

QUARTERLY ISSUE #65 SEPTEMBER 2017

panorama

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

flourish®
AUSTRALIA

Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

Cultural Cookery
Online banking
Good news on hep C

Leadership and training:
developing strengths
on the path to open
employment

Flourish Australia

About us

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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CEO: Pamela Rutledge

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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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Panorama #65

September 2017

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Contributors

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Neil Fenelon photographer

Lorraine Petersen and Georgia Shrubssole have also contributed some photos for this issue.

Thanks also to **Kathy, Alma, Warwick, Jay, Peter, Alison, Bao, Alan, Jas** and the countless others who assisted with this edition

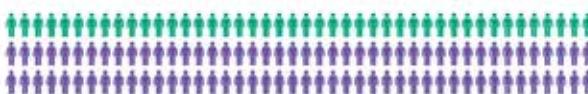
Grant J Everett staff writer

Warren Heggarty staff writer

Below: Yoga was one of the activities featured at the Buckingham House Tennis Social Day. More pictures and story on page 26



We employed 685 total workforce
Peer workforce 33% front line positions



INDIGENOUS

GENDER

AGE

5%

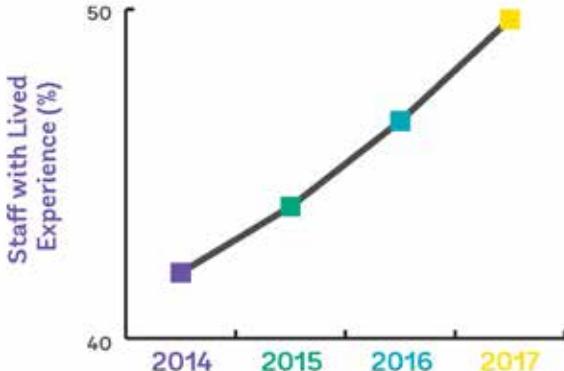


CALD

15%



<25: 6%	40-44: 12%
25-29: 14%	45-49: 14%
30-34: 13%	50-54: 12%
35-39: 12%	55+: 17%



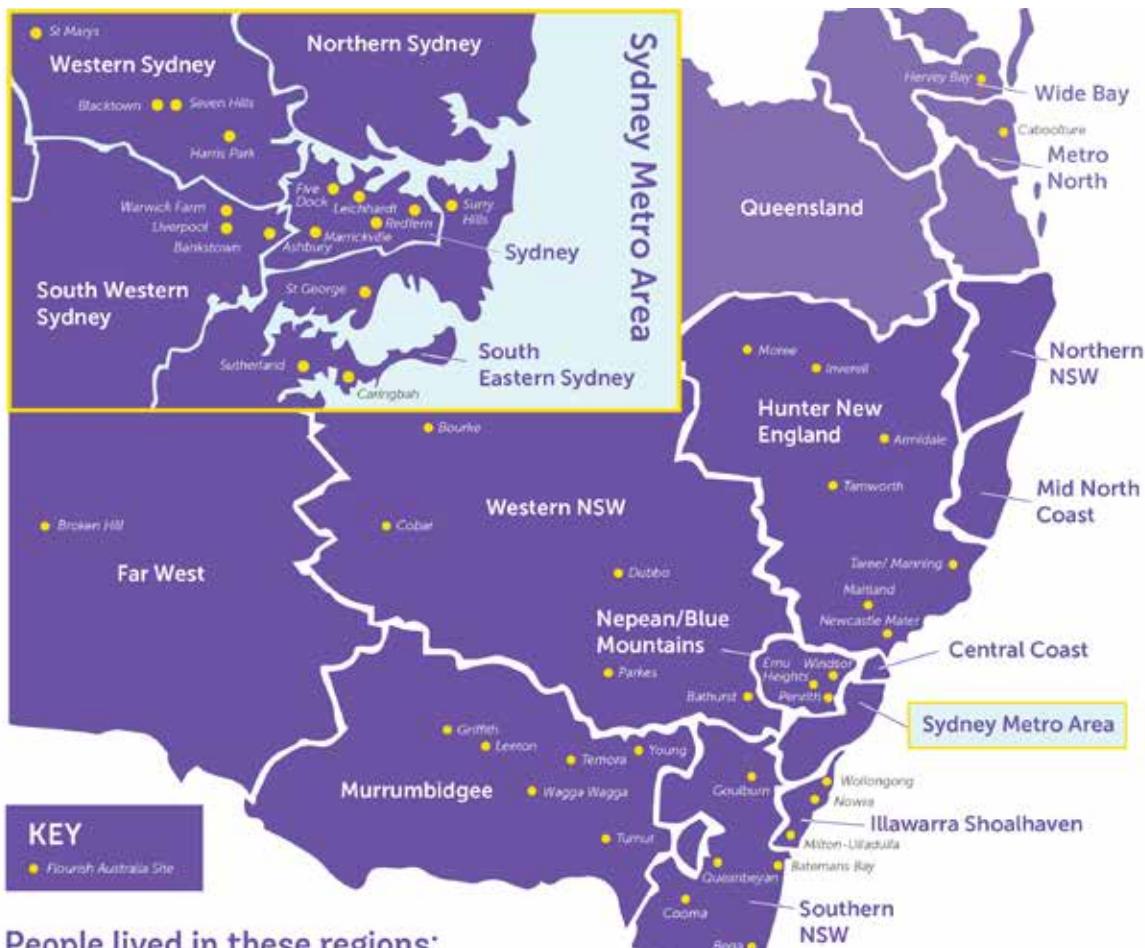
Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

People told us:

97.9% I am treated with dignity and respect by Flourish Australia

97.1% Flourish Australia supports me to make my own decisions

97.5% I am satisfied by the service Flourish Australia provides



A snapshot of who we are, where we are and what people think about us

[taken from our 2016-2017 annual report]

Graduation Day

Certificate III Warehousing



The Harris Park graduates (from left): Pam Rutledge [CEO], Lisa Waata with Rachael Wotte, Lachlan Black (standing behind them), Tracey Pratt, Shane Harvey, Dina Kovacevic, Stephen Prior (obscured), Gregory Elliott, Stephen Fitzgerald, Joel (with beard), Heidi Chan, Wayne Petersen, Gene, Sam Karout, Chamara Ekanayake, Katarzyna Bryk, Flocerpina Diaz, Aman Pablo, Ariana Arghandewal.

Flourish Australia
Prestige Packing Co.
23-25 Station Street West,
Harris Park 2150
1300 779 270



The Marrickville graduates (from left): Solomon Moses, Adam Parker, Mary Costa, Louise Dallas, Van Tram, Mark Wastie, Wayne Petersen, Peter Bragg, Deonny Zaroual, Anthony Marfia, Peter Derbin, Ashokkumar Sundaralingam (obscured behind Peter Derbin) and Pam Rutledge.

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Prestige Packing Co.
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Marrickville 2204
1300 779 270

Graduation Day

Certificate III Warehousing

By Grant J Everett (Harris Park) and Warren Heggarty (Marrickville)

They say that what you get out of something depends on what you put into it. Well, after two years of on-site study, 31 employees from Flourish Australia's business services at Marrickville and Harris Park recently graduated with a Certificate III in Warehousing Operations.

With a new, nationally-recognised qualification to put into their resumes, these graduates have come much closer to the goal of open employment and financial independence. It's not just a dream!

Pride

'I am absolutely so proud of you,' Flourish Australia CEO Pam Rutledge told the graduating group at Marrickville as their co-workers looked on. 'Studying to gain a qualification involves commitment and sacrifice. It is especially true as an adult where you are doing this on top of your work hours. I know this because I have done it myself!'

Later, Academy of Workplace Learning CEO Wayne Petersen echoed Pam's words. 'I am really proud of these guys. It has taken hard work, discipline and application. Each one of them is now qualified to be a leading hand in any warehouse.'

'At first,' said Wayne, 'a lot of people thought it would be like school, but I think they all found that it is nothing like that at all!~'

'The course was magic. It stimulated my intellect and gave me the opportunity to raise the bar.'

-Mircea,
Marricville

Lifelong learning

Pam said that there is an additional challenge with adult learning. 'Having to relearn how to learn.' It can

be daunting to begin with but as she told the graduates, 'you have done just that and we hope lifelong learning will be an ongoing thing for you.'

Wayne and his wife Lorraine have worked closely with Flourish Australia and the people who access our services for the past two years.

Diverse backgrounds

One of the Harris Park graduates, Radha* told us that one of the great benefits of the course was that she was able to improve her communication in English as well as understanding some of the jargon associated with work.'

Some graduates, like Adam and Mircea of Marrickville, received a second Certificate in Access to Vocational Pathways.

Magic

'The course was magic' says Mircea, who works as a supported employee with Flourish Australia in its the courier and document destruction businesses based at Marrickville. 'It stimulated my intellect and gave me the opportunity to raise the bar. Wayne is an excellent teacher.'

Forklifting and Bricklaying

Joel says that as a result of the course 'I would like to become a forklift operator onsite' at Harris Park.

Eric* remarked 'something really useful I learned was how to fill in a Receiving Inspection Report. Knowing how to do this means I could work in a supervisory role.'

Eric* has also given thought to the benefits of eventually getting open employment on a full wage. "I think that one of the big things that would change if I was working ...in open employment is something I've wanted to do for a while: I want to help my parents knock down their old house and rebuild it."

Another Harris Park graduate ,Philip* said "I'd like to continue my apprenticeship in bricklaying. I feel confident about getting back into

this field, and I'm planning on trying for it as soon as I am ready. It would be nice to be able to get a bit more experience before resuming my apprenticeship, though, and I am currently saving up so I can afford it. "Future-wise, in the next five years I can see myself reach-

I can see myself reaching mental wellness, getting off the pension, supporting myself with my trade, and renting my own private flat.

-Gene, Harris Park

ing mental wellness, getting off the pension, supporting myself with my trade, and renting my own private flat."

Overcoming the doubt

Gene overcame some self doubt. 'I had a few moments where I was sure that I wouldn't be able to complete the course. But I did it!"

"If I had a choice in jobs, I'd like to have a role that involves forklift operation and being a warehouse hand... I have signed up with Ability Options to find a job. I hope they can help me find something."

What about you?

Completing the Certificate III in Warehousing (or any course for that matter) is no pushover; but nor is it beyond our reach. The graduates have proved by example that we can successfully make the effort to improve our situation and move towards open employment. Consider the possibilities.

*To protect from prejudice in job hunting, some of the graduates have asked that their real names not be disclosed.

Thanks to Alma, Kathy and other business services staff for helping out with this article.

GRADUATE PROFILES



Left: Mircea displays his two certificates, the Certificate III in Warehousing Operations and Vocational Pathways.

received support for mental health issues.

Since becoming a supported employee with Flourish Australia, he says that his life has become more level and consistent without the major ups and downs he was experiencing before.

How will his graduation from the Certificate III in Warehousing Operations change things?

