former public servant! As the photo shows, the cabinets even come in the two classic colours: government beige and government grey.

It's easy to forget how spoiled we are with technology. Nowadays, when we need to know something we can simply Google it or check a database. Before computerisation took off in the 1990s, though, a great deal of the world's information was kept on little bits of cardboard. Armies of clerks would spend their days searching through cards to find the right files. Sometimes, turning up one file would involve a physical trip to a huge repository, such as the sheds alongside Alexandria Canal near Sydney where literally millions of paper files now gather dust.

This task is enabling our employees to develop useful skills with modern technology, bringing them into the future just as surely as the records.

-WH

*Does any of this stuff interest you? Then be sure to contact our Marrickville office! We're always on the lookout for new talent.*

**Flourish Australia Marrickville  
Prestige Packing Co  
6a Rich Street,  
Marrickville 2201  
(02) 9393 9180**



Flourish Australia Marrickville  
Prestige Packing Co  
6a Rich Street,  
Marrickville 2201  
(02) 9393 9180

**James Carblis** shows us how to fix a lawnmower on a work bench at Marrickville



## First meeting Community Advisory Council

**The Flourish Australia Community Advisory Council met for the first time on Tuesday the 3rd May 2016 at Figtree Conference Centre. The Council is comprised of 24 people who access our services throughout NSW and South East Queensland.**

Chief Executive Officer Pam Rutledge said that: "The Council is a further strong and public commitment from Flourish Australia to ensuring the voice of people with lived experience is heard and acted upon in our day-to-day work and service development."

The Council will meet twice a year, with regular communication in between meetings.

Pam described to the Council members the importance of its relationship to our Board of Directors. The Board is the body that is responsible for the governance, vision, mission and general direction of Flourish Australia. Flourish Australia is a company with a turnover of some \$50 million per year and with over 600 employees.

Pam described the individual board members and their backgrounds, particularly our new Chairperson Professor Elizabeth Moore, who is actually a professor of management, and Paula Hanlon who is a long

serving member with lived experience of mental health issues. "Lived experience is the foundation upon which our organisation is built," said Pam.

So what is the purpose of the council and who can be members? The Community Advisory Council will be a conduit for advice, information dissemination, representative views and feedback between people accessing the service, Flourish Australia management and the Board.

**"People with personal lived experience are active collaborators in everything (Flourish Australia) does."**

*– from Recovery Action Framework, Organisational Accountability #6*

Specifically, the Council will be a platform for inclusion and consultation regarding policy and procedures, decision making, review of service provision, strategic planning, WH&S, disability rights or other relevant issues.

Council members may advocate for the specific needs of people accessing the service in the region which they represent and consult with other people accessing the service to field important news to share with Flourish Australia management. However, they don't advocate for individual people.

There are 24 representative positions, two of which are specifically dedicated to Flourish Australia's Young Peoples programs, to encourage youth input. There is also a

staff representative, primarily for facilitation support, and a minute taker from staff. Consideration is also given towards representation from members of certain diversity groups.

Pam thanked Peter Farrugia (Manager, Peer Workforce), "for the work he has put into the Recovery Forums held throughout NSW and South East Queensland. It was from these forums that nominations for the Council came. Peter was also instrumental in organising the first meeting of the Council and making sure it ran smoothly.

"Thanks also to Fay Jackson, General Manager, Inclusion, for continuing to lead our work ensuring people with lived experience are the centre of everything we do and remain active collaborators," said Pam.

*Photos by Warren Heggarty, John Maraz and Jas Buchal*



Each Issue covers a new CANSAS theme!

This month's theme:

# Panorama ACTION

## Psychotic symptoms

1. Accommodation. 2. Food. 3. Looking after the home. 4. Self care. 5. Daytime activities. 6. Physical health. 7. **Psychotic symptoms**. 8. Information on condition and treatment. 9. Psychological distress. 10. Safety to self. 11. Safety to Others. 12. Alcohol. 13. Street Drugs. 14. Company. 15. Intimate relationships. 16. Sexual expression. 17. Childcare. 18. Basic Education. 19. Telephone. 20. Transport. 21. Money. 22. Benefits. (Plus other special topics from time to time)



## Defining 'psychotic symptom'

What exactly do people mean when they say "psychotic symptom"? Let's explore why it might not be such a good term to use after all...

In medical parlance, hearing, seeing, feeling and smelling things that aren't really there (hallucinations) or believing in things that aren't real (delusions) are two of the most common psychotic symptoms that a psychiatrist will look for when assessing somebody for a diagnosis of

psychosis. However, by diagnosing something as a "delusion," this implies that there are two clearly defined sets of beliefs you can have: one that is healthy, and another that is disturbed. But who decides where this line is drawn?

To illustrate our point, think about the following examples:

- Should a person who believes they have been abducted by a UFO be labelled "psychotic?" What about a person who believes that The Sharks are ever going to win a premiership? Now THAT is an odd idea to have!
- What about people who believe they have memories of a past life? Are they psychotic? And if you answered "yes" to that question, what are you saying about the majority of the population of India, where reincarnation is an everyday belief shared by almost the entire population?
- Richard Dawkins wrote a book called "The God Delusion" in which he claims that having a belief in God is some kind of mental aberration. Yet psychologists know very well that the human mind is geared towards finding "agency" behind all phenomena. If that's the way our brains work, then you could also argue that believing in God is the "normal" mindset, and that **atheism** is abnormal (after all, atheists are in the minority everywhere on the planet). How do we tell who has the "delusion" in this situation?

• In some political regimes, people with "incorrect" political views have been labelled mentally ill so the government could have a convenient excuse to lock them up. After all, one of the quickest ways you can discredit somebody who opposed you is to attack their credibility, and accusations of mental illness, sadly, tend to work really well for this purpose.

• And what about poor Galileo Galilei? Back in the 17th Century Galileo was forced by the Church to recant his idea that the Earth went around the Sun. Well, I think almost everybody believes his findings now, but a few hundred years ago it was easy to paint him as being mad, bad, or both.

On the other hand, many of us will experience (or know people who experience) mental states that are not just unusual or "interesting", but are extremely unpleasant or outright threatening to their wellbeing. Most of our readers would know someone who has been tormented by voices, or who sees terrible things. Whatever the nature or the cause of these states, the important things is to learn how to deal with them as best as we can right now. We need to do this both for our own sake, and for the sake of the people we support.

To sum up: when we use the term "psychotic symptom," we are describing a problem that the person we are supporting DEFINES as a problem.

**Positive symptoms:**  
Things that are **ADDED** to a person due to a mental health issue (voices, delusions, hallucinations)

**Negative symptoms:**  
Things that are **TAKEN AWAY** from a person due to mental health issues (reduced levels of self-care, losing most of your motivation, an inability to show emotion)

**HYGIENE: THE VALUE OF A TUB AND A SCRUB****Negative symptoms**

*Is a certain little birdie telling everybody about your mental health issues? Here's how I kicked that birdie to the curb.*

by Grant J Everett

Even though we're at a point where the general population knows more about the realities of mental health issues than at any other time in history, these conditions can still be scary and confusing to many people. And while disclosing any details of your personal health information is entirely up to the individual, there can be many poor habits and mannerisms that may reveal a lot more than we intend. Some of these things fall under the classification of "negative symptoms," which is what you call it when a mental health issue **removes** something from a person, such as their drive to maintain good hygiene, or not being able to communicate as well as they used to.

Before we go any further, please note that I know about negative symptoms firsthand: when my illness was at its most disabling, my self-care and social skills both suffered greatly. At my very worst I'd go days without showering or brushing my teeth, and I'd wear the same clothes for a solid week without an ounce of shame. I'd also walk around with my mouth hanging open like I was trying to catch flies, and muttering and laughing to myself. Suffice to say, I wasn't doing myself any favours. Far be it for me to preach about how people should act, but I found that my negative symptoms were really getting in the way of a lot of important stuff, such as how people perceived me, my attempts at starting a career, and how quickly I got out of hospital, too.

All I'm trying to accomplish with this article is for our readers to ask: "Am I doing anything that's holding me back from the life I want?"

It's one of the most elementary of facts: no matter who you are, your hygiene and your appearance both need daily maintenance. Unfortunately, a person's drive to maintain their hygiene can be profoundly affected by conditions like schizophrenia and depression, and an overall loss of motivation (known as apathy) is a common symptom for both of these issues. Bad hygiene can be an immediate giveaway that somebody is struggling; in fact, one of the signs that mental health professionals will often look for in diagnosing a psychiatric condition is whether somebody's level of self-care has suddenly decreased. This doesn't mean that wearing a creased shirt and having a three-day growth is a sign of schizophrenia! However, a sloppy appearance can hint that something isn't right.

**It's worth noting that we humans have great trouble smelling our own body odour, or being able to tell if our clothes and bedding reek. This means you can't rely on a "sniff test" to see if you pong.**

Before we go on, I have to harp on the point that even if nobody says anything, people will definitely notice it if you don't shower or brush your teeth every day, and this can create obstacles in every area of life. Sure, they say "never judge a book by its cover." You've heard it a hundred times! However, potential employers, real estate agents and possible love interests will have trouble seeing beyond black teeth and a bad smell, especially if the competition is neat and clean instead.

**APPEARING WELL**

My job involves interacting with other people, so I class my ability to communicate and being able to appear on-the-ball as essential. This is especially true when I have to meet anyone I don't know all that well in a professional setting, or if I attend a meeting where I need to take an active role in the proceedings. It can honestly be a bit of a strain, sure, but I've spent years learning how to make an excellent impression, and it's actually reached the point where people are usually quite

surprised if I tell them that I have schizophrenia!

