

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

panorama

Monthly Issue **May 2025 #97B**

**Getting Thru
HEART Times!**

**Hope Beyond
Bereavement:
Light at the End
of the Tunnel**

**Youth Reference
Groups**

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About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking beside people with a lived experience of mental health issues as they progress along their recovery journeys. We passionately believe in mental health recovery, and are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement to people so they can achieve their recovery goals. We offer this help across all 70+ of our services in New South Wales, Southern Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or
flourishaustralia.org.au

Chair: Prof Elizabeth More AM
Chief Executive Officer: Mark Orr AM
Chief Development Officer: Peter Neilson

About Panorama

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

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

You can ALWAYS email us at...
panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au

Prefer snail mail?

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

Disclaimer

Panorama's content is not intended as a substitute for the advice of any specialised or qualified professional. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, not necessarily of Flourish Australia, or any associated enterprises, their staff, management, employees, or service recipient

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Contributors include...

Adrian has found the light at the end of the grief tunnel

Texas Rose survived a heart scare

Shakaya and **Rylie** are Youth Reference Group Members at headspace Broken Hill

Jade Ryall Program Manager of Back on Track Health

Edwina won a martial arts tournament

And thanks to Flourish Australia staff Larni, Corina, Nikola, Brittany and Sonny.

Contributions are welcome!

Publications People

Kylie Bolton