'This new qualification opens the door towards being a leading hand or supervisor in a warehouse' says Mircea. 'I want to tread carefully, though. I have been out of hospital for one and a half years now.'

'Here at Flourish Australia, I know that I will get support from people like Bao [Nguyen, who supervises the courier business] and Warwick [Poulton, manager of the Marrickville site]. They are always asking if I am OK. In open employment you might get a manager who doesn't care about your wellbeing. So for that reason I feel more comfortable in supported employment.'

This dilemma – being keen and capable, yet fearing undoing all the good work of recovery or even losing the pension by

venturing into open employment- is a very common one.

Nevertheless, Flourish Australia will continue to encourage Mircea to aim towards open employment. Mircea would be better off financially, earning a salary closer to his abilities and responsibilities. 'But money is not the only factor.' He says, 'There is also your quality of living.'

Mircea has learned to 'watch for triggers and signals' that he is becoming unwell. 'I have a system in place' he says. 'Some of the signs I watch for are smoking too much, spending too much, racing thoughts and losing sleep.' When he notices these things he can take action to stop things escalating. 'I have protection over my bank account, too!' he adds.

This sense of personal responsibility carries over into Mircea's work, which involves driving. 'When you're driving you have responsibility for the safety of others.'

In the courier business 'we start with morning meetings where we decide to split up the duties between the three drivers. We have to be at certain places at certain times to make regular pick ups and deliveries. So there are a lot of time constraints. Nine out of ten times, there is no problem, but on the other occasions, if I think I will have trouble making it, I can rely on my colleagues to fill in for me, and they can rely on me in the same way. It's very much a team thing.'

Thanks to Bao Nguyen

Taking Responsibility

Mircea has a varied experience of study, work and even self-employment. He studied Construction Management at UTS university and gained a qualification as a Microsoft systems engineer. He has worked for a large Bank, an employment consulting company, and a computer company as well as Australian Hearing Services, having come to Australia from Romania at age 21.'

Mircea's wife passed away from colon cancer aged only 35. After that he moved in with his mother and has



Background in Civil Engineering

Ashokkumar Sundaralingam, or Ashok to his friends, already had qualifications in Engineering when he came to Australia from Sri Lanka.

Graduating from this Certificate III is part of a process of recovering from past set-backs.

Ashok studied civil engineering at Peradeniya University near Kandy in Sri Lanka. 'I am good at mathematics, I studied advanced level' says Ashok.

Left: 'I am good at mathematics' says Ashok

'My favourite subject at university was multiple span joists, which involves calculating weight, volume, density - how much load a structure can bear. I also studied physics, chemistry and English language.'

After that, I worked as a supervisor on motor highway construction.'

Ashok came to Australia in 2004. Owing to mental health issues, he began working in Prestige Packing's Redfern factory, which later moved to its present location in Marrickville.

'I prefer practice to theory,' says Ashok. 'I was already working in the factory, so I thought I would gain the qualification as well. I enjoyed it!'

Thanks to Wayne Petersen and Alma

Focused on the job

Anthony has progressed through supported employment to mentor and Cert III graduate...



Flourish Australia
Unit 19 / 29-31 Scrivener street WARWICK FARM 2170
9393 9177

Recently graduated from a Certificate III in Warehousing (see story on page 24), Anthony Marfia spoke to Panorama about making a recovery journey in the workplace.

Anthony currently works on the site of Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute [EMAI] near Menangle. EMAI is a laboratory involved in 'biosecurity' which means protecting our crops and livestock from the possibility of damage from disease.

It is one of the sites for which Flourish Australia is contracted to provide cleaning services. Anthony says he is pretty happy working there, and he lives not so far away in Wilton.

Anthony began accessing Flourish Australia's services twelve years ago, due to mental health issues. Over the years as a supported employee [see box on opposite page] he has not stood still but has taken on more and more challenging roles as he has progressed.

'I've worked on a lot of projects over the years' says Anthony. 'For example, I was

at the former West Ryde site operating a skin packer, which is now housed at Harris Park. I got a lot of help from many people there, such as the managers and supervisors Michaela, Norman, Peter, Steve and others.'

'For a while I also did deliveries' Anthony says, 'driving a ute, doing pickups, loading and unloading.'

Mentoring

'Another role I had at West Ryde was when we took over a computer recycling business, with Alfonso as manager. That was a real challenge. We had to take the computers apart without breaking them. I enjoyed it as did a number of other people, but it was more demanding work than some people were used to. So my job there involved mentoring. I even trained as a mentor with Coach Peter Tos (later of PreEmploy Institute).'

'With the computer recycling work you needed to be able to concentrate on the job as well as have good physical coordination. Some people found it difficult and became very frustrated.'

Six months ago, while studying the Certificate III in Warehousing, Anthony started cleaning Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute. Supervisor Alison Gimbert has trained him in the special procedures for safely cleaning a laboratory. 'This is the sort of job where a person needs to responsibly carry out tasks on their own' says Alison. 'I've given Anthony particular responsibility for cleaning the plant labs.'

More in control

Has Anthony noticed any changes in himself over the years in how he handled his mental health issues?

He says that gradually there has been a change for the better and that he now felt more in control. 'I've come a long way' says Anthony. 'I've noticed it within myself and my doctors have as well.'

Alison has noticed it too! Her own children have disabilities yet work in open employment so she is convinced of the value of encouraging people like Anthony to reach their full potential.

Anthony told us that in the past issues such as 'hearing voices' and talking to himself, had made it difficult for him to concentrate. It had also tended to make him withdraw from other people.

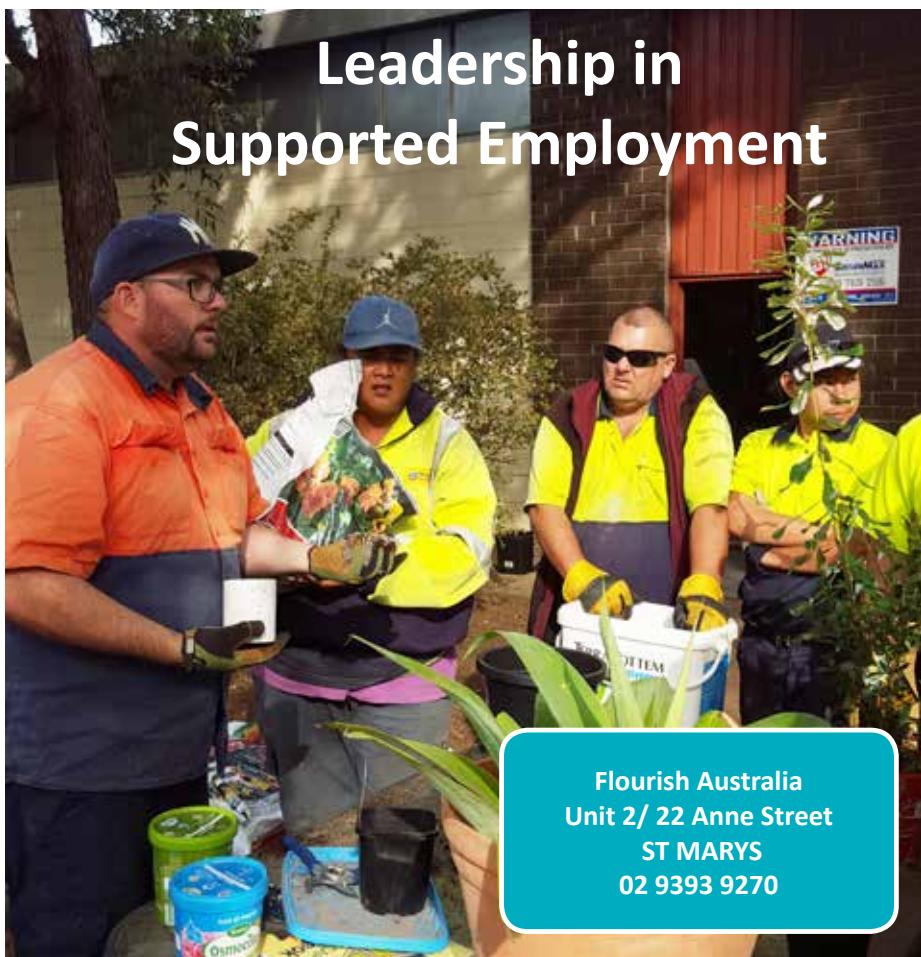
'I think I've become better at dealing with my mental health issues and at the same time I have also been able to focus on my job!'

We know that recovery does not happen in a perfectly straight line. 'I still get times when I can't help but think certain things [that make me lose concentration] but it is not as bad now. I know that when that happens I need to take time out and relax and get through it. Having a good friend helps a lot at these times, too.'

When you think about it, ALL workers, whether they have diagnosed mental health issues or not, have difficult days, and Anthony and his colleagues are not the only people who sometimes lose focus.

The difference is that Anthony and others on the recovery journey have learned to recognise this problem and are able to take action to get back on course. A lot of workers could do with skills like that!

Thanks to Alison Gimbert



Leadership in Supported Employment

Flourish Australia
Unit 2/ 22 Anne Street
ST MARYS
02 9393 9270

The most important people in the recovery process are the people who access our services, but it doesn't hurt to have leaders who can act as career role models.

By ANTONY WEARNE of Royal Sydney Golf Club, formerly Flourish Australia

I haven't closed the door on Flourish Australia, but gardening is my trade and I saw this offer to move to Royal Sydney Gold Club as a big opportunity to push myself and extend my skills as a horticulturist.

I've always wanted to work on a golf course. This is a Professional Golfers Association course, a private club that has top end facilities. It is also the oldest golf club in Australia and they are giving it a new face with a \$30 million redesign.

I think my role at Flourish Australia impressed my new employers. I learnt a lot from a leadership role with supported employees. Important things like the use of strengths based language and the importance of reflective practice. When you practice the step by step process of reflection, it becomes not just a work skill but a life skill. That is something that I have always tried to get across to the supported employees I've worked with.

Of course, there is a challenge here. We have to balance two equally important sides, which are providing support while meeting the contract requirements of our customers. This means that supervisors can have quite a lot on their plate, and we need to be good at multitasking.

Mowing the lawn is not the best time to talk about issues, but we make time to do this, in the car for example. When on the job, employees will also come up to us needing to chat about things, and not necessarily at the most ideal time, but it all has to be done. Just like the training side of the job and the Workplace Health and Safety side of it, these things can't be neglected.

The Horticulture course that some of our supported employees are doing I think has great potential for developing careers, and the NDIS is a big opportunity for employees to develop the relationships with customers that allow them to have a career perspective.

Thanks to Jay Irsaj

What is the idea behind

Supported Employment?

A supported employee often has a lot more on their plate than the average worker.

Some supported employees are very highly qualified but have had major setbacks due to long periods of hospitalisation, institutionalisation, or unemployment.

Many people with mental health issues also have poor physical health, and then there are the effects of social disadvantage. Some people have literacy and numeracy problems especially if their mental health issues developed while at school.