A big part of my recovery was identifying certain negative mannerisms that were holding me back. However, these little quirks had become really ingrained after doing them for years and years. It took some effort to stop doing them, sure, but ditching these bad habits has helped me in my objective of giving the best impression I can, and that's been a precious gift in many areas of my life.

I honestly believe that working on the three following things has played a huge role in allowing me to live the life that I want.

**BODY LANGUAGE:** I try to maintain good posture. I stand up straight, I look ahead rather than at my feet, and I keep my hands out of my pockets. I also never walk around with my mouth hanging open.

**EYE CONTACT:** Eye contact is good. However, I try not to stare at people for longer than a couple of seconds at a time unless I'm talking to them, ESPECIALLY if I don't know the person all that well. Giving somebody the hundred-yard-stare can freak them out, and some may even take it as a challenge.

**INTERNALISING:** I tend to think out loud at times if I'm alone, but I'm well aware that muttering and laughing under my breath can freak people out...so I don't do it.

**SUMMING UP**

Now that I've gone into great depth about the things that I've worked on in order to inch closer the person I want to be, can you think of any bad habits that you'd like to kick? Can you identify any ways that you may be holding yourself back?

**Positive symptoms are things that are ADDED to a person due to a mental health issue (voices, delusions, hallucinations)**

**Negative symptoms are things that are TAKEN AWAY from a person due to mental health issues (reduced self-care, losing all motivation, an inability to show emotion)**

Call Ostara  
1300 334 497

Panorama

#3  
2016

# Employment

Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service bulletin for Ostara



## You have permission to make mistakes

It's very common for people with mental health issues to underrate themselves and their ability. Sadly, thinking of oneself as a "failure" is widespread among people with a lived experience. If only we all realised how important the experience of "failure" is and how highly it's valued! The secret is to stop seeing "a failure" as a type of person and to start seeing it as a necessary step we take on the way to success.

Now, the kind of valuable failure we're talking about is the sort that helps us to learn important lessons and develop certain skills. As an example, there was an Olympic ice skater who was the first female to successfully complete a certain kind of difficult jump to win a gold medal. She estimated that in order to bring herself to that level of

perfection, she had to fall down on her backside 20,000 times. Each one of those failures was part of her strategy to bring her one baby-step closer to her goal. If your goal is simply to stay upright on skates, then you have to be prepared to fall over between two or twenty-two times. The same principle applies whether you see yourself as ordinary or extraordinary.

The same is true in business. Take this example from the career of Richard Goyder, chief executive officer of Wesfarmers, one of Australia's top ten firms. Some time ago, Goyder led Wesfarmers in a \$20 billion purchase of Coles, a company which many believed was in serious trouble at the time. This was seen as a poor choice on Goyder's part. That \$20 billion was shareholder's money, and shareholders don't like to lose their investments. Goyder later said in an interview with Glenda Korporaal of *The Deal*, "I knew [that Coles was] performing [up to the required standard]... yet there was a lot of negative stuff being written. The mistake I made was assuming that everyone in the organisation [Wesfarmers] knew what I knew. It get's back to communication. I could see the numbers coming through but people...were reading

the newspapers...I probably didn't communicate this to the broader Wesfarmers employees as well as I could have. That was a lesson."

So there you have it! One of Australia's most experienced and successful businesspeople admitting to a mistake: the mistake of not communicating properly, thereby leading to \$20 billion worth of flack! But Goyder learned his lesson, so something that you might have thought would tarnish his reputation has, in the long term, actually enhanced it.

"In Silicon Valley", Goyder said, speaking of the famous centre of technological innovation in California, "there is an acceptance that failure happens, and that some investors won't invest in people unless they have had some failures. We need to champion that and give people an opportunity to say failure is OK. We all make mistakes but the key thing is to face it and deal with it...if you don't make mistakes, you're not trying."

See what Goyder just said? Some investors won't invest in people *unless they've had some failures*. Why? Because that's how you learn, especially in a job where innovation is important.

A recent survey by National Australia Bank (NAB) found that companies which are more agile and highly innovative are also the companies that have the greatest confidence in the future. The survey asked companies what attributes they needed to be highly innovative. The second most highly rated attribute was "constant reviews of the existing processes and learning from their failures." So if you want to be successful, learn how to fail well.

-Warren Heggarty

Sources: Glenda Korporaal, 'The Goyder Line' in *The Deal*, September 2015.

Richard Gluyas, 'Innovation key to confidence boost: NAB' in *The Australian* 23 September 2015



## Transferable skills: Employers want them. And we can all get them.

(Above) Our peers, CAC members Dean and Elana, show their presentation skills. PHOTO: Jas Buchal

Panorama Employment is going to start a new series on **Transferable Skills** so that you, our readers, can keep up-to-date with gaining attributes which will make you become more and more attractive to employers in the workplaces of the future.

**The Foundation for Young Australia** published a report recently called *The New Basics: Big data reveals the skills young people need for the New Work Order*. It identified which jobs were in decline (e.g., administration) and which jobs seem to be expanding (e.g., community and personal service workers and sales).

The report says that the jobs of the future - those that are less likely to be replaced by computerisation - were the sort that required the following skills:

- Problem solving
- Communication skills
- Digital literacy
- Teamwork
- Presentation skills
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Financial literacy

Most of the jobs of the future belong to the "tertiary" or "service sector." They are jobs where people interact with people, jobs where computers and machinery can't replace their creators. When the Foundation for Young Australia compared these jobs with "jobs of

the past," they found that jobs of the future were 70% more likely to require the skills we just listed above. All eight of the things on that list are called "executive" skills, but we are calling them by another name: "transferable" skills. Until recently, they USED to be called "soft" skills, and not so long ago employers actually used to deride these kinds of "soft" skills and complain that there weren't enough people with HARD skills. Hard skills, to put it simply, are technical skills, skills that are specific to a particular job. Examples of HARD skills would include surgical skills for a doctor, hair styling techniques for a hairdresser, and JavaScript for an IT worker. Focussed, specific skills. The true advantage of SOFT skills is that they are TRANSFERABLE. Not only are they transferrable between jobs, but also between industries. This could include problem solving for a doctor, creativity for a hairdresser, and digital literacy for an IT worker. In fact, problem solving is useful for doctors, IT workers AND hairdressers. Likewise, creativity will be useful for all three jobs, and digital literacy comes in handy, too.

There's nothing "soft" about transferable skills. When you invest in them, you invest in the future (and you also lessen the odds of being replaced by a robot).

Next issue:

## Problem Solving



## Reduce unemployment: invest in youth mental health

"Investing in mental health in early life may be an effective way to reduce unemployment."

-Egan, Daly and Delaney

Work is recognised as one of the most important aspects of a person's life and one of the most important keys to mental wellbeing. Recent research at the University of Stirling in Scotland suggests that experiencing psychological distress during our teenage years leads to very high rates of joblessness in later life. This is regardless of your socioeconomic background. That being the case, we would do well to invest more effort in ensuring that youth are equipped with all the skills they need to deal with mental health issues as early as possible. This can lead to better mental health all round, and could potentially result in massive savings on our national health bill.

The research findings were published as **Adolescent Psychological Distress, Unemployment and the Great Recession**, by Mark Egan, Michael Daly and Delaney in the journal **Social Science and Medicine**. Another interesting observation they made was: "...the impact of high distress was...double the magnitude of having a serious physical health problem."

Their research found that during the global financial crisis from 2007, young people with high levels of psychological distress were disproportionately more likely to become unemployed than others. So perhaps maintaining better mental health can help people weather recessions?

"One of the best things we can do is to reach out to adolescents and provide them with the skills and insights they need to work through psychological distress and walk the recovery path," they said.



# Exploring open employment

**It's the beginning of yet another semester at PreEmploy Institute, with a new intake of people preparing themselves for a big future in the open workforce. For many people with lived experience of mental health issues, this is a major transition. Panorama asked one of the new people starting on the 14th of July 2016, Meredith\*, what she was hoping for.**

Meredith has been to some information sessions for PreEmploy Institute (PEI) and she already has ideas about which work experience options she would like to pursue.

"I would like to increase my workload, but I think it best to do it incrementally, bumping it up to two days per week to begin with."

For this reason, Meredith is open to opportunities in office work. She actually has some qualifications in Economics, and has studied Marketing, Business and Sales at TAFE.

Meredith has also participated in a program called Compeer. Compeer is an international program promoting the power of friendship among people with mental health issues. Compeer matches volunteers in one-to-one friendship with people who have become socially isolated.

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They meet up for coffee, movies, whatever. Locally, it's run through the St Vincent de Paul's society, and is a brilliant way of fighting the scourge of being all alone.

Another thing that Meredith has done recently (which we think is fabulous) is participating in a New Moves program through Frangipani House in Harris Park. It's good to see Meredith taking care of her physical health through this program, as every little bit helps.

Meredith currently works one day per week as a piano teacher. She has up to five piano students on that day. At the moment, she likes to teach youngsters the fundamentals of ivory-tickling.

"I do enjoy teaching."

Meredith isn't a backyard operator, either: she's completed 8th Grade Practical and 7th Grade Musicianship, and obtained official accreditation from the Music Teachers Association of NSW as a qualified piano teacher. This means she's been able to train students to take grade exams - including some pretty high grades. These exams can be challenging, but there's one major factor that can severely affect a student's performance: not practising.

"Nowadays, it can be difficult to get students to do the daily, solid practice that's required when they already have so many other activities on the go as well."