As well as doing the job itself, supported employees have the additional challenge of learning to deal with their mental health issues and with the side effects of medication, such as sedation.

Alan Blake, Quality, Training and Technical specialist with Flourish Australia's community businesses says that in supported employment, sometimes even very enthusiastic workers might benefit from beginning on simpler jobs so that they can improve their ability to focus stage by stage.

In the course of the recovery journey, the aim is to take on more complex tasks involving more decision making.

In Anthony's story on page 8 (as well as others') we can see how he has built himself up over time. We can also see from his experience mentoring in computer recycling operation that at any one time there will be people working together who are at very different stages of recovery.

Cleaners working at EMAI have to be particularly responsible and reliable because of the need to prevent cross contamination between laboratory buildings and so this sort of supported employment is suitable for a person who has made great progress towards open employment.



The Expressive and Creative Writing Workshop: An outlet for recovery

By Grant J Everett

Each Monday, Buckingham House at Surry Hills offers a group called the **Expressive and Creative Writing Workshop**. Run by award-winning poet ARIEL RIVEROS since March 2017, the Workshop is a gathering where writers of all genres and experience levels can express their creativity with a friendly, supportive group of like-minded wordsmiths. A recent survey showed that everybody who attends the Workshop found it to be a positive space that nurtured their craft and provided them with essential technical help.

On the day Panorama attended, there were five participants: George, Nicole, Pia, Larry and Ariel himself, though the group can swell to as many as fifteen people on busy days. The Workshop started with Ariel asking the group if they'd like to share anything they've been working on, followed by an opportunity to show off any literature that has had an impact on them recently.

The exercise for each group is chosen

Recovery Groups

the week before, allowing the participants to do a bit of brainstorming in the meantime, and each person had their own personal notebooks for the day's exercises, allowing them to keep a record of all their involvement. Today's task was to write a speech or monologue about something important in their lives, the sorts of things that get them out of bed, and to do it within 15 minutes. As the Workshop is held in a quiet room, the participants were able to concentrate.

For starters, Pia wrote about how her father is at the core of her support network, and how much she values the time they spend with each other. George wrote about how his hearing aid is actually more of an irritant than a help, and discussed his love of life drawing at the National Art School, and why it's one of the highlights of his routine (Pia asked for some details so she could look into taking part). Larry wrote about his participation in a Library group and a project he is going to run about a many-authored story (which is going well).

Ariel also participated in the exercise, writing about his view on celebrating birthdays, especially where mud cake is involved (i.e., every birthday ever).

**Flourish Australia
Buckingham House, 43-45
Buckingham Street, Surry
Hills, NSW 2010
(02) 9393 9240**

The inner workings

The Workshop is designed to help participants build on more than their writing skills: like with other Flourish Australia groups, the Workshop provides social contact, builds on your existing skill set, and generally offers a good reason to get out of bed in the morning. In addition to that, attending the Expressive and Creative Writing Workshop can be an excellent outlet. In case you don't know, an "outlet" is a healthy method of venting frustration, anger, stress and other negative emotions. Popular outlets include physical exercise, including anything from punching a pillow to martial arts, talking to somebody you trust, or doing something creative. As you may have guessed, the Workshop provides the

latter outlet.

Writing your difficulties down on paper can be a great way to really get a handle on them, and you might even brainstorm new ways to overcome them in the process. So, if you are feeling depressed, you could channel your feelings into writing a sad story, or you could turn your anger and frustration into a funny rant from a fed-up character. Not only is it more healthy to put your pain onto a page than letting it swirl around your brain, but readers will be able to pick up on the emotions you've invested, and this can give your words even more impact. In effect, feeling terrible could help you to produce a powerful story!

A dozen styles, countless stories

While the facilitator of the Workshop, Ariel, is primarily a free-verse poet who also pens "flash" fiction (short stories up to 1,000 words), the participants who attend the group all have their own specific strengths, literary interests, writing styles and genres.

'We have some really talented authors, and discovering people's skills is always a pleasant surprise.' Ariel told us. 'The group members all have interesting stories to share, and so many styles. When it comes to formats, we have a real variety: one participant is interested in writing plays, another is a sonnet specialist, and George has spent 8 years writing a quizzical work: it's one continual sentence that runs for 57,000 words.'

Jack Kerouac, eat your heart out!

What can participants expect to get out of the Workshop, exactly?

'Sharing your work with your peers and receiving supportive feedback is at the heart of the Workshop,' Ariel explained. 'The group are encouraged to "be themselves," as this is a space to explore your creativity. It's a place of no judgement. The group can all empathise with each other's hardships.'

Does this Workshop sound good? Don't take our word for it! Head over to Surry Hills and see for yourself. If you're interested in joining, contact our friendly staff at Buck House on (02) 9393 9240 to find out more.

'Please, come and join our class,' Ariel said. 'You are all welcome!'

The Committee wanted to use the Department of Education's former premises at 88 Scott Street Newcastle for this purpose, and Neville volunteered to write to his local Member of Parliament to ask to use it. The reply was an affirmative, but Neville was initially met with disbelief until he showed the letter to his fellow committee members!

It was actually a letter from Neville to his Member of Parliament that led to the establishment of 'The Centre' in the first place.

"I've been here since The Centre's very inception," Neville told us. "And I've known a lot of its workers for a long time. For instance, I worked with Dianne Carson (who recently retired) for over 17 years, and I've also been in contact with some of the regular members for more than 20 years. A few of them still attend!"

"The Scott Street address became [Flourish Australia's predecessor] PRA's first day-to-day living centre in Newcastle," Neville told us. It was a very humble affair, too, compared to what it has since become.

The Centre has had several location changes before arriving at 627 Hunter Street: after Scott Street, they moved to Stewart Avenue, then to King Street (which is why they were once known as PRAonKing), and finally to Hunter Street. Neville has been here for all of these shifts. Each time, it got better!

"It gives me a sense of satisfaction and purpose knowing that I've helped."

Neville Linsley

30 years of contribution... and one amazing historical coincidence!

By Grant J Everett
with Alana Mondy

Neville recently uncovered an amazing coincidence about Flourish Australia's service at 'The Centre,' 627 Hunter Street, Newcastle.

"Where The Centre is located right now used to be a market, and my ancestors owned it back in the 1930s."

He made that discovery one weekend recently when he attended a family reunion on the Central Coast. At the event there was some family historical documents on display. Neville noticed a document (reproduced on the next page) which had a very familiar address on it. 627 Hunter St Newcastle West, the same address as the Flourish Australia Hunter St Centre.

His family informed him that his relatives owned the same building in the 1930's

and it was a Cash and Carry Self-Serve Grocery. Neville was astounded that the building in which he currently works 3 days a week on reception is the same building that his Great Uncle would have walked the floors of!

Despite having been an integral part of The Centre and its predecessors for about 30 years, Neville says 'I had no idea about this connection until I stumbled across it at the family reunion!'

It was actually a letter from Neville to his Member of Parliament that led to the establishment of 'The Centre' in the first place.

He was a patient at Biala Unit at James Fletcher Hospital in Newcastle at the time it was due to close down. A committee headed by social worker Rosemarie Ramsay (who became the first boss of The Centre, by the way) was formed to found a place where former patients could meet and continue their recovery journey.

At one point Neville left PRA for a couple of years to assist an organisation called Kaiyu to set up their service in the Hunter Valley. Pronounced Kie-You, "Kaiyu" is a word from the indigenous Awabakal language that means "to have power and ability." Kaiyu provides mental health services and supports people to live satisfying and valued lives as full members of the community.

THEN

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BROWN ST., WOLLONGONG
'Phone: Wollongong 51

MAGELLAN ST., LISMORE
'Phone: Lismore 551

NOW

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Reply to



THEN AND NOW: Above: 627 Hunter Street back in the days when Neville's ancestors owned it- as shown by the letterhead at the top. .

"I would get involved in other projects like Kaiyu if offered," Neville confirmed.

"I've always assisted with clerical tasks around The Centre," Neville said. "I was the secretary for many years while Rosemary was at the helm. In addition to running reception, I've also showed many others how to manage the front desk. Currently, I'm also in charge of stocktaking, such as ordering drinks for the vending machine and keeping the fridge full."

The best thing about my role is that it allows me to mix with a lot of diverse characters. I enjoy being useful to The Centre - like assisting with enquiries and

finding solutions to people's problems - as it gives me a sense of satisfaction and purpose knowing that I've helped."

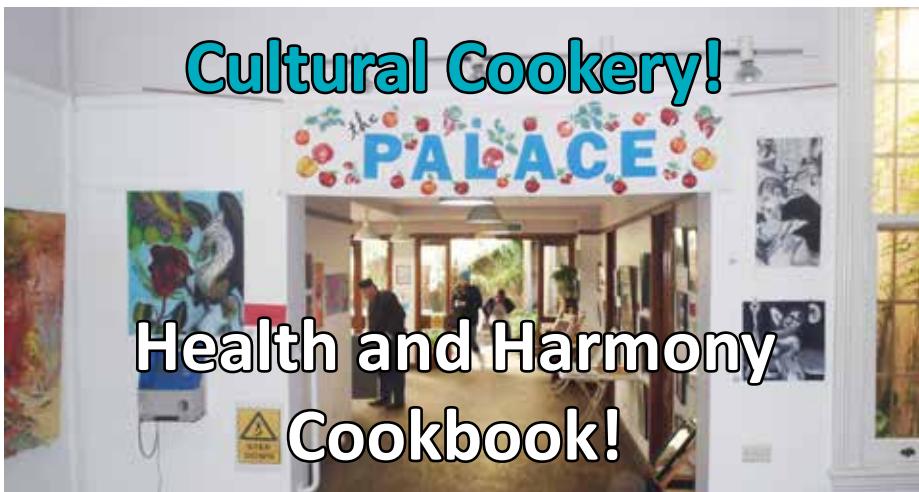
Even when it isn't his shift, Neville is always happy to volunteer when the other receptionists take their breaks.

"Neville is very knowledgeable and a great asset for all new staff, including support workers," Alana Mondy, the Senior Peer Worker at The Centre, told us.

Neville shared a funny example of how much The Centre (and our entire organisation) has changed over time: "We used to have a game evening back

at Scott Street in the 80s when The Centre was just a small office. The prizes were usually packets of cigarettes. How times have changed! In addition to not giving away addictive substances, what the organisation has to offer has greatly improved. The practices, the way people are treated, the language the staff use, and the support that they offer are all amazing."

Neville is also passionate about music. "I watch bands on the weekends and go to all kinds of live music events. I've always loved listening to live music."



By Grant J Everett and Warren Heggarty

You may have heard about *Cooking For One*, the cookbook produced in the kitchens of Flourish Australia's Buckingham House.

Well now chef Amanda Perkins and the Cooking Group have taken it to the next level with a cultural cookbook called the *Health and Harmony Cookbook*.

'Some of the people in our groups have not had the advantage yet of having travelled overseas, or having gone to Uni to study other cultures.' says Buck House manager Donna Shrubsole. 'The cultural cooking group is not just about food, not just about nutrition, it's about the cultures of the various societies who produced the food as well, for instance, Vietnamese, Syrian and so forth, and it's done in a social environment.'

In the Friday groups upon which the book is based, Chef Amanda gets everyone involved in every aspect of these social and culinary events. Every participant brings skills of their own to the group and these skills have all been part of the process of putting the book together.

'Each Friday we travel to a new country on a plate' says Amanda.

Of course, The Health and Harmony Cookbook can function as a facilitator's handbook so that people involved in similar groups (or who want to start one up!) can use the book as a launchpad.

'I am incredibly proud of the people who come to the group' said a glowing Amanda.

No cookbook would be complete

without lavish photography and the photographer just happens to be Georgia Shrubsole (we think she might be Donna's daughter- small world after all!)

The Palace catering

Speaking of which, Buckingham House has a restaurant (famous throughout Flourish Australia) called *The Palace* which has for a long time done catering on the side for special events. Of no exception were the recent graduations at Harris Park and Marrickville.

Another recent job was the Another Door Opens Art Exhibition. Amanda was particularly proud to say that the catering there was drawn from the Friday Cultural Cooking Groups.

**Flourish Australia Buckingham
House, 43-45 Buckingham
Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010
1300 779 270**

Did you know that *The Palace* is staffed by members of Buckingham House as supported employees? This is yet another way that Flourish Australia provides opportunities for people to gain experience to help them return to the workforce.

If you are a Flourish Australia staff member, you can find Amanda's previous project *Cooking for One* on the share drive of your computer.

Otherwise, if you are interested in *Health and Harmony Cookbook*, contact Donna Shrubsole, manager at Buckingham House. Donna.shrubsole@flourishaustralia.org.au

Grant's easy, fun
quick, yummy

ice cream recipe



This is the easiest and cheapest ice cream recipe you can have!

Ingredients

1. Banana
2. Mixed berries*
3. Milk (cows', soy, coconut...)

Equipment you'll need

- Refrigerator freezer
- Blender

Method

1. Peel and freeze bananas.
2. Once frozen, chop a banana into slices.
3. Place into a blender with a handful of frozen mixed berries. Mixed berries are sold by the bag in supermarkets.
4. Pour in about a quarter of a cup of milk (or soy milk or coconut milk).
5. Blend until smooth.

*If berries aren't your thing, you can add all sorts of tasty ingredients. Such as: Cinnamon, Honey, Cocoa powder, Mint, Dark chocolate chips, Mango, Pineapple

Each Issue covers a new CANSAS theme! This time it is CANSAS domain number 13: 'Drugs'



Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

Drugs September 2017 #66

1. Accommodation.
2. Food.
3. Looking after the home.
4. Self care.
5. Daytime activities.
6. Physical health.
7. Psychotic symptoms.
8. Information about condition and treatment.
9. Psychological distress.
10. Safety to self.
11. Safety to Others [Taking personal responsibility].
12. Alcohol.
13. Drugs.
14. Company.
15. Intimate relationships.
16. Sexual expression.
17. Children.
18. Basic Education.
19. Telephone.
20. Transport.
21. Money.
22. Benefits.

Drugs and mental health issues: a chicken and egg question?

Having a drug habit can cause a lot of negative or unwanted changes in people's lives. A few of them are listed below:

- Becoming less motivated
- becoming irritable
- becoming anxious
- becoming aggressive
- not getting along with people
- not having enough money
- getting kicked out of home
- getting in trouble with the law
- losing weight
- gaining weight
- developing physical health problems
- having accidents

You may notice that a lot of these things can also be signs of a mental health diagnosis, or even side effects of medication (eg. gaining weight). This leads to an important question: what comes first, the mental health issues or the drug issues?

According to SANE Australia, 'it can be hard to tell.' That is about as helpful an

answer as you will get.

Most people assume that there is a distinction between a disease and an addiction. Not so Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. They promote a 'disease model' of addiction. They see alcoholism or heroin addiction as a disease in itself, the only remedy for which is abstinence.

The term 'drug induced psychosis,' according to SANE refers to a condition which lasts a few days after taking drugs. However, you will meet people who have experienced mental health issues for years who will refer to it as 'drug induced psychosis.' Perhaps taking drugs triggered problems that might otherwise not have occurred.

So there is a lot of speculation in this field, and experts disagree among themselves. One thing is certain, though, from looking at the list above: If this is happening to you and you think it might be related to drugs, then the drugs are not doing you any good.

Self Medicating

Some people speak about 'self-medicating' where a person takes drugs in order to feel better. For example a person who is extremely anxious might take a particular drug that makes them feel less anxious. If this becomes a habit, the original intention is thwarted. For example, alcohol in small doses will temporarily reduce anxiety, however addiction to alcohol can ruin your entire life.

The problem here is that self medication merely masks the negative feelings. It does not solve the problems that are causing the feelings in the first place.

Prescription Medication

All medicines have side effects and interactions. Some mild side effects might affect everyone who takes a particular medicine. Some severe side effects might effect a only few people.

For example some drugs that reduce painful inflammation might also cause bleeding of the stomach in some people. A doctor might look for an alternative way to help the patient with pain if that is the case.

Benzodiazepines are drugs which some doctors once commonly prescribed to reduce anxiety. If over prescribed they are extremely addictive and people can end up in hospital trying to 'dry out' from them. Nowadays, some medical centres have signs in the reception room saying that their doctors will not prescribe such 'drugs of addiction'.

INSIDE

Drugs and Mental Health

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Avoiding a bad mix;

Interactions, page A2

Nobody sets out to become

addicted to drugs, page A3

What will you do instead of getting high? page A4

Interactions

More reasons why you should talk to your doctor or pharmacist about drugs

In the story about Lisa in this issue of Panorama (#65) we read that her new doctor thought the old doctor had been over prescribing. That's one good reason to get into the habit of asking your doctor/pharmacist questions. Here's another: drug interactions.

An interaction is where a combination of medicines/drugs causes an undesirable or even dangerous effect. It is not limited to drugs, because even food and drink can sometimes cause bad interactions.

Some people will not be affected by some interactions (see box), but others can be very dangerous.

- Prescription medicines, including antidepressants, blood pressure medication etc
- Supplements, including vitamins and minerals
- Alternative Treatments, such as St Johns Wort, Echinacea
- Recreational drugs, whether legal or illegal, such as heroin, marijuana
- Alcohol, including even vinegar!
- Over the counter medicines like Panadol or cough medicine
- Food, including even grapefruit

Fatal 'synergistic' effect

Drinking alcohol at the same time as taking heroin can lead to a dangerously slow heart rate. It can also lead to dangerously low levels of oxygen in the brain, which kills brain cells. Some people stop breathing altogether.

Increasing the effect

An example of a bad interaction between prescription drugs is Warfarin (for cardiovascular conditions) and Aspirin (the painkiller). Both of these drugs thin the blood. So if taken together, the blood thinning effect will be increased. There is an increased risk of bleeding.

Some antidepressants, especially serotonin drugs can cause an upset stomach, even abnormal bleeding. Ibuprofen, which is an anti-inflammatory, can also cause stomach bleeding. Taking them together can increase the possibility of this side effect (see Wayne's story in the box).

St John's wort is an alternative treatment for depression and anxiety which can react very badly with some antidepressants. Even grapefruit has been found to have bad interactions with 85 different drugs!

Cancelling out the effect

Warfarin being a blood thinner, acts against blood clotting. But Vitamin K promotes blood clotting. Taken together, their properties will interfere with one another.

Biphosphonate, taken for osteoporosis, can reduce the effect of mineral supplements.

St John's Wort has also been reported to interfere with the effect of the contraceptive pill.

Alcohol can interfere with the working of some antibiotics and other drugs.

Where to get help

As you can see, this is quite a complicated issue, but GPs and pharmacists are trained to keep abreast of all the

Stomach trouble

Wayne was taking paroxetine, an SSRI antidepressant, which was prescribed by a doctor to help reduce obsessive-compulsive behaviour. Wayne found that it was very helpful to him.

Wayne also had occasional attacks of gout, a painful form of arthritis. Gout is usually treated with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), like ibuprofen. Alternatives to ibuprofen did not work for him.

Wayne actually took both drugs at the same time, without knowing that in combination they might increase the risk of stomach bleeding. To make matters worse, he already had a previous history of gastritis due to excessive drinking.

Here is what one manufacturer's information leaflet says about paroxetine: *'There is an association between the use of [SSRI drugs like paroxetine] and the occurrence of abnormal bleeding. Concurrent use of an NSAID [some anti-inflammatory pain killers like ibuprofen], aspirin or warfarin [increases] this risk. Therefore patients should be cautioned about using such medicines concurrently with [Paroxetine]' - GlaxoSmithKline*

Here is what one manufacturer's information leaflet says about Ibuprofen interactions: *'... selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs): increased risk of gastrointestinal bleeding.' - Abbott Laboratories*

'Fortunately,' says Wayne, 'I was already in the habit of never taking paroxetine on an empty stomach, and I usually only have to take ibuprofen for a day or so to be effective, and I don't drink any more, so I haven't had any trouble with bleeding.'

interaction issues. As well as this, there is an organisation called the National Prescribing service, the job of which is to keep the public and professionals alike informed about these issues. <https://www.nps.org.au/>

And yes, there is also a MedicineWise app, put out by the National Prescribing service!