Have you thought about entering or returning to open employment? Why not consider doing the Pre-Employ program in the first semester of 2017? In its present form, the program runs on a fortnightly cycle over a period of six months. Each fortnight will contain three days of paid workplace experience plus one day of training at PreEmploy in Surry Hills. Information sessions will be advertised towards the end of 2016. If you're interested, be sure to discuss this with a peer worker or other mental health worker.

\* A different name has been used to protect privacy

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Links

The Music Teachers Association of NSW:

[www.musicnsw.com.au/](http://www.musicnsw.com.au/)

Compeer Friendship Program:

[www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp/view/113](http://www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp/view/113)

# When will modern women break the Plexiglas ceiling?

by Grant J Everett

Gender roles have shifted a lot over the years, but the divide between men and women - whether you want to focus on vocational achievement, education levels, or life expectancy - seems to be growing by the minute, rather than balancing out. Some of these changes are encouraging, others are frustrating.

Not only are women equal to men, but in some ways they are stronger. For instance, modern schoolgirls outperform their male classmates in most school subjects and on tests, and female students only make up a third of special education programs. Juvenile girls are far less likely to commit crime, they drop out of high school less, and they have a suicide rate three or four times lower than boys. Their rate of alcohol problems is also half that of men.

**Male bank workers are nine times more likely to be in a highly paid role, and will earn over \$37,000 extra per year.**

Sadly, despite all their strengths, woman in Australia are still getting shortchanged purely due to gender. The Glass Ceiling Index keeps track of this particular situation by calculating average wages according to gender, tracking whether the wage gap is widening and where, and noting the ratio of working men to working women. Despite it all, the glass ceiling is still just as thick as ever with a whopping 95% of occupations overtly paying women less money for the exact same job than when it's done by the opposite gender.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics

revealed the gender pay gap is at an all-time high, as men are more than four times as likely to reach high-paying roles across most occupations. There were only a total of eleven occupations where women were found to get equal or better treatment, and this mostly covered classically female-specific roles such as secretaries, library assistants and fast food cooks. Even in female-dominated occupations, however, men still hold the top paid positions: male midwives, for instance, are five times as likely to earn \$16,000 more than a woman in the same field, despite only representing two percent of Australian midwives.

**When calculating the Glass Ceiling Index, a score of 10 is maximum disadvantage, while 0 is no disadvantage. 0 is very, very rare.**

Things are still in flux, though. For instance, working as a domestic engineer is still a valid life-choice for Australian women to make, but it isn't seen as compulsory like it used to be. On the flipside of this equation, being a "househusband" is a role that more and more guys are playing.

Millions of Australian couples now rely on a double income to fund their lifestyles, and if that's the case then there's generally a higher chance that they'll divide the housework, too. For modern guys, things like grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, balancing the household finances and picking up the kids from...whatever it is kids do nowadays is normal. It certainly isn't the exclusive domain of women anymore.

Half a century ago, if somebody's wife had to work in order to be able to cover the household bills, it would have been seen as a source of shame for the husband, and he may even be perceived by society as not being a good enough breadwinner. Nowadays, it's so common that nobody cares.

Sources:

[observer.com/2015/08/10-habits-that-change-boys-into-men/](http://observer.com/2015/08/10-habits-that-change-boys-into-men/)

[www.news.com.au/finance/work/the-glass-ceiling-index-the-jobs-failing-women-in-australia/story-fnkg-bb3b-1227432717646](http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/the-glass-ceiling-index-the-jobs-failing-women-in-australia/story-fnkg-bb3b-1227432717646)

**Living with mental health issues?  
Looking for a job?  
Ostara can help!**

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# Practical ways to thrash psychotic symptoms

by Grant J Everett

Many people who experience symptoms the medical model term as 'psychotic' face the challenge of having to figure out what is true or untrue. We may see or hear things that aren't there, or feel as though people are out to get us. So what can we do about these things? Here are a few hard-won insights from a mental health veteran who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

## Challenge your beliefs

Also known as "reality basing", challenging your beliefs means taking a minute away from what you're impulsively feeling in order to put two and two together...even if you may not necessarily want the answer to be four! I know from experience that this can be a very effective technique for managing paranoia and social anxiety. You can use reality basing by actively thinking beyond your initial sense of paranoia and trying to figure out what's more likely: after all, were those strangers really laughing at you for no reason? You weren't doing anything to attract their mocking, were you? Don't you think they have something better to do than watch you walk past? Are those feelings of danger realistic?

Reality basing is an essential weapon to have when it comes to fighting psychotic symptoms, but it can be difficult. Many will actually find solace in their symptoms, and choosing to let go of a long-held belief that you've suddenly come to see as false can be terrifying and embarrassing. Also, nobody likes to admit that they're wrong. However, squaring up to reality is an essential part of recovery, and it will make you stronger in the long run.

The nature of delusion can be a

prickly topic in other ways, though. For instance, take the long-standing disagreements between Creationists (Christians who believe the world was created by God in six days, followed by the universe's first Allocated Day Off) and Evolutionists (who believe we have monkeys for uncles). Each side directly contradicts the other and calls them wrong. To an Evolutionist, a Creationist is the one who's deluded, and vice versa. How are we meant to be able to tell who's right?

## Self-talk

This management technique is just like it sounds: when something tough comes up, talk yourself through it. You don't necessarily have to do this out loud or anything! Self-talk means counseling yourself by reaffirming things that you already know. For instance, when I feel like screaming my head off at somebody because they're being an inconsiderate jerk, I'll often do some self-talk by reminding myself that I'll stop being angry soon and that I shouldn't say or do anything when I'm furious. The answer should present itself pretty quickly, even if it's as simple as leaving the room for half an hour.

## Put your ego aside

Admitting you might be wrong is painful, but it's necessary from time to time. Sadly, many people may go through their time on this planet shackled by delusion, which may rob them of much of their lives in the process. My suggestion is to admit that we are only human and don't have to be perfect, and to simply consider the odds: what's the chance that you are the only correct person on the entire planet, and everyone else is deluded?

## Talk to someone

While an open, honest dialogue with a good therapist is invaluable, you don't need a PhD to listen. It's great to know some trusted people you can bounce ideas off, especially if they're the honest sort who won't hesitate to tell you if you're not being very realistic. Please note that it may be inadvisable to have talks about psychosis with people you don't know all that well, as this could freak them out if they have no lived experience of mental health issues.

## Insight

Insight is the ability to see yourself and your words and deeds as others see them. It's a very difficult skill to sharpen, but one that you may find indispensable.

Just like everyone has a "blind spot" in the centre of their field of vision (where the optic nerve joins the brain), we also have a "blind spot" with how other people see us. The best way to get around this mental blind spot is insight. Gaining insight will require you to become proficient in all the coping techniques we've mentioned so far: being able to challenge our beliefs, applying thoughtful self-talk, putting our egos aside, recognising why other people believe what they believe, and talking with trusted people.

## Don't let it hold you back

Psychosis can be tough, and although we may not have a choice in whether we develop symptoms or not, we do have a choice in how we respond to them. Better yet, we can do things to prevent them. Some choices may be harder than others, sure, but they are still choices. Avoiding illicit substance use is always a good one. If you are on a medication that works for you, then taking every prescribed dose is a good idea. Creating a mental health recovery plan BEFORE you become unwell is gold, too.

Funnily enough, by this point you may have noticed that all of these choices depend on YOU.

## Summing up

A common theme in our publications is to reach as far as you can in life. Psychosis is a scary experience, sure, but it's really sad how many times I've met people who have allowed their fears of a recurring episode prevent them from wanting to return to study or work. Sure, maintain your mental state as best you can and be sure to get whatever help you need, but don't let the FEAR of mental health issues hold you back from the life you want. Apply for that job, enroll in that TAFE course, and don't let it win.

Source:

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/schizophrenia/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/schizophrenia/index.shtml)

# Talking about the Seventh Theme: Psychotic Symptoms

The support services that Flourish Australia offers are generally non-medical, which means that we don't offer things like medication or psychiatric therapy. This presents us with a bit of a challenge whenever we deal with the "Psychotic Symptoms" theme in ACTION, as this is a medical term and, thus, outside our scope. However, Senior Mental Health Worker (Business Services) **Kara Lyons** and her staff support our Business Services Employees in many different ways, and this includes having CANSAS conversations with them...and yes, this includes the Psychotic Symptoms theme. Panorama asked them how they approach this issue.

## People don't see their own thoughts as "psychotic"

Kara agreed that many of the people who access our services may not see their experiences as being defined as "psychotic symptoms," and this can make it hard to identify exactly where these experiences fall within the CANSAS conversation. Peer Worker **Matthew Roberts** has found that a good way to get around this issue is by asking people if they have any "mental health issues," and whether they are seeing a professional to help them with what they are experiencing. If somebody raises that they want to talk about a specific "psychotic symptom," then Matthew will discuss whether they should talk about it there and then or leave it until the end of the CANSAS conversation. Matthew says that waiting for the CANSAS as a whole to finish takes pressure off the issue.

## Hearing voices and bird noises

Kara told us: "I think the most common 'psychotic symptom' that the staff are likely to come across when conducting their CANSAS conversation is hearing voices. Staff have often asked how we can support people with this experience. We will often take coping strategies that have worked for other people in the past, and use these as suggestions. This may include things such as reality checking, paying attention to all five of their senses, or visualising certain images. They could also use distraction techniques such as listening to music, or use various relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing, massage, and so on. There are also some good 'hearing voices' workshops out there, and I will often encourage the vocational staff to gather the latest information for referrals."