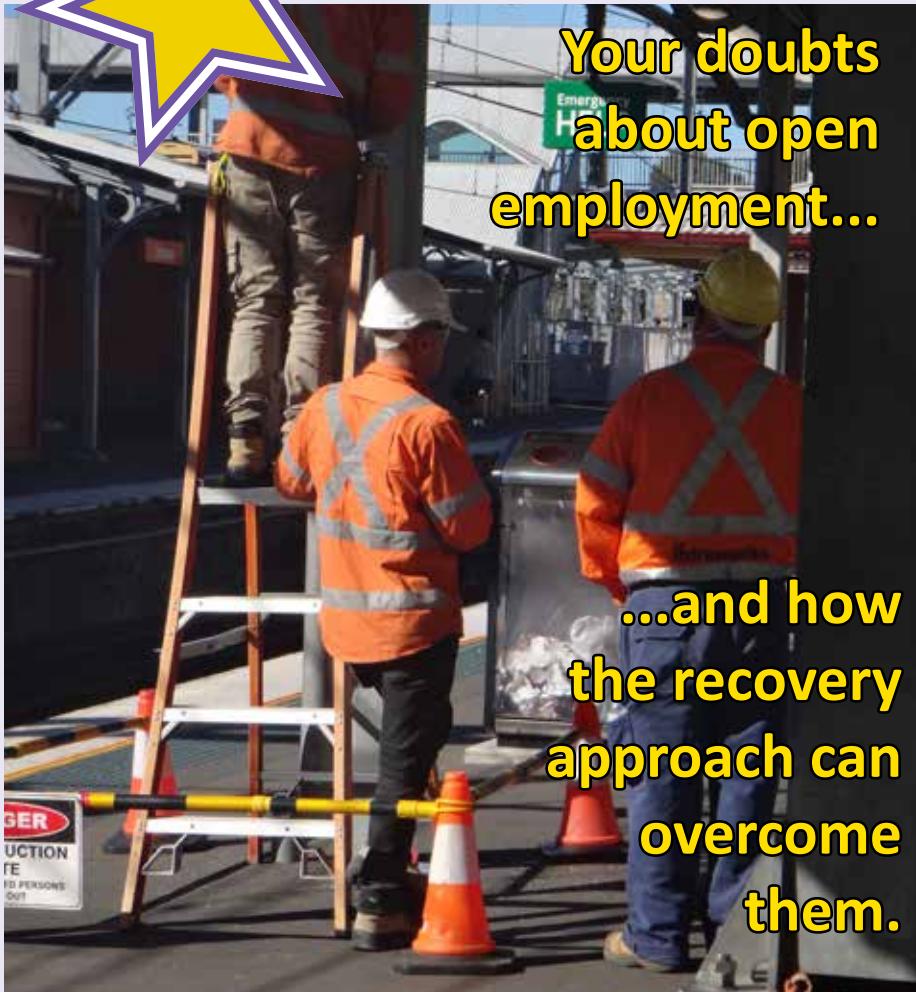


Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

Panorama Employment

Panorama's Disability Employment Service Bulletin for Ostara

Call Ostara on 1300 334 497



In Flourish Australia, one of the things we do is talk about recovery by using strengths based language. Alas, we can all get into the habit of expressing doubts, especially about moving into open employment. If we confront these doubts, we may find them pointing towards strengths that we can and will develop.

The doubts which supported employees often express about moving into open employment, seem to fall into three categories: 1) The welfare system, 2) their mental health issues and 3) lack of confidence. By far the most common reasons cited are in the third category!

These common doubts might be holding

you back from being the best that you can be, not to mention earning a wage that matches your strengths, rather than any perceived limitations.

Panorama Employment will look more closely at these doubts in coming issues. First up, let's start with a brief summary of some of the doubts we encounter. Then we will look at the strengths that we can develop to overcome them.

The doubting comments on the next page are often used to end a conversation about open employment. On the contrary, we think they are merely the start and we hope that conversation will lead to the development of the strengths shown on page 3.

September 2017

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

1300 334 497

Email:

Julie.Duong@flourishaustralia.org.au

Our Disability Employment Service [DES] locations are as follows:

Ostara Liverpool
Suite 5, Level 2,
224 George Street
LIVERPOOL NSW 2170,
PH 9393 9360
Fax 9602 9727

Ostara Caringbah
Level 2, Suite 205
304-318 Kingsway
Caringbah NSW 2229
PH 9393 9134
Fax 9531 7612

Ostara Redfern
Suite 1, Level 4
159-161 Redfern St
Redfern NSW 2016
PH 9393 9220
FAX 9698 3516

Ostara Armidale
2 Cinders Lane
Armidale NSW
2350
PH 9393 9557
FAX 02 6771 3812

What sorts of doubts do supported employees have about open employment?



Lack of confidence

Examples:

- ‘Outside my comfort zone’
- ‘Happy to stay in supported employment’
- ‘Not ready yet’
- ‘I lack confidence’
- ‘I’m scared of open employment’
- ‘My boss won’t understand’
- ‘I won’t fit in’
- ‘Too much pressure’

These thoughts are experienced by most people entering employment. Getting a new job is one of the most stressful experiences (or at least it was until job hopping became a social norm) and everyone who has ever entered open employment has been subject to doubts to some degree.

Similarly, all of these doubts can be overcome. One of the tenets of recovery is ‘citizenship.’ This means participating in society just like everyone else. The desire always to remain in our poverty stricken comfort zones holds us back from full citizenship.

What these ideas really signify is a fear of the unknown. These are fears shared by everybody. Just because a doctor has given us a diagnosis does not mean that it must become a dominant, permanent characteristic that determines the whole course of our lives. That is why Panorama Employment is going to be looking at all of these doubts to see if we can’t substitute in each case a strength that you can develop.

When you take the ‘recovery approach’ you talk about strengths and what you are good at. The same applies to employment. Perhaps if we look at those doubts that we think to be our weaknesses, we will find hidden strengths lurking!

Doubts stemming from mental health issues

Examples:

- ‘I will have a relapse’
- ‘I hear voices’
- ‘I’m too anxious’

From a recovery perspective, none of these things automatically prevent a person from taking on open employment. On the contrary, work seems to mitigate against ‘relapses.’ A person with severe agoraphobia, for example is likely to deteriorate (that is, become less able to achieve their goals) as a result of withdrawing from the things they fear.

There are techniques you can learn for dealing with anxiety. Besides, anxiety is a feeling which is as much a part of being human as any other emotion. Yet many employees talk about their own feelings as if they were disease symptoms which can only be controlled by a psychiatrist. Emotions, from sadness to anger all relate to how we live and are not quite as far beyond our control as some people seem to believe.

Hearing voices, having delusions and even ‘being odd’ are sometimes cited as reasons for not venturing into open employment. Yet most of our readers will know people who experience all these things (and more!) yet hold down jobs. Some of them have quite highly paid jobs. Being ‘unemployable’ is often a fallacy or fear and not a fact.

Doubts about the welfare system

Examples:

- ‘I will lose the DSP’
- ‘My mum will lose her carer’s pension’
- ‘I will lose benefits (concessions etc.)’

Even a low paid job will put a person into significantly better financial position than the Disability Support Payment. This is true even when we include the loss of the monetary value of concessions, free services and other benefits.

There is a commonly expressed fear that once off the DSP a person can never return to it. This is the result of constant attempts by governments to try to reduce the number of people on welfare. In fact, you CAN return to the DSP within two years.

It is sad that people feel compelled to look at the issue of work in this way, as a potential catastrophe rather than an opportunity to earn what you deserve and achieve independence from welfare.

We hope that some of the articles we have published and will publish on open employment in future will encourage people that it might not be such a catastrophe after all!

**Reality check:
YOUR STRENGTHS**

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Apply within

Strengths 1. Personal resilience

Examples:

- 'I have worked hard at my recovery and come a long way'
- 'I learned how to be more confident'
- 'I have helped others in their recovery journeys whenever I could- and they have helped me.'
- 'I have demonstrated that I am responsible'
- 'I am able to plan things.'
- 'I am able to work towards goals in work and study.'
- 'I know when and how to get help and work as a team.'
- 'People are likely to accept me because I have learned to accept myself.'
- 'I have practiced ways to deal with pressure.'
- 'If something worries me, I ask questions about it and that often helps.'
- 'If somebody misunderstands me, I try to explain it some other way.'

Strengths 2. Knowledge of our mental health

Examples:

- 'I have learned a lot about myself and others through experiencing mental health issues'
- 'I have learned how to monitor my feelings, thinking and behaviour.'
- 'I have learned how to deal constructively with unpleasant emotions such as sadness , anger or nervousness.'
- 'My new boss might learn a thing or two about what people with disabilities can do!'

Strengths 3. Putting learning in to practice

Examples:

- 'Having been on a low income, I have learned to budget and use money responsibly.'
- 'To get back control of my money from the protective commissioner, I had to prove that I am responsible.'
- 'I know the value of teamwork and the importance of supporting one another. in tough times.'
- 'My mum doesn't need a carer's pension now- my new salary covers her expenses!'

Qualified: Wayne Petersen and Pam Rutledge present Gregory with his graduation certificate, Cert III Warehousing Operations.

Sage Advice

What if they think I'm really not good enough?

How to deal with rejection

We can't control other people's opinions of us. We CAN control our opinion of ourselves. And if we are doing the best we can do, we can also control how we present ourselves to other people.

A story by Tarla Lambert in Women's Agenda about netballer Abbey McCulloch demonstrates this attitude.

As a teenager, after being rejected for teams many times, Abbey resorted to tears and tantrums and nearly gave up. But then: "I thought 'oh well, if they're not going to pick me, I'll make them pick me.'

"The only way I knew I was going to get noticed was to work a little bit harder than the people around me. I missed out on a lot of teams and it was really disheartening, but I just kept at it, working away and eventually I got the phone call to come play for the QLD Firebirds. It was the opening that I really needed."

Life being unfair as it is, I suppose it is natural to ask yourself 'why SHOULD I work harder than everybody else?' Yes, perhaps those others who got picked ahead of you have had unnatural advantages. That is all the more reason to work harder than they had to. You're the real deal so you are out to EARN your place on the team.

"A rejection is nothing more than a necessary step on the path to success." -Bo Bennett

Warren Heggarty

Lambert, Tarla 'I'll make them pick me', <https://womensagenda.com.au/uncategorised/ill-make-pick-abbey-mcculloch-rose-prominence/>

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

or phone

0420 505 907 or 02 9393 9000



No one sets out to become addicted to drugs

By Warren Heggarty and Grant J Everett

Addiction is where a person keeps taking a drug even though they really want to stop.

At first, they liked the way the drug made them feel.

However, as time went by they needed more and more of it to get the same effect. Over time, they needed to take the drug just to feel normal. The good feeling became less and less, while the urge to take the drug grew more and more.

And more expensive, too.

The urge to take drugs now becomes the most important thing in their life.

Without it, they can't even feel 'normal' let alone good. So the effort required to keep taking the drug takes the place of whatever they were once interested in doing.

They may lose their job. To try to get money for drugs they might lie and steal and even hurt the people closest to them. Often they will end up being arrested, perhaps for theft, or assault or drug dealing.

Drug addiction takes us over completely. But how?

One explanation is that the human brain is wired to keep repeating behaviours that make us feel good. So if taking a drug makes us feel good, we well tend to repeat that behaviour until it becomes a habit. The problem is, we develop

a tolerance to the drug and it doesn't make us feel good any more. We are actually playing catch-up just to feel normal. We have fallen into the trap of addiction.

So to overcome addiction, you have to effectively overcome something that has almost become an instinct. To make matters worse,

until you do overcome the addiction, not taking the drug will make you feel bad.

As you may have guessed, our brains are wired in such a way that we avoid repeating behaviours that make us feel bad. So we are battling our own brains to reverse the addiction. Becoming drug free may seem like an impossible goal.

Fortunately, we can override our basic instincts, difficult though it may be. But if we expect it to be trouble or effort free, we will be wrong.

Some people who have successfully stayed off alcohol or other drugs for a long time say that they don't kid themselves they have ever beaten the addiction. They see using the drug again as a potential threat which they need to avoid or resist every day for the rest of their lives.

The strength they find in being off the drug keeps them motivated day by day,

but they must remain vigilant.

One should expect anything worthwhile to take some effort, and there are few things more worthwhile than getting ourselves out of an addiction.