Peer Worker **Jeanette Rodriguez** said that a lot of people have told her about the ways they deal with psychotic symptoms. For instance, people have told her that listening to music can help them when they are hearing voices. This can be quite effective when the voices are whispering, but if the voices are shouting then they can be extremely hard to control. Other people have told her that actively listening and relaxing to the sound of birds can be helpful in dealing with voices.

## Look up! Look down!

The "look-ups" is a common experience that people diagnosed with a psychotic illness will have at one time or another. It generally involves involuntary eye movements, such as having your eyes roll back and get stuck. We should note that look-ups isn't a symptom of psychosis: it's actually a side-effect caused by many types of antipsychotic medication (the kind used to control voices and other symptoms), and it can be very annoying. However, if a certain medication is helping us function in other ways, or if we are legally obligated to take it, then it may be necessary to simply learn to live with the look-ups every now and again, or to get on some sort of side-effect medication to manage it. Just be sure to keep your doctor in the loop. Also, you could always get a second opinion from another

doctor.

Panorama once spoke with a former in-patient who was required to take a new medication. They experienced the look-ups, but to make matters far worse they had absolutely no idea what was going on. Their psychiatrist and the other hospital staff hadn't bothered to explain the possibility of side effects with the person, which is a pretty big oversight. You can imagine how scary that must have been! So, the lesson of the story is that we should always ask our doctors if there are any side effects when they give us a new medication...just in case they forget to tell you!

**Jeanette told us that some people find that when they get the look ups, just lying down can help.**

Another story is how one of our peer workers was walking along with an employee when the employee suddenly developed the look ups. The employee was understandably alarmed by this. The peer worker sat down with her for a while and made a phone call to a colleague who had some experience on the subject. The employee began to feel better after a while, and they agreed that it would be a good idea to discuss this side-effect with their doctor. The peer worker walked with the employee for a while until the employee expressed confidence in being able to manage by themselves.

**Q:** What can we do about our unmet needs? What resources are available? Where can we get further information?

**A: TAKE ACTION!**

**Watch out for the next issue CANSAS domain 8**

**Information on condition and treatment in December Panorama**

# Our right to choose?

*Should we all be pushed to reach our full potential...even if we don't want to?*

By Grant J Everett

It's a story currently shared by the better part of half a million Americans: if you are born in the US with a serious developmental disability or a physical disability (like cerebral palsy or spinal damage), this generally means that public schools will automatically jam you into the too-hard basket from day one. Developmentally delayed students are generally encouraged to leave school at the age of 14 to start a lifelong career in a nonprofit workshop for sub-minimum wage. The majority of these workplaces don't offer any chance of rehabilitation or advancement, and are basically a dead end.

But thanks to a decision made by the Justice Department in the little state of Rhode Island, there are some MASSIVE changes being put into place that have the potential to cause sweeping change across the United States. Long story short, if these workplaces aren't able to bump up the pay to minimum wage or better, they'll be closed. However, most of these workshops don't generate enough revenue to pay minimum wage, so it's inevitable that most of them will go out of business.

If somebody isn't benefiting financially from a job, but they get a sense of accomplishment and meaning, what's best for them?

On the surface, better pay and better conditions for vulnerable workers is great news. Everybody should be paid a living wage. But what do the EMPLOYEES want?

## Judged

To be brief: back in 2014 the Justice Department of Rhode Island found that the "sweatshop industry" employing thousands of developmentally delayed workers was guilty of systemic violations of the Disability

Act. As a result, these sheltered workshops were given two options: improve their working conditions, or close down for good (Heasley 2014).

Rhode Island is also breaking the sweatshop cycle at its source by putting more help in place for school kids who would otherwise be destined to get stuck in this spiral like so many others. There are plans to redirect "significant" funds towards this issue over the next decade, which will include transition services for students, internships, visits to potential job sites and peer mentoring. As there's more to life than just work, there will also be fun and educational community-based activities outside of business hours.

But what do the *workers* want?

Most people will get mad if they hear about people with a disability getting exploited. It's a natural reaction and proves you have a soul. However, when we look at the Rhode Island situation, it's important to keep in mind that many of the employees who attend these workshops are content with the existing conditions, and a lot of them have made it clear that they'd prefer to stay right where they are (a sentiment that's more common than you might guess). In addition to the workers themselves, many carers have good things to say about the workshops, and have gone so far as to say that closing these locations would be a great loss for their loved ones.

So the big question is: if somebody is content with their work situation and they make a decision *as a grown adult* to keep things the way they are, do we have the right to force them to do something else? Are these workers really being exploited if they find meaning, worth and perhaps even joy in doing what they do? If somebody we care for is capable of getting more from life, is it our duty to encourage them to pursue it?

## Dead end?

If you think that "sweatshop" is too harsh a term, consider that minimum wage in America is \$7.25 an hour, while the average hourly pay for a disabled worker in a sheltered workshop is \$2.21. Some might dismiss these numbers with the argument that the workers get government benefits to make up for their low wages (like here in Australia). But while our local Disability

Support Pension (DSP) might share a few similarities with American disability benefits, there are *huge* differences. Getting onto disability benefits in America is magnitudes more difficult than Australia (it's meant to be the most choosy disability support system in the Western world), and even if you *do* qualify, the monthly cheques from Uncle Sam are far less generous than what you'd get here. This means that while the average Australian resident in a supported employment role would be able to pay their rent and bills thanks to the DSP safety net, if you're living in America and attending a similar kind of work setting, you'll find that making ends meet will be a constant struggle. Most American welfare recipients have to rely on food stamps and carer support just to survive, let alone to treat themselves to anything that isn't essential.

Most Westerners are sympathetic towards (for instance) workers in Brazil who only earn two bucks an hour, but keep in mind that the much higher cost of living in the US effectively makes American workers worse off than those south of the border!

As a final note: the 2014 judgement made by the Justice Department in Rhode Island has become the catalyst for sweeping change across the US. So far, Oregon and New York have jumped on the bandwagon, and many more will undoubtedly follow.

So what do you think? If we're capable of getting more from life, should we be forced to meet our potential?

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We have the flag you're looking for right here in Bankstown

We read in the news that quite often people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds experience problems in accessing mental health services. In this special Panorama feature we will look at Flourish Australia's commitment to promoting recovery within a culturally diverse society. TOM TRAAE describes a service operating in an area with one of the highest populations of people who are CALD in Australia. Peer Worker ALMA describes her own experience as a person with lived experience of mental health issues who is a person from a CALD background. We also look briefly at the idea of "dual vulnerabilities" and people who are CALD.

- Many staff have attended cultural awareness training
- Several other organisations besides Flourish Australia are part of the consortium which operates headspace Bankstown. They include the Arab Council of Australia and Transcultural Mental Health services
- We use TIS services for translation services whenever we need to, and we don't hesitate or shy away from having difficult conversations using difficult communication methods such as talking through the use of an interpreter
- We actively monitor trends in our CALD population, and keep track of our biggest language groups
- We serve culturally appropriate food during events and celebrations

These are some of the ways we cater for our CALD population but the most important of all is the Recovery Action Framework. Essentially it doesn't matter how well you cater for people who are CALD if you don't use such a framework and show a willingness to allow people to be the drivers of their own recovery journey.

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headspace Bankstown

dignity and respect.

## Recovery as a universal "language"

by TOM TRAAE, Clinical and Operations Manager, Bankstown headspace

Since we opened our doors in Bankstown in March 2015, we have serviced a population of young people which includes 47% identifying as CALD. This is an incredibly high figure.

In dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse young people, there is one thing we emphasise overall: treating everyone with

Dignity and respect are the basis of the 'Recovery Action Framework' by which we and all other Flourish Australia services operate. The Recovery Action Framework can be universally translated into good mental health support regardless of language. It puts the people who access our services at the heart of everything we do.

Drawing on our commitment to Recovery, our approach to working with young people who are from CALD communities is multifaceted. Here are just a few examples...

- Our centre has flags of all Nations on display. This also include special positioning of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
- We have bilingual staff, covering many Nationalities and languages



Chinese Dragons have been known to visit Bankstown headspace on festive occasions.

## Recovery for people who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

# One peer worker's experience

**Flourish Australia peer worker Alma is a Muslim of Lebanese background who has a lived experience of mental health issues. She says that while there is a lot more awareness these days among people of her culture, there is still a strong stigma attached to mental health issues.**

"You never used to hear about it, but there are more people accessing services now and people do discuss it, but not always politely, a lot of people say things like 'he's crazy' or 'he's a nut job' or things like that.

"Even my own family members, with university education, sometimes say that people should 'toughen up' and you should 'pull yourself together!'

"There is still a strong element of shame associated with lived experi-

ence in my culture. People see you as being defective in some way. They wonder 'who will marry you, who would want you?' You are like damaged goods, in a way.

"I had wanted to do psychology at uni, yet my family didn't think that was such a good way of helping people, so I did social work.

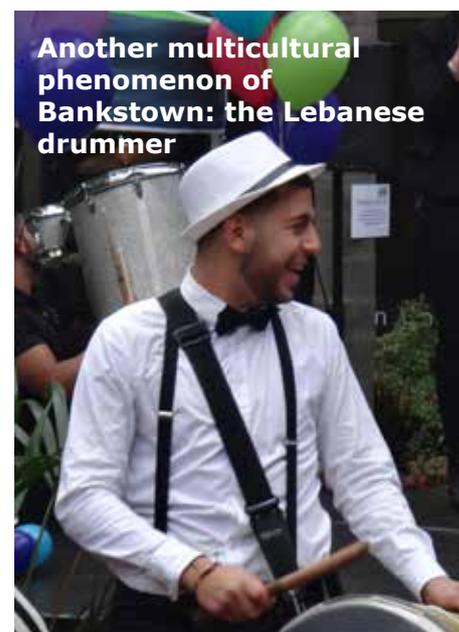
"My lived experience is situational and it is part of who I am. When I was sixteen I was told I might not be able to walk again. People didn't understand how that felt and kept telling me to be strong all the time.