Further information about addiction:

NSW

Australian Drug Information Network [New South Wales]
<http://www.adin.com.au/help-support-services/new-south-wales>
Health Direct, 24 Hour Counselling, Call or text 1800 888 236.

Queensland

Alcohol and Drug Information Service [Queensland]
<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/mental-health/help-lines/addiction/>
ADIS on 1800 177 833
13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

CANSAS Q.13 Drugs Addiction

It makes you feel good

Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant. Like most uppers, 'ice' can improve concentration, boost energy levels, and make you feel more alert. This is why a lot of students, businesspeople, truck drivers and other people take ice... But it would be naïve to assume that they aren't using ice for its pleasurable recreational effects, too.

It becomes the most important thing in your life

"By this time, everything was about my drug habit – Where can I find some meth – who's holding? [Where am I] going to get the money to buy more meth? When can I get high again? That was my day – finding a source, figuring out how to steal or scam enough money to buy what I needed, and then doing it all over again. I didn't waste time working, going to school, or even taking care of myself. I didn't need to." -Anon

<https://www.aspenridgerecovery.com/blog/my-story-i-never-thought-addiction-could-happen-to-me-2/>

NOT having it makes you feel BAD

The BEHAVIOURAL effects of using ice (or withdrawing from it) include insomnia, agitation, irritability, talkativeness, panic, compulsive fascination with repetitive tasks, violence, confusion, diminished social ability, hallucinations, delusions and a range of other potentially permanent psychological problems. One of the biggest mental issues surrounding ice abuse is paranoia...

We haven't even started on the physical effects.



CANSAS Q.13 Drugs Strengths

What will you do instead of getting high?

The need for strengths-based approaches to addiction

When people think about overcoming addiction they tend to think in terms of the negative things the addiction is doing. Taking a strengths based approach might be better.

If we look at addiction entirely in terms of 'faults and failures' how can we expect success to emerge? For success to emerge from it, we need to look at strengths and achievements.

What is really important to the person with the addiction? What strengths can they draw upon to achieve these important goals that lie beyond drugs?

Why don't you change?

Most approaches to addiction seem to focus on why people *don't* change rather than how people *do* change. In a paper entitled 'Strength-Based Strategies for Prevention', substance abuse therapist Michael D. Clark says that the traditional approach 'believed that you had to break people down to build them back up... If they're suffering from pathological levels of denial, well then you've got to get in their face and you've got to turn up the volume so they can hear you. That's been refuted, but it is something that has taken on a life of its own, and we [therapists]

find it hard to stop now.'

Quoting a fellow therapist, Clark says ' We cannot know another person's thoughts and we cannot know the path for their solution right off hand.' All people are put together differently so there cannot be one key to unlock everybody's potential.

According to Build Motivation, a training centre for professionals, a strengths based approach to substance abuse 'speaks to the beginning of new behaviours ("What will you do instead of getting high?"), not the end of unwanted behaviours ("Don't use!") ... It [also] seeks intrinsic reasons for change [which are] important to the [person with the addiction]'. It moves 'beyond compliance to focus on... change and growth.'

A strengths based approach might focus on looking at how a person had successfully dealt with difficult situations in the past, while emphasising the role that the person is to play in their own recovery.

Self direction

Build Motivation estimates that therapists were out-talking their clients at a rate of three to one. With strengths based approach, you might expect the opposite to be the case. If change is to happen, that is, if the person is to move beyond their addiction, it needs to be self directed. Self-direction is, of course, one of the recovery principles we live by at Flourish Australia.

Committing to being drug free involves not just the obvious change (stopping the drug) but changes to every facet of life. One must draw on one's strengths to be successful in:

- The way we deal with stress
- Who we allow in our life
- What we do with our free time
- How we think about ourselves

Building a meaningful, drug free life (which includes things that you DO want to do),

will protect against a return to drug use. Drugs take up a lot of time and money and there will be a lot of slack available for the addiction to reassert itself, given a chance.

Building a meaningful life beyond drugs will also help protect against the 'relapse triggers.' These include the following unavoidable things:

- negative emotional states
- positive emotional states (that is, wanting to 'celebrate' to feel even better)
- physical discomfort
- testing personal control (fooling yourself that "just one won't hurt")
- cravings, temptations, urges
- conflict with people
- social pressures (using the excuse "everyone else is doing it!")
- good times.

All of these things are inevitable, and all of them are triggers. So the attempt to counteract them with a list of DON'Ts or THOU SHALT NOTs is ultimately pointless. The individual has to develop the strength to make tough decisions for themselves, and to see the traps and pit falls before it is too late.

Sources

Clark, Michael D 'Strength-Based Strategies for Prevention' downloaded from <http://www.buildmotivation.com/substance-abuse.php>
Great Lakes Training Inc/ The Centre for Strength Based Strategies <http://www.buildmotivation.com/substance-abuse.php>
Smith, Melinda, Rachael Backwood, Jenne Segal, 'Overcoming drug addiction, How to stop abusing drugs and start recovery' 2017 www.Helpguide.org accessed 11 July 2017.

**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
#14**

Company



Questions for our doctors

Why we need to play an active role in our own recovery

By Clare Isabel Evans

Over ten years ago, a woman I know, who we shall call Lisa, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Upon receiving this diagnosis, Lisa was prescribed medication which was increased dramatically over time. According to Lisa there was a point where she had to consume fifteen different tablets every day.

More recently, during a stay in a private mental health clinic, Lisa started seeing a highly recommended psychiatrist. After assessing Lisa over a period of time, the new psychiatrist informed her that her original diagnosis of bipolar disorder was incorrect and she did not need to be on the plethora of medications she has always assumed were necessary to maintain her sanity.

Throughout her hospital stay, Lisa's medications were gradually reduced from ten different meds to two. Lisa's initial reaction to the medication reduction was stark fear. She truly believed she would descend into insanity without all her meds. After all, she had been encouraged by medical professionals to believe that she needed every one of those meds to stay sane. Going through the process of disengaging herself from her old diagnosis and excessive treatment regime was, for Lisa, traumatic in itself. 'Bipolar' had been a part of her identity for so long.

Lisa's experience is an example of the effect of exclusion. Historically, people

have accepted the notion that people with mental health issues are not capable of making informed decisions about their own recovery journey. Doctors with this view might not be inclined to fully explain the effects or side effects of medications. Even worse, the patient may feel disinclined to ask about alternative medications or therapies. If the patient themselves is in the dark, no wonder different doctors may make different diagnoses.

The Real Lisa

Despite her mental health issues and her history of misdiagnosis and over medication, Lisa has been, and is to this day, very much a contributing member of society.

Along with being a bright, personable and intelligent individual, Lisa has successfully raised seven children. As a mother of seven she has been the primary caregiver and household manager while her husband has been the breadwinner. Lisa married her husband at a young age and their marriage is still firmly intact.

Lisa is now a grandmother and she is actively involved in the lives of her children and grandchildren. She is a very talented person and I have seen the beautiful artworks she can create, although where she finds the time in her busy life I have no idea.

People with mental health issues need to overcome the feeling of intimidation they might have when

seeing a psychiatrist or GP. Some doctors today do take a more inclusive approach, openly discussing options and encouraging people to actively think about these options and ask questions.

Become involved

Ultimately, however, it is up to us to make sure that we play an active role in our recovery. We should endeavour to find out all the pros and cons of any new treatment being prescribed. This can be achieved through the simple act of handing your practitioner a list of questions and asking them to go through them with you.

The following list includes the questions that I like to ask about any new medication I am prescribed to treat either physical or mental health symptoms. This list is certainly not exhaustive, nor is every question relevant to everyone, but it provides an example.

It will be worth while. Since her medication was changed, Lisa reports that both her physical and mental health have improved.

Questions Clare asks:

- How long will it take for this medication to alleviate my symptoms? When should I notice a difference?
- What side effects might I experience while taking this medication?
- Might this medication affect my ability to drive a car?
- If I were to suddenly stop taking this medication would I experience any negative physical or mental effects? For instance, if I were to go away for a long weekend and forgot to take my medication with me. Would this be a problem?
- How might this medication interact with other medications I am currently taking?
- Will this medication change how alcohol affects me? Would it be advisable for me to avoid alcohol while on this medication?

Why not make up your own list of questions? Discuss it with your support worker.

Violence: a deal breaker for any relationship

By Grant J Everett

One in three women will experience abuse from an intimate partner, but your chances of suffering domestic violence are even higher if you have a mental health issue. The Vic Health Report (2004) found that intimate partner violence is the top cause of injury and death for Victorian women aged 18 to 45, and there are similar patterns across the rest of the country. Being a survivor of abuse is also a very common life factor among people who develop clinical depression, anxiety disorders, insomnia, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues.

Inflicting abuse is a choice made entirely by the abuser. A lot of violent people will blame their partners for "making them angry" to avoid taking responsibility, or try to blame their behaviour on some variety of personality disorder. However, research has shown that most men who are violent towards their families are able to behave in other settings, which indicates they have control over their actions when they really want it.

There's no such thing as a standard abuser. Abusers can come from any cultural group, religion and social class, as well as both genders.

The "psychological" form of domestic violence is the most common, as it is easier to hide, but it's also just as damaging as the other two kinds. Working out whether you're in an abusive relationship might not be as straightforward as you might think, though. Does your partner get jealous easily? Insult you? Are you denied access to your own money? Do they yell at you? Forbid you from seeing certain people? Play mind games?

If your partner controls your purse, this is ECONOMIC abuse. This can include stealing your money or using your cards without your knowledge. This form of control makes it hard to escape, as it's difficult to run with no cash. If somebody has absolute control over where you go and who you see, this is SOCIAL abuse. Yelling, threatening, swearing, belittling

and attacking a person's self-esteem are all VERBAL abuse. Using religion to manipulate you into doing things you don't want to do is SPIRITUAL abuse.

Been there, defeated that

KRISTY MUNSEY, a regular at our Embark Cottage day-to-day living centre, spoke about the psychological abuse she received from her former fiancé, as well as how she took back her life.

Kristy: 'After our engagement ended, I went through seven months of horrid depression while I grieved for the life that I thought I was going to live: husband, babies, gone. I received counselling at my local women's service, which was extremely helpful, and started seeing a psychiatrist. Medication played a role in helping me get through the hard times, as did yoga and acupuncture. Ending a six year relationship takes a toll on your body, mind and heart, and a great tip I learned was to realise that what had happened was a major life event, and not just something I could forget or ignore. I couldn't just "pull myself together" and get over it. Although I didn't use a face-to-face domestic violence support group, I joined a Facebook group called "Empaths and Survivors of Sociopathy" in order to vent to like-minded people and to hear their stories. It turned out my ex wasn't unique or special: there are many, many others just like him. Realising I wasn't alone was very helpful. A lot of the women taking part in the online group were going through a crisis, and I talked to some of them every day. It really helped that my family and friends were so supportive, which is a blessing that not everybody has. I felt that the most important thing for me was to have no contact with my ex. I had to block him, his mother, and his friends.'