**"...be proud of your lived experience and see it as a strength."  
-Alma**

"Although my parents do support me, they don't quite understand it the way I do. Sometimes they ask things like 'aren't you scared at work, working with crazy people?' My Mum sometimes says 'be careful!' when I go to work. I think 'be careful, be careful of what? It's not LIKE that!'

"These cultural views are not going

to go away. The only way around it is to be proud of your lived experience and see it as a strength. In the days before coming to work as a Peer Worker for Flourish Australia, I never would have said anything about my lived experience. But once here, I began to feel that I could talk about it and I saw the people around me as being just like me. Once you start doing that then you slowly break down the barriers. People eventually do adapt to changes, and that includes Muslims.'



**Another multicultural phenomenon of Bankstown: the Lebanese drummer**

### Migrants who don't speak English at home seem to underuse Mental Health Services

A report from the Australian Bureau of Statistics has shown that people born overseas who also don't speak English at home used mental health services at a significantly lower rate than other people. How can mental health services bridge this gap?

Among those born in Australia who speak English at home, 10.9% of people aged 15 to 54 access mental health services in 2011, compared to only 6% of people born overseas who do not speak English at Home.

The statistics seem to indicate that the key factor is whether English is spoken at home, because migrants who do speak English at home have a rate of 9.3%. (Koziol, 2016) Other factors which might cause the lower usage rate include cultural differences and lack of knowledge of or engagement in the broader community.

According to The Herald, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has not released figures like this before, so gauging the exact size of the problem has not been possible. However, the existence of the problem has been known for some time. In the view of Wendy Cross and Charanjit Singh, even when migrants DO manage to access mental health services, that is not the end of the problem.

In 2011, Cross and Singh first published 'Dual Vulnerabilities: Mental Illness in a culturally and linguistically diverse society.' (Cross & Singh, 2012) This paper recognised that people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds have ideas about mental health issues that are different to 'western' approaches.

They claimed that mental health services 'do not adequately meet the specific needs of CALD communities' which they considered to be 'a violation of sound health care access and rights.' They therefore claimed disadvantage on two fronts: 'marginalisation and stigmatisation associated with mental illness' and the 'access and utilization of services.'

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## BACK ON TRACK HEALTH Your Physical Health

brought to you by Jade Ryall, program manager, B.O.T.H.

# Flourish Australia promotes a healthy lifestyle for all

Good physical health and good mental health just go together. Panorama has featured many stories about how our services are supporting us in taking responsibility for maintaining good physical health. But did you know that we provide this support is for the staff as well?

First off, let's take a quick look at some of the ways Flourish Australia is fostering a culture where healthy lifestyle choices are valued and encouraged, followed by one small initiative we've got over at Head Office: standing desks...

For starters, we are going to develop (and evaluate) quarterly health plans at the local level. Each of our sites will set out a range of activities that are formulated to promote healthy lifestyles. Some of the things Flourish Australia will be doing include...

- Providing information about healthy eating choices
- Supporting people to quit smoking by offering smoking cessation programs
- Promoting active participation in physical activities by including hands-on fun things at organisational events
- Ensuring that the food and beverages we offer within the organisation meet nutrition guidelines and, where possible, individual dietary requirements
- Providing appropriate safe food handling training to any staff member responsible for the preparation and serving of food
- Harm minimisation information for potentially harmful activities such as alcohol consumption or risky sex (Flourish Australia, 2016)

### HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOCUS:

## Standing up for health

Flourish Australia has invested in furniture that enables people to stand up while working at their computers - as demonstrated by Workforce Development Manager John Maraz in the picture below.

One of the problems with sitting down in an office for long periods of time is that, according to some studies, it causes back pain, contributes to type 2 diabetes and is not good for your heart. (Crew, 2015) One recent study by the universities of Exeter and London in the UK reveals that the real reason that SITTING is bad for you is that you aren't moving. When you are standing up, you'll find it much easier to move around more and THAT is where the health benefit comes from. (Medical Xpress, 2015)

So what does John think about his standing desk?

"Sometimes it gets to the afternoon before I realise that I've been standing all day," says John, "and that makes me feel good! It's really great!"

(Pictured: John Maraz)



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Sydney Olympic Park  
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(02) 9393 9000

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### Physical Health Community of Practice

People with a common interest in supporting the physical health of the people who access our services meet by teleconference every month. If this interests you, then call Jade Ryall, Manager of the Back On Track Health program, on:

(02) 9393 9007

# Veggie Boxes

All of the goodness, a fraction of the price

Flourish Australia Newcastle  
627 Hunter Street  
Newcastle, NSW 2300  
(02) 9393 9180

Grant J Everett

One of the major focuses of our organisation is sharing practical ways we can all live healthier lives. This is why we encourage good nutrition: moderating portions, eating from the five food groups in the right amounts, munching on assorted colours of vegetables, and minimising fat, sugar, alcohol, caffeine and nicotine are a few of the ways we do this.

Alana Mondy from The Centre on Hunter Street, Newcastle, started up the popular Veggie Box program to encourage the people she works with to eat more fresh produce. The way it works isn't all that complex: the staff drive the veggie box group to a local farmer's market, bulk-buy whatever's in season or has a good price, and divides the produce into equal amounts. As you can see in the above photo, the boxes come packed solid with a great variety of staples, as well as one or two more exotic things.

On the subject of variety, one of the big rules of the Veggie Box Program is that people can't pick and choose what they want: every box has the same mixture of fruit and veggies in the same amounts. In addition to making things easier to run, this rule also encourages the participants to try out things they wouldn't normally buy. After all, exploring new things is one of life's greatest pleasures, and is something we all need to do more of for a happy life.

**TIP: Only buy fruit and veggies that are in season. If they're out of season they are more expensive, and will generally be in cold storage for ages before you buy them.**

The Veggie Box program always runs on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month, and there are usually a dozen or so buyers who pay \$10 a head. \$120 of bulk-bought

veggies is an enormous amount of food, and after months of practise the buyers can now immediately tell if something is a good deal. For instance, a box of apples will normally set them back \$20, a box of cucumbers will be \$15, and so on. It's pretty common to pay as little as a third of what you'd part with for the same weight of goods at Coles or Woolies.

So, to sum up, the Veggie Box program is encouraging people to eat more fruit and vegetables, it saves them money, and they're also trying new things a couple of times a month. They're winning in three ways!

After hearing about the Veggie Box program I decided to check if our other centres were running similar programs. Well, it turns out that Embark Cottage at Blacktown have been doing something almost identical for a couple of years now. In fact, Sciberras farm in the Hawkesbury supports the Embark cooking program by supplying them with fresh locally-grown fruit and vegetables at a discounted price. Also, Buckingham House at Surry Hills recently wrapped up something called the "Foodmate Cooking Skills and Nutrition Group." Foodmate was an 8-week program that ran from late July to early September, and it taught the participants how to handle, prepare and cook a meal with fresh ingredients, as well as how to budget and shop for a whole week. There was also a lot of stuff about nutrition.

## The sad truth

Having a mental health issue statistically means that we may live about two decades less than the general population, and many of the details that factor into this are preventable. When you combine cigarettes, substance abuse, poor nutrition and a lack of exercise, it's no exaggeration to call it lethal. Our workers don't harp about these things for the sake of their health: they do it for the sake of OURS!

*Thanks heaps to Alana at Hunter Street, Narelle Robertson from Embark, and Donna Shrubsole from Buck House for their help with this story. Keep up the good work!*



Warren Heggarty

Dedication and a can-do attitude as well as compassion: these were all part of the operation of Grevillea Cottage, a PARC project operated by RichmondPRA and Mt Druitt Hospital from 2015-2016 which came to a close at the end of the financial year.

The project was all too short-lived because the funding was only available for a limited time. In the course of Grevillea Cottage's operation, the project provided many learning opportunities that will be useful for future endeavours. The data they collected will also provide evidence for future programs.

PARC means "prevention and recovery centre." The idea was to provide a way for people to avoid hospital admissions, either with a step-up (moving from home into the cottage) or with a step-down (moving from the hospital into the cottage). You can read more about this in the March 2016 edition of Panorama.

Outgoing manager, Alexander Avenarius, said that the step-up part of the program was particularly successful.

"This has demonstrated that a PARC can be a genuine alternative to an inpatient admission for some people experiencing a deterioration in their mental health."

Once again, Alex said, it has also shown, "the great value of close partnerships between (NSW) Health and NGOs (like Flourish Australia) and the amazing things that such collaboration achieves for the people we support."