A matter of choice

Even the most violent people aren't ALWAYS violent. An abuser may act loving at times, and even seem ashamed of their bad behaviour. While abusers can be charming (especially if they're being manipulative), saying and doing anything they can to get a second chance is a common tactic. Although this may make it hard to stay angry at them, remember: once violence has entered a relationship, the chances of further abuse are very high. If an abuser is serious about putting an end to their ways, they'll have to take responsibility for their past, present and future behaviour, and seek profes-

sional help. Such change comes slowly, if at all. Whether an abuser goes into therapy or not, violence is an absolute deal-breaker in any relationship, and nobody should tolerate it.

Help for survivors

The top priority in all abuse situations is the safety of the victims. A new government scheme called "*Staying Home, Leaving Violence*" has rolled out in many locations across NSW, and it allows victims to remain in their homes while the perpetrator is forced to leave (which is the exact opposite of what usually happens). Once the abuser is gone, safety upgrades like new locks, bars and alarms will be installed. This is a real paradigm shift, and will empower a lot of people who would otherwise end up on the street.

"Gaslighting" is a form of mental abuse where a person deliberately twists or falsifies the truth with the intention of making a victim doubt their own memory, and even their own sanity (Wikipedia)

Ending the cycle of abuse requires professional intervention. Unfortunately, many victims will continue to endure terrible conditions for years before finally seeking support. This "stalling period" is often due to fear, or in the vain hope that things will get better.

Sources:

www.domesticviolence.com.au/pages/frequently-asked-questions-about-men-who-abuse.php

The British Journal of Psychiatry

theconversation.com/abcs-hitting-home-portrays-ideal-frontline-responses-to-domestic-violence-50121

www.thelookout.org.au/fact-sheet-5-family-violence-myths-and-facts

www.smh.com.au/national/male-domestic-violence-victims-need-more-support-20131229-301m4.html

The Health Cost of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence, VicHealth (2004)

au.reachout.com/signs-of-an-abusive-relationship

NSW Domestic Violence Line:

1800 656 463

BACK ON TRACK HEALTH

Your Physical Health and Wellbeing

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

TIME FOR A 'CHANGE OF MIND' ABOUT HEP C TREATMENT

Here is good news for people with mental health issues

By David Pieper of Hepatitis NSW

Hepatitis C is more common in people with mental health issues than it is in the general population but recent medical advances present an opportunity to address this. In a new campaign called *Change of Mind*, Hepatitis NSW is encouraging people who live with hep C and who also experience mental health issues, to find out about changes in the treatment - and cure - of hep C.

In March 2016, the hepatitis C treatment landscape in Australia changed completely. New Direct Acting Antiviral (DAA) medicines were added to the PBS, drugs with very high cure rates (95%), working in as little as 8-12 weeks. These DAAs do not require injections and importantly they have minimal side-effects – replacing previous hep C drugs that caused mental health side-effects, including causing or exacerbating depression and psychosis.

However, despite the fact more than 30,000 Australians started hep C treatment in 2016 alone, there is concern that people living with mental health issues are missing out. To remedy this, Hepatitis NSW is working with BEING NSW to promote the new hep C cure both among mental health professionals and consumers.

The campaign is needed for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the prevalence of hepatitis C in people with mental health issues is higher than it is in the general population. While it is difficult to estimate the exact proportion

of people with mental health issues in Australia who have hep C, academic studies have found rates of between 3% and 42% amongst people in Australian psychiatric hospitals, compared to just 1% population-wide.

The hep C of people who experience mental health issues may have been overlooked or under treated in the past due to a focus on mental health issues. Another challenge is to change outdated views about hep C treatment.

The old, interferon-based treatments had significant, often debilitating, side-effects, and were particularly tough on people with mental health issues, including depression. As a result, people living with both hep C and mental health issues may understandably be wary about starting treatment – but they do not need to be, as the new Direct Acting Antivirals (DAAs) have much reduced side-effects and are more suitable for people with mental health issues.

The side effects of the new hep C medicines are much reduced and are therefore more suitable for people with mental health issues.

The benefits of treating, and curing, hep C are considerable. Over time, people with untreated hep C can develop liver damage/failure and a number of other illnesses which contribute to a shortened life expectancy. Treatment and cure of Hepatitis C has a positive impact on the incidence and/or progression of all of these other physical illnesses.

Even people who don't have noticeable symptoms benefit from treatment with many reporting having more energy and a new lease on life. Now that a safe and effective cure is available, there is no reason why people living with both hep C and mental health issues should miss out on these benefits.

The 'Change of Mind about hep C treatment' campaign will emphasise three specific messages:

1. Hep C is higher among people with diagnosed mental health issues

2. The good news is that Hep C can be easily treated, and cured

3. Even more good news: curing Hep C can have multiple health benefits, including mental health benefits

People who experience mental health issues and hepatitis C deserve the chance to live better, healthier and longer lives. Now is an excellent time for anyone with mental health issues to be diagnosed and treated for hep C. Get behind this campaign, and help make hep C treatment and cure a reality. For more information, visit www.hep.org.au or call the Hepatitis Infoline on 1800 803 990.

How you can help

Hepatitis NSW is calling for expressions of interest from people who have experience of mental health issues and hep C to be champions for the project. If you are interested in championing the treatment of hep C among people who have experience of mental health issues contact David Pieper dpieper@hep.org.au or 02 9332 1853.

A 'Change of Mind' poster can be downloaded from www.hep.org.au

BACK ON TRACK HEALTH
Recommended health screening tests

- Self-checking (skin, teeth, breasts)
- Skin exams
- Dental checkups
- **Testicle checks**
- **Pap tests**
- **Pregnancy**
- Blood pressure
- Blood tests
- Obesity tests
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Diabetes
- **Breast cancer**
- **Prostate cancer**
- Bowel cancer
- Eye health
- Bone density
- STIs (if sexually active)

Another Door Opens

By Grant J Everett

The tenth biennial Another Door Opens art exhibition was held at Flourish Australia's Buckingham House on 30th June.

It was an absolutely fantastic turnout – there was a real crush of people in the Recovery Art Space. Not only were there staff and people who access our services, but as always members of the community joined in.

It gives a chance for people living with mental health issues to meet, talk, exhibit their work, and even make a bit of money. 63 of the 91 exhibits were up for sale with prices ranging from \$10 to \$600.

Exhibitors were not just people from Buckingham House, which has been holding regular art groups every Thursday. There were artists from our friends at Como Leisure Club, and Concord Hospital among others.

One of the regular exhibitors, Gerry Connolly from Prestige Packing Co. Harris Park proved the advantages of being dapper- turned out in a suit rather than his familiar factory gear he really attracted a lot of compliments!

Another trend setter was Edwina Keelan from Prestige Packing Co. Marrickville. We were pleased to hear that Edwina is soon to finish her millinery course. Millinery is the design and creation of hats and Edwina is notable for her very stylish headgear. Edwina exhibited nine works in various media.

Indeed, it wasn't just painting, but a whole range of media from Fernando Alvarez's Environment paintings to Stephen Correy's pen drawings. There were also sculptures, ceramics and textiles. George Stone combined the elements of text and paint to produce 'Flourish' shown at right.

This was also the occasion for a public unveiling of the Cultural Cookbook.



PHOTOS GRANT J EVERETT

Above: Detail of 'Dandylion' (watercolour pen/collage) by **Amy Agus**: 'Art helps me ground myself whilst also being a great way to lose myself in shapes and colours. I'm finally able to take a moment for myself to breathe.'



Work by **George Stone** based on the word 'flourish'!

Right: Edwina might qualify as a work of art in her own right. Here she is with some of her sketches, sporting some interesting headgear.

More about that on page 12 of this issue of Panorama.

Awards

Winner **Justin Adams** 'Port 111'

Highly Commended AND People's Choice **Stephen Corry** 'Viewing South at Bondi Beach'

Commended **Tasman Duffy**

Encouragement **Heidi Graf**



ADO Viva Voce

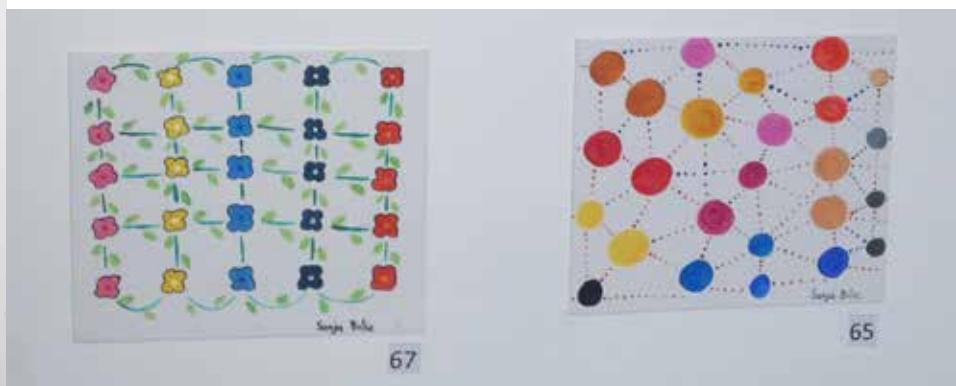
Below: #71 From the 'Collective Vision' Concord Hospital.

#69 **Ashley Reynolds** 'Unexpected'. 'I started using scarves as a tool to manage my mental illness three and a half years ago, and it has really helped me flourish.'



Above: **Josip Bazdaric** *Aftermath of destruction* (paint). 'Art allows me to express my thoughts, feelings, emotions, mental state, beliefs and opinions in ways that spoken or written words cannot, and can never.'

Below: **Sanja Bilic** *Blossoming B* (left) and *Circles of Life B* (right) (paint). 'Art brings everything good in me. It gives me a light when I am in the dark. My work represents endless... blossoming... life in full bloom.'



Left: The culinary arts did not go unrepresented. Chef Amanda Perkins looks pretty pleased with herself, launching the cultural cookbook. See story on page 14 of this Pano-rama.



Right: **Heidi Graf** received the encouragement award this year.





Chris is ready for anything



Robert deomnstrates his service



Monica in the swing

The tennis day was held on Friday 26 May 2017 at City Community Tennis in Prince Alfred Park, Chalmers Street Surry Hills (as always). But it wasn't just tennis. There was Yoga and Table Tennis as well. Plus a personal trainer came armed with a selection of hula hoops and other exciting gismos. What was not to enjoy?

After some free play to warm up, there were some group lessons, a sort of 'tennis clinic' if you like, where people were able to try out ways of improving their games. Looking at Robert P (middle panel above) we are fairly sure he has played tennis before.

The table tennis table was also

extremely popular as demonstrated above by Chris L [left] and Monica S on the right.

Also popular the milk crate full of bananas and mandarins which Shaz took around during the day to keep people fuelled.

A passing group of school students were attracted by Buck House Manager Donna Shrubsole's hula-ing and quickly joined in.

'You're hardly moving!' Donna remarked to one young fellow who managed to thread half a dozen hoops around him and keep them in motion while appearing to make no effort. People had hours of fun trying to emulate him, but we have

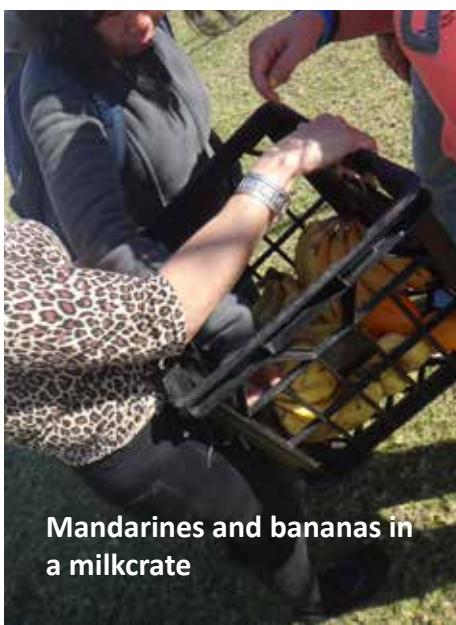
a funny feeling he must have been in a circus!

As well as the free play and the tennis clinic, there was a competition. But don't think that this sort of thing is for experts only. Anyone can pick up a racquet and have a go. That means you!

Flourish Australia
Buckingham House, 43-45
Buckingham Street, Surry
Hills, NSW 2010
1300 779 270



Hula hoops



Mandarines and bananas in a milkcrate



One of Monique McK's latest creations courtside



Professional Maintenance Services in your local community

Flourish Australia's community businesses provide quality maintenance services with a smile, including:

- ★ *Lawn mowing and grounds maintenance*
- ★ *Industrial cleaning services*
- ★ *Property maintenance services*
- ★ *NEW hoarding and squallor cleanup service*

By choosing Flourish Australia's community businesses you are choosing to support people on their mental health recovery journey!



Flourish Australia supports people recovering from mental health issues to access employment.

We provide comprehensive workplace training to all employees, along with the option of completing work-related TAFE qualifications onsite. This means that we can provide a professional service at a competitive price!

Covering all Sydney metropolitan area

Contact us for a FREE quote today:

Phone: 0427 498 307 or (02) 9393 9270

Email: darren.field@flourishaustralia.org.au



Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing

Youth Recovery Forum

The final Recovery Action Forum for now had a special focus on young people... and some very colourful furniture!

14-24

The 2017 Youth Recovery forum program was developed in consultation with young people to ensure the information and activities were relevant for a young audience.

Through the various activities of the day a number of young people found an opportunity to share their experience of mental health issues (and wellbeing!) with others.

It was held at Figtree Conference Centre, Sydney Olympic Park on 3 July, facilitated by Peter Farrugia and including speakers such as Christine Miniawy (Manager, workplace peer support projects), Mark Orr (Chief

Information Officer) and Annie Sykes (Senior Independent Advocate).

There were 24 participants representing 8 different services, including Broken Hill, Bankstown, Emu Heights, Newcastle, Kogarah, Penrith, Blacktown and Surry Hills, with ages ranging from 14 to 24 years.

Topics covered included diversity, recovery, advocacy, Flourish Australia's recovery radio idea and peer work.

In the morning Grant Everett told the gathering his own recovery story, moving step by step from hospital and supported employment into to open employment. Then moving from the

hospital into a private flat and eventually getting married!

In the afternoon, Grant spoke about the idea of Flourish Australia radio which was met with enthusiasm and even some offers to volunteer on the project.

Warren Heggarty asked the forum how Panorama and Panorama online could better serve the young people in its readership. There was some great feedback.

Some of the participants mentioned that it was a great opportunity to network and that they would love to see it happen again next year!



We're Making History

Have you ever felt like you were making history? Not because you are Napoleon Bonaparte, but simply because you are YOU? Michael White, peer worker at Flourish Australia's Flowerdale Cottage, Liverpool was recently involved in a project that recognises the historical importance of the experience of living with mental health issues.

After seeing Michael give a talk about his lived experience, Mardi Haworth of One Door Fairfield-Liverpool suggested he might make a good subject for a project being undertaken by the State Library of NSW. So she put him onto Louise Darmody of Sound Memories,

a company which has been contracted by the library to record the stories of today's people for future generations.

Hopefully, when future generations hear Michael's story they will already live in a world where mental health issues no longer come with stigma. They will be able to learn about Michael's ancestry (there were some convicts there!) and about how his original apprenticeship had to be abandoned 'because the tools were talking to me' as he puts it.

They will hear that doctors had told Michael's wife that he had paranoid schizophrenia and would never recover. And they will hear how Michael eventually went to work for organisations such as CAN (Consumer Advisory Network) and Flourish Australia as a peer worker, walking alongside people in their own recovery.



Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing



Expand your repertoire: Join a CoP today

Communities of Practice share an interest or passion for something they do and want to learn how to do it better as they interact regularly with each other. For information on how to start a new community of practice, contact

Janet Ford, Professional Practice Manager,
02 9393 9003, janet.ford@flourishaustralia.org.au

Communities of Practice currently operating within Flourish Australia

Physical Health: contact Jade Ryall at Olympic Park on 02 9393 9007

Peer Workforce: contact Debra Gibbons at Hervey Bay 02 9393 9560

Supporting Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander People and Communities: contact Jade Ryall at Olympic Park on 02 9393 9007

Next issue of Panorama:

TheMHS 2017

What is YPOP?

Backyard Breakthrough

A look at one of Flourish Australia's residential services

Individual Placement and Support

Another pathway into open employment

Out December

“Brushes with Life 2017”

Art workshops + exhibition

A celebration of hopes and dreams and good mental health! Throughout the year, the Taree branch of Flourish Australia provides FREE art workshops every month. Materials, instruction and light refreshments are all provided for no cost, and no artistic experience is required!

Artists are also welcome to take part in the **Brushes with Life** exhibition in October, too, for the chance to win acclaim and prizes.

Contact Flourish Australia to book your place in the workshops or the exhibition, or if you need more details.

1300 779 270

Where?

Uniting Church Hall, Main Street, Cundletown

When?

First Thursday of the month, 10am to 2pm

Workshops are held on the 2nd of March, 6th of April, 4th of May, 1st of June, 6th of July, 3rd of August, 7th of September, 2nd of November and 7th of December. As the **Brushes with Life** exhibition is held in October, the workshop does not run that month.

Panorama Online is 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. Go to

panoramaonlinemagazine.com



**Let the internet make
your life easier with**

Online Banking

By Grant J Everett

Online banking makes it easy to streamline the majority of our financial tasks, allowing us to sort things from anywhere with a click.

It's no more difficult than banking in person, and it has a lot of benefits, too. Of course, as banks know that a lot of people wouldn't be able to tell a five terabyte hard drive from a medium Quarter Pounder Value Meal, their staff are always happy to explain things in layman's terms and help you get started.

Once you've been provided with a client number and a password, all you need is an Internet-enabled device and you're ready to bank! Here are some of the many advantages of e-banking.

Access your account details no matter where you are

You can access all of your financial information from anything with internet capabilities, such as smartphones, laptops, tablets and even some fridges. This means you can bring up the specifics of all your accounts, as well as the account details of everybody you've ever done business with. This allows you to quickly pinpoint exactly who you've exchanged money with, as well as how much and when, and you also have the option to leave notes about these transactions (such as what the money was for). There are many situations where this could be very useful, like if you need to provide specific numbers to Centrelink, an employer or a real estate agent, or when you're trying to get a refund for something.

Banking outside of office hours

Forget only being able to do your banking between 9:30 and 4 on business days. If you go online, you can sort out your finances whenever you want. Have you realised in the middle of the night that you need to pay a gas bill before

the early bird discount expires in half an hour? No problem! Log in, fill in your details, click confirm, and sleep soundly. You can also arrange set-and-forget transactions, such as automatically arranging to pay a certain amount of money to a specific account on a set day of the month.

One-tap shopping

The "e" in e-banking means 'electronic' and is there for a reason. You can't pull physical cash out of your phone, no matter how hard you try. However, you may have seen those recent television ads where people pay for things by tapping their phones, so that's the next best thing. Physical currency will be around for a long time to come, but it's certainly not your only payment option anymore.

Security

Hacking a bank account is a very, very difficult task, so scammers will normally target the weakest point in a bank's digital armour: the customer. They usually do this by sending emails or texts where they pretend to be the bank (known as "phishing" for details). However, if you take basic precautions and know a little about common scams, your accounts will remain safe. Here's some advice.

Tip One: Don't share your client number, password, account numbers or secret password recovery questions with ANYBODY. Any emails or texts that ask for these things are fake and should be ignored and deleted.

Tip Two: Always log out whenever you use e-banking on any device (even on your personal smartphone).

Tip Three: Don't allow your devices to remember your client number or your password (select "no" if it asks you). This prevents lost or stolen devices from leading to an even bigger loss. Don't keep your client number or password with your devices.

Tip Four: Have a real password made up of letters, numbers and at least one or two symbols (do NOT use something like "God" or "Secret" or "Password" or "1234")

Tip Five: If you want to buy something from a website and they don't have a PayPal option, be cautious!

Tip Six: Change your passwords regularly



The quickest, easiest way to get Centrelink estimates

Grant J Everett

Are you on welfare payments? Making plans for the future? Need some numbers for a budgeting mock-up? Don't feel like waiting on hold with Centrelink for eight hours? Then the online pension calculator is for you!

The calculator can be used to work out all sorts of potential situations, such as seeing the effect that some extra hours at work would have on your welfare payment, or seeing the effect of a rent increase, or the expense of a major life event. As knowing how to best balance your work income with your Disability Support Pension can be tricky, the estimator can help you get everything in order.

Note that you may need to have some paperwork at hand if you want to get a precise number, and keep in mind that payments and other Centrelink factors may change with time. You'll need your income details, bank account details (as well as investment information and that sort of thing), your rent, and that sort of thing.

1. Go to: www.humanservices.gov.au
2. Go to the bottom of the page, look under **Customer Information** (second column from the left) and click on **Estimate**.
3. Click on **Launch the Rate Estimator**.
4. Follow the prompts.



Supporting Mental Health & Wellbeing



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 live in an NDIS rollout area, you may be eligible for supported employment at one of Flourish Australia's Community Businesses.

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 qualifications onsite, including:
Cert. 3 in Warehouse Operations and Cert. 3 in Horticulture.

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★★★★

Flourish Australia is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider. We can answer your NDIS questions and support you to access our services. Contact us to find out more: 02 9393 9000



At Flourish Australia Community Businesses we currently have supported jobs available in:

Packing and Light Assembly at Marrickville or Harris Park.

Property maintenance, lawn mowing and professional and specialised cleaning services at St Marys, Warwick Farm and Marrickville.

Contact Us to find out more!

Phone: 02 9393 9000
Email: clare.evans@flourishaustralia.org.au
Web: flourishaustralia.org.au