**Flourish Australia is a leading not-for-profit organisation providing community based support and employment services for people living with a mental health issue.**

**As a social enterprise of Flourish Australia, Figtree Conference Centre provides outstanding event facilities and delivers positive social outcomes through the provision of training and employment opportunities to break the cycle of unemployment and isolation so often experienced by people with lived experience of mental illness.**

**Being employed gives people a sense of purpose and goes a long way to improving their wellbeing.**

**Each employee is trained and mentored in events and catering management. Vocational services give employees tailored training, mentorship and direction along with access to TAFE courses.**

**The ability to interact with others, achieve goals and make a productive contribution provides a boost for participants' self-esteem, helping them with their recovery journey.**

**Located in Sydney Olympic Park, Figtree is a purpose-built conference facility, which can be tailored to suit your individual event requirements.**

**Our versatile, open-plan venue is flooded with natural light, has state-of-the-art, integrated IT and audio visual facilities, free on-site parking and full access for people with a disability.**

**Figtree is easily accessible by public transport and is located within walking distance to hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues within the Sydney Olympic Park precinct.**

**We have a range of delicious menu options to cater for any event or budget and a separate, open-plan art gallery for exhibitions, displays, trade shows or cocktail functions.**

**To discuss your event or meeting needs, please email:**

**[figtree@flourishaustralia.org.au](mailto:figtree@flourishaustralia.org.au)**

**or phone**

**0420 505 907 or 02 9393 9000**





## “Where are the boundaries?”

### Prickly questions at the Intentional Peer Support Training

During the **Intentional Peer Support Training** event in May, the question of professional boundaries was raised. A medical practitioner, for example, has clear rules of conduct in place to protect both doctor and patient alike from impropriety, or even just the *appearance* of impropriety. The nature of Peer Work, however, seems to make it different from other professions. Does Peer Work lack boundaries, as some have suggested? When Fay Jackson addressed the IPS training group on this topic in May, she was very clear that it *does* have boundaries. This is a position which might be controversial to some, but which is our policy at Flourish Australia.

**Fay Jackson**, who was among the earliest Peer Workers herself, spoke about some of the disastrous things that have happened in the past when Peer Workers have operated without boundaries.

“Not having boundaries can be downright dangerous,” Fay said. She went on to mention cases where wills were changed, where suicides occurred.

It can be said that a Peer Workers’

role is to be a friend, but Flourish Australia’s ethos is clear that a Peer Worker’s core role is to support people to “build themselves.” This means that it’s best for the person to ultimately find their own friends, and not to develop a dependence on a Peer Worker.

“You can’t end up in bed with a person,” Fay said categorically. “Yes, a Peer Worker can give a person a hug if the context calls for it.” For example, if there is a funeral or some similar strong reason. But: “The people who access our services are not to become enmeshed with you (as Peer Workers) or with Flourish Australia as a service provider.”

There is a need for transparency. Our Chief Executive Officer Pam Rutledge said that: “If you think something is a good idea, but you are not sure, there is always someone to talk to about it.”

Aidan Conway (General Manager, Operations) gave an anecdote to illustrate how Peer Workers should know when they’ve reached the point where they need to withdraw. He spoke of a music group that a Peer Worker had initiated. The worker gathered a group of people who accessed their service, and they went to various venues on several occasions. Eventually, it became a regular activity. After a while, the Peer Worker asked themselves: “What am I still doing in this group? It’s already taken on a life of its own.” And so the Peer Worker stopped accompanying the group.

Fay Jackson spoke about how some other services will co-opt Peer Workers into things which are really clinical.

“We don’t have to be mini-clinicians to prove our value. Peer Work is a profession in its own right that we need to have. No other profession drops the ‘return-to-hospital rate’ as much as Peer Work. We are needed as we are.”

Pam added that Peer Workers need to recognise that they are working alongside people who don’t have the same lived experience, and who have their own value to bring to the table. However, Peer Workers don’t need to justify themselves to other workers. “You don’t have anything to apologise for, being a Peer Worker.”

*“Houston, we have a problem...and we’re coping fine.”*

## How Astronauts de-stress

Some think that people with mental health issues can’t handle stress. In fact, **NOBODY** can handle stress... until they’ve learned how. It’s not your health condition, but your learning and practice, that determines your ability to de-stress. People with anxiety problems can acquire stress management skills which are **SUPERIOR** to the general population. How? The way that astronauts do!

In April, a small group from Flourish Australia Inclusion attended a webinar on **Uncovering the innovative secrets of NASA’s training approach with autogenic training** presented by Helen Gibbons via the NSW Business Chamber.

NASA selects only the highest achievers to become astronauts, but they aren’t superhuman and can succumb to stress like anyone else. The difference is they learn ways of dealing with it. One of their techniques is Autogenic Training. This involves taking conscious control of your own stress responses. The first female American astronaut, Dr Patricia Cowings of the AMES research establishment, introduced it into astronaut training.

After periods of intense mental effort, we need a period of deliberate “winding down” in order to return quickly to optimum performance. An optimal cycle is 90 to 120 minutes of activity followed by 20 minutes of winding down. You can still function if you go beyond 120 minutes without a break, but your performance will begin to deteriorate until you won’t be able to concentrate at all.

Want to hear something strange? Some of our group thought that the practical exercises in Helen’s webinar were eerily similar to things we’d learned in hospitals or from psychologists! How were we to know we were being secretly prepared for space flight?!

You can learn more about the Autogenic Training Institute here:

[www.autogenics.com.au](http://www.autogenics.com.au)

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# Keep a spending diary

In the previous **Moneyrama** we talked about priorities and about spending money on things you don't really need. This time we are going to look at keeping a spending diary.

Keeping a spending diary is necessary if you want to make wise financial decisions based on actual facts, not guesses. You will be able to see exactly what you spend money on. You may be shocked to see how much you spend on things that are of low value and having the figures in front of you will make it easier to transfer that money to things you really DO want.

When your correspondent (that's me!) first started keeping a spending diary over twenty years ago, he had a job, but he had zero savings. The diary made him aware of how poor some of his choices were. And when his diary was taken and read by his mates, the embarrassment was sufficient to make him reform. Once he had become conscious of his spending, despite four years on Austudy and eighteen months on Newstart, he actually managed to save a small amount each week, something he could not previously do even on a full wage! All because of that little notebook he kept in his top pocket!

You can even find spreadsheets on the net that ready-made to help you keep your spending diary. This will help you turn your spending diary into a SAVINGS diary as you watch your money grow. When you get to \$16,000 you will be able to purchase a Fiat Pop 500, in your favourite colour: "Mint Milkshake," in cash! Go for it!

Warren

Source:

[www.moneyminded.com.au](http://www.moneyminded.com.au)



## Pension Purge

Grant J Everett

In the past twelve months, an enormous 31,000 Australians have had their Disability Support Pensions (DSP) cancelled. This is by far the biggest annual purge on record, and Social Services have revealed that another 90,000 pensioners will be targeted for medical reviews over the next three years. Unlike a decade back, nowadays there's a lot of emphasis on getting people back into study or into work the moment that they are capable of it, rather than letting them remain on the DSP for life.

Gaining (and keeping) the DSP is getting tighter all the time, and a lot of pensioners can expect to get shunted over to Newstart, which pays \$173 less per week than the pension. Word about the crackdown is certainly getting around, as Social Services have found that fewer and fewer people are even bothering to apply for the DSP due to the stricter rules.

Social Services are appealing to people to be honest about their capacity for work so that they can identify those who are in genuine need.

### Quick stats

Australians currently on the DSP: 788,000

People who lost their DSP last September: 5,000

Number of those who have returned to work: 70

Estimated number of DSPs that will be cancelled each year from now on: 2,300

Number who will go onto Newstart instead: 1,800

People on the DSP who have an income: 7.2%

Difference between Newstart and DSP: \$9,000 a year

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"Crackdown throws thousands off disability support pension"

Rick Morton, The Australian, July 13, 2016



An official study provides an insight into the LGBTI community

By Grant J Everett

A massive report called "A Closer Look at Private Lives 2" was the biggest-ever survey of the LGBTI community ever conducted in Australia, with nearly 4,000 people taking part. The survey found that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community in Australia face more combined stigma and discrimination than any other group. It was also reported that around half of all people in this category will experience some form of abuse as a direct result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In particular, while people with gender dysphoria (who identify as transgender, in other words) are now more likely to be accepted by the mainstream community than ever before, this particular colour of the rainbow will still encounter more discrimination and violence than other members on the spectrum. There were a lot of other alarming statistics about the LGBTI community, such as how members experience higher levels of psychological distress and drug use than the mainstream.

### On the outer

Our capacity to discriminate begins early. Like we all witnessed in school, it's an unfortunate fact that being different in any noticeable way can paint a target on your forehead. Kids fear and reject what they see as alien, and whatever they are unable to easily understand from their own limited perspective is often interpreted as unnatural, un-

acceptable and wrong. The "more" different you are, the higher the chances that you'll be singled out. This inability to comprehend why or how somebody else can live or behave in the manner they do can be enough to provoke insults or even violence. And sure, while school-children will eventually grow up and mature into adults, all that means is that they'll employ more subtle bullying tactics.

### Gender what?

Gender dysphoria means somebody has the constant, overwhelming belief that their physical body and true gender don't match, and this is a state that usually begins in very early childhood. In fact, most people with gender dysphoria have felt this way literally as long as they can remember. This used to be called "gender identity disorder" a while back, but having a mismatch between the physical body and the internal sense of gender isn't seen as a mental health issue anymore. The anxiety and depression that often result from the stress of living with gender dysphoria, however, ARE mental health issues, and may require support. Also, people with gender dysphoria who have made the surgical transition from one physical gender to the other will still be susceptible to high levels of psychological pain. Gender reassignment isn't a magic solution that instantly makes life perfect.

### Hope

The findings of *A Closer Look at Private Lives 2* weren't all bad, of course! The report found that people who identify as LGBTI have lower levels of distress if they are able to take part in community events where they felt they could be themselves, no matter whether the events were LGBTI or mainstream. Also, the higher rates of psychological distress we mentioned will generally decrease with age. After all, sometimes the worst discrimination and stigma comes from within, and it can take a lot of time for us to accept who we really are.

### Snippets

Gender dysphoria was once called **transsexualism**, but this term is outdated and some even consider it offensive. **Transgender** is the cor-

rect term nowadays.

Note that gender dysphoria is not homosexuality. Your internal sense of your gender is not the same as your sexual orientation.

Members of the LGBTI community are more than four times as likely to use methamphetamine than the heterosexual community, and their use of other illicit drugs is also higher.

The condition of a person's wallet can play a small part in their mental health issues. Simply having a job, for instance, is linked to a higher level of resilience to many mental health issues. This doesn't mean billionaires are immune, of course!

### Help is available!

Are you a part of the LGBTI community? Need some support? These guys will always listen.

Lifeline: 13 11 14

beyond blue: 1300 224 636

Sources:

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[www.webmd.com/mental-health/gender-dysphoria](http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/gender-dysphoria)



"If Harry Potter taught us anything it's that no one should live in a closet."

-JK Rowling, author of a little book called *Harry... something*



# Join the Wellness Walk 2016

On Sunday 16 October the Wellness Walk returns for its fourth year of fun, festivity and fundraising for mental health.

The 5km walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge is a family-friendly walk with an easy route suitable for all ages and abilities. The walk raises awareness for mental health and encourages walking as a way to improve wellness.

This year Flourish Australia will be raising funds for our Women & Children's program based in Blacktown, which provides safe, supported accommodation to mothers living with a serious mental health issue and their children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We invite you to join Team Flourish Australia for this fantastic event. Let's walk together to raise awareness and show support for people living with a mental health issue.

To register visit: [www.wellnesswalk.org.au](http://www.wellnesswalk.org.au), select the Register option and follow the below prompts:

1. Select your preferred walk (2km or 5km)

2. Select your category (adult, concession, family or infant)

3. Select your preference (Join a team, Create a team, or Register as an individual)

4. If you would like to join Team Flourish Australia, select "Join a team" and search for Flourish Australia. When the Flourish Australia team appears, select the JOIN option.

5. To fundraise, select Flourish Australia on the **FUNDRAISE** page.

Get your family, friends and team mates involved and help us create

a brighter future for vulnerable women and children.

If you're unable to attend the Wellness Walk but would still like to support our Women & Children's program with a donation, visit:

[www.flourishaustralia.org.au/donate-now](http://www.flourishaustralia.org.au/donate-now)

For further information, please contact Alison Perizi, Flourish Australia's Fundraising Manager.

[alison.perizi@flourishaustralia.org.au](mailto:alison.perizi@flourishaustralia.org.au)

or call 0437 069 154



# Is the next generation FINALLY learning from our mistakes?

By Grant J Everett

Scoff if you want, but numbers from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicate that today's teens are LESS indulgent in drugs, alcohol and cigarettes than previous generations. This might be hard to accept thanks to a media avalanche telling us that all Aussie youths are a pack of binge-drinking, coward-punching, alcohol-chugging brats.

## Drink

The ABS has reported that since the start of the 21st Century our alcohol consumption has dropped to its lowest point since the early 1960s. If you go a bit deeper, it seems this decline is mostly due to a massive reduction in youth drinking. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey in 2013, between 2004 and 2013 the percentage of kids aged from 12 to 15 who reported having a drink in the past twelve months has halved from 35% to 18%. And although the number of kids aged 16 or 17 who had a drink in the last year was substantially higher than that, their demographic has also experienced a sharp decline from 81% in 2004 to 59% in 2013. The rates of risky drinking among teens have fallen, too. In fact, Australian teenagers are now drinking less grog than at any other time since these surveys began in the early 1980s, and these trends seem to be part of a global shift. A paper in *The European Journal of Public Health* looked into rates of teen drinking in a total of 28 countries, and identified significant declines in underage drinking in 20 of them. In the UK, Canada and Sweden (countries that possess similar drinking cultures to Australia), teen drinking has actually been split in two.

Young Australians who are in their early adulthood years (between 18 and 24) are less likely to indulge in risky levels of drinking, and the number of young adults who get totally paralytic on a Friday night has dropped from 32% in 2010 to 22% in 2013. Unfortunately for those of us who've left our teenage years

far behind, Australians 30 or older are still throwing back just as many schooners as ever.

**Lots of young people confirmed that exercising, eating well and avoiding alcohol and other drugs are all important lifestyle choices, which is doubtlessly an important factor in the declining use of drink, drugs and durries among our youth.**

How teens *perceive* drinking has changed a lot, too. Dr Nicola Newton and Dr Lexine Stapinski from the **National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre** said that when they asked Australian youths which substances are the most destructive, 50% saw ice as the very worst offender, followed by alcohol at 29%. The good doctors also mentioned that only about half of all kids aged between 14 and 19 have drunk alcohol, and a mere 2% trying methamphetamine. And in case you're wondering if teenagers are merely migrating from booze to illicit substances, rates of cannabis and amphetamine use have both declined in the past decade, too.

It's fantastic news that kids are either abstaining from alcohol or starting to drink it later in life, as this will give their developing brains the best chance of reaching their fullest potential. As the human brain doesn't mature until 24, hitting it with foreign chemicals (even legal ones) is bad news. By not slamming their grey matter with dope, these kids will have a chance to properly develop and do everything they want to do in life. Hopefully this reduction in substance use will also result in less young people developing mental health issues, too.

## Durries

Rates of smoking among young people in Australia have dropped to a record low, and there's hope it could be the early signs of a smoke-free generation. In 2014, less than 7% of teens described themselves as smokers, whereas two decades ago it was 23.5% (according to Anita Dossaix from the Cancer Institute of New South Wales). The latest fig-

ures show that in the past 20 years the number of adolescents who smoke has reduced by over 70%. It's thought that our multi-pronged assault on smoking - such as the plain packaging laws, constant price increases, the expansion of smoke-free areas, the long-established ban of selling cigarettes to minors, and public education campaigns - has been a major part of this shift. Although these drawbacks might be merely irritating to older smokers, the numbers indicate that it's having an impact of those who haven't gotten hooked yet.

The tobacco industry must be quaking at this news, because their business model relies on pinning down as many people as possible at a young age. After all, when your product has the unfortunate habit of killing its customers, you need a steady supply of new ones to take their place! In the greater scheme of things, less smokers means less preventable diseases among our population, and this alone has the potential to save billions of dollars worldwide.

As somebody who used to waste a lot of time and money smoking assorted substances, things have definitely changed. Let's hope the NEXT generation can do even better.

Sources:

[www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-28/adolescent-smoking-rates-at-record-low/7119532](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-28/adolescent-smoking-rates-at-record-low/7119532)

[theconversation.com/dont-believe-the-hype-teens-are-drinking-less-than-they-used-to-41884](http://theconversation.com/dont-believe-the-hype-teens-are-drinking-less-than-they-used-to-41884)

[www.researchgate.net/publication/273956132\\_Decreases\\_in\\_adolescent\\_weekly\\_alcohol\\_use\\_in\\_Europe\\_and\\_North\\_America\\_evidence\\_from\\_28\\_countries\\_from\\_2002\\_to\\_2010](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/273956132_Decreases_in_adolescent_weekly_alcohol_use_in_Europe_and_North_America_evidence_from_28_countries_from_2002_to_2010)



**It's not cool. Don't fool yourself.**

# Cooking it our way...



## Green Smoothies

by Warren Heggarty

In other culinary news, Panorama heard from Karina that our friends at **Flourish Australia Queanbeyan** have been doing **Green Smoothie** groups twice a month. It's simple: everyone brings their own vegetables to the kitchenette, and they use them to make a nutritious, fibre-filled treat. Did you know that most people will find Green Smoothies just as tasty as those expensive fizzy drinks, but without the sugar or fat? Plus, as the Green Smoothie class is run as a group, there's a social element to it, too!

One of the Queanbeyan participants was so impressed that they hastened to purchase their own blender from a local variety store so they could make Green Smoothies at home. Last we heard, they were planning on making an apple-ginger-cucumber smoothie.

Mmmmmmm...

## Green Breakfast

In other GREEN news, Sue from **Flourish Australia Tamworth** tells us that when they first tried to get people interested in eating green foods, it was a bit slow to take off. However, our Tamworth location has been using their regular breakfast program to gradually add more and more green stuff to the menu, and now they've finally progressed all the way to a Zucchini Slice.

By going the slow and steady route, the participants had enough time to adjust to the new tastes without being grossed out. The moral of the story is that nutritious eating, like all the finer things in life, is a bit of an acquired taste, and ALL of us can acquire it!

For more information on anything diet or health related, check with Jade Ryall, the Manager of Back on Track Health (BOTH) right here:

[Jade.Ryall@flourishaustralia.org.au](mailto:Jade.Ryall@flourishaustralia.org.au)

Above: Rosita from Business Services cannot WAIT to try out some of these recipes!

- Oregano lemon chicken with bean salad
- "Cheap & Cheerful" beef curry
- Bolognese with short pasta and cheese
- Lamb chop with Greek pasta salad

These recipes, plus everything else a beginner needs to know about the kitchen, is all available in the **Cooking for One** book!

## What is "Cooking for One?"

**Cooking for One** is an eight week program which started at Buckingham House, Surry Hills, back in May, and is based on Chef Amanda Perkins' fabulous cookbook of the same name. As the title spells out, the course teaches you how to handle, prepare and cook a meal for one. It also deals with how to budget and shop for a week's worth of meals.

The Cooking for One course originated as a follow-on group from

the New Moves program (which is now up to its third class), and it was designed to give the participants a chance to further stretch the healthy eating skills they'd acquired in New Moves.

The key reasoning behind **Cooking for One** is that most cookbooks concentrate on cooking for groups, but many of the people who access our services only need to budget for one. However, we think that the recipes are so good that people will want to come to your place and join in anyway!

"Participants in the course are getting a complimentary copy of the cookbook so that they can try it out at home as well," Amanda informed us.

Even before the very first Cooking for One program kicked off at Buck House, other Flourish Australia services from as far apart as Ulladulla and Tamworth have shown an interest in running it. It's hoped that the program will travel right across our many locations, as there are a lot of people who access our services who would benefit from learning such practical, useful skills.

If your service has a kitchen, or even just a kitchenette (as Karina from Queanbeyan described their modest outfit) please consider running the Cooking for One course. You can find the file here:

[S:\RichmondPRA\\_Shared\\_Resources\Community of Practice-Physical Health and Wellbeing\Community of Practice\\_Physical Health Resources](S:\RichmondPRA_Shared_Resources\Community of Practice-Physical Health and Wellbeing\Community of Practice_Physical Health Resources)



**Pictured: Pam, staff at our Five Dock office (including Bailey the Labrador) and our Board members**

# BOARD VISITS

Grant J Everett

On Friday the 29th of July, our CEO Pam Rutledge and six of our dedicated Board members went on a big tour of our organisation. Between

9am and 4:30pm they managed to fit in trips to Five Dock, Marrickville, Buck House and the Women's and Children's Program at Blacktown. Phew!

The whole point of the tour was to give the Board members a chance to better understand the services that we provide, and was a great opportunity to speak with the people who access these services. As you can see in the photo below,

it was also a good excuse to wear neon yellow high-visibility vests!

This trip happened to fall on the same day that Buck House was celebrating Christmas in July, so the Board were treated to a wonderful Christmas lunch while they were there. They were also treated to some angelic singing by the Choir.

Thanks for the photos, Jas Buchal, and cheers to Aidan Conway for helping with the facts.



**(from left) Paula Hanlon, Pam Rutledge, Robyn Carmody, Warwick Poulton, Dr Josey Anderson, James Herbertson, Jeremy Thorpe, Rachel Slade, and Professor Elizabeth More (Chair) at Marrickville Community Business**

Continued from THE LAUNCH OF FLOURISH AUSTRALIA on page 3

paying our respects to the traditional owners of the land, and to elders both past and present. As she has done many times in the past, Auntie Millie Ingram performed the "welcome to country" on behalf of the Eora nation, a people who have been here for tens of thousands of years. After this, we moved onto the inspirational speakers for the day.



Janet and Dr Parkinson catch up

Janet Meagher spoke passionately about past tragedies that are far too recent, of how many people with a lived experience still don't have a voice, and how people with mental health issues face abuse, ignorance and discrimination to this day. However, those of us who have a voice have a responsibility to shine a light for present and future generations. We stand on the shoulders of great people. Janet finished on a popular motto of how services like ours are run:

"Nothing about us without us."

Flourish Australia runs a total of 64 locations, employs 700 staff members, and we care for around 4,000 people with a lived experience of mental health issues each year. Of our 700 staff, 140 are peer workers.

Donna Marque spoke about her struggles as a mother who needed help, and how one of her earlier attempts at getting professional assistance involved the terrible pain of being away from her son – Ishmael – for five weeks. However, Donna was then able to get involved with the Charmian Clift Cottages Women & Children's Program, where her son

could be with her. She came a long way in a short time, and Donna has formed many positive connections and gotten involved with a lot of charity work.

The word "flourish" can mean to thrive, to do well, to prosper, and to grow. It can also mean being in a period of highest productivity, excellence, to be at your peak, to be healthy, to be successful. Considering that we're in the business of helping people to achieve their best, Flourish Australia is an appropriate name.

Matthew Mitcham was a celebrity guest on the day. As a men's health ambassador, Matthew shared with all of us how he needed to learn to accept himself and how self-esteem needs to come from WITHIN, rather than from external sources. Be sure to check out the in-depth story about Matthew on page 3!

We had quite a few other guest speakers besides Matthew. Our Patron, The Governor of NSW, His Excellency The Honourable General David Hurley AC DSC, thanked us for shining a light. In addition to the Governor, Lucinda Brogden, Katherine Lowry, Professor Elizabeth Moore and Fay Jackson all spoke at length about the many changes they've seen, and how we need to keep working for a better system. Our CEO Pam Rutledge thanked our army of volunteers who worked tirelessly, to make this all happen.

Once the speakers had finished and the curtain was "flourished" away from our new logo to great applause, we existed! The formal part of the day then concluded with a smoking ceremony in the courtyard.

### The origin of FLOURISH AUSTRALIA

A while back, RichmondPRA offered all of our staff members and the people who access our services an opportunity to suggest possible names. After hundreds of good efforts, "Flourish Australia" was eventually declared to be the winner. Just to prove how much we care about your feedback, even *the shade of green* we're using for the new logo was the result of intensive sessions with focus groups. Sure, there were other names, colour schemes and logos that came close

to being used, but the Board had to make a unanimous decision on what moniker we were going to choose.

When it comes to design choices, you may be wondering why our new logo is a speech bubble. Well, as Jasmin Bucal told me: "It starts with a conversation."

### Farewelling the temp

The "RichmondPRA" name - one we've carried since the merger on July the 1st, 2012 - was only ever meant to be a placeholder. In case you weren't around for it, this previous name was the result of two major not-for-profit organisations merging to become one: Richmond Fellowship and PRA (Psychiatric Rehabilitation Australia). While RichmondPRA may have been a logical choice considering the circumstances, this temporary name wasn't all that intuitive (if I had a dollar for every time somebody asked me if RichmondPRA was in Richmond... grrr!). We hope that our new motto will immediately spell out exactly what we're about and who we help: "Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing." Says it all, really, doesn't it?



The spread!

### The impact

A good question to ask at this point is: "How does this all affect ME?" Why should you, the reader, care? If your involvement with Flourish Australia involves hanging out at one of our day centres or working in a supported employment role, things probably won't change much. However, rebranding our name is a huge job in a lot of ways. It's not as simple as removing "RichmondPRA" from our signs and replacing them with "Flourish Australia" stickers.

As one example, our IT department had to work hard to get our email accounts up and running across the entire state. There will also be a bit of a "transition period" as the country gets used to the fact that we're called something else.

But don't panic! When it comes to contacting us or physically finding us, for now all of our phone numbers and street addresses are the same as always. However, on the day of the rebranding, all our email addresses switched over to a new format. They went from this to this:

[jimmy.fake@richmondpra.org.au](mailto:jimmy.fake@richmondpra.org.au)

[jimmy.fake@flourishaustralia.org.au](mailto:jimmy.fake@flourishaustralia.org.au)

**IMPORTANT:** Don't worry if you accidentally send an email to an old RichmondPRA inbox. It will still turn up in the new, correct inbox just like before. Thanks, IT guys!

Look, the most important point we can make is that Flourish Australia will continue to offer the same services, vocational opportunities, and everything else you'd expect from our organisation. The things we provided yesterday will still be available tomorrow...promise!

### Highlights of the rebranding

One of the big draw cards of the renaming event was an art exhibition. We like to encourage artistic expression (after all, it's known to play a key role in many recovery journeys), and the rebranding was a great opportunity for many of our talented folks to put brush to canvas and show what they could do. We had several big pieces that were a group effort between entire services, with up to ten people working on the one item. In addition to paint, pencils and other visual mediums (like sculpture from the awesome Glenda Mears), we also had hardcopies of poems and short stories.

### Flourish Australia and Panorama

We decided that Panorama magazine will still be called Panorama magazine. The changes we've undergone are pretty much cosmetic: all we've needed to do was swap out our RichmondPRA logos with Flourish Australia logos at the bottom of our pages and on the front cover. While we were once known as Panorama (showing our PRA heritage, there) we left this behind years ago.



Members of our senior leadership team  
From left: Andrew, Fay, Mark, Marty, Tim



Some of the managers of our many locations



# Learn While You Work

★ *Are you living with mental health issues?*

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

If you are on a disability support pension or have an NDIS package, you may be eligible for transitional supported employment at one of our community businesses - Prestige Packing Co or Enterpraise.

As a community business employee you will have access to vocational training and recovery groups so you can build your skills and experience, while furthering your mental health recovery journey.

**You can even do tertiary certificate courses onsite including: Cert. 3 in Warehouse Operations at Prestige Packing Co. and Cert. 3 in Horticulture at Enterpraise.** We can also support you to access other courses at TAFE and Community Colleges.

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

## ★★★NEWSFLASH★★★

**RichmondPRA is a registered NDIS provider. If you have an NDIS package we can answer your NDIS questions and support you to access our employment services. Contact us to find out more.**

### Prestige Packing Co.

Supported job vacancies in packing and light assembly.

Locations: **Marrickville, Harris Park and West Ryde**



### Enterpraise

Supported job vacancies in lawn and garden maintenance, commercial cleaning and our **NEW** specialized hoarding and squalor cleaning team.

Locations: **St Marys, Marrickville and Warwick Farm**

To register your interest contact Clare Evans on 9393 9000 or email [clare.evans@richmondpra.org.au](mailto:clare.evans@richmondpra.org.au)

RichmondPRA  
Together, we're better.



Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

RichmondPRA will soon be called Flourish Australia. Our new name reflects our fundamental and enduring commitment to people's mental health and wellbeing, supporting them to thrive and live a contributing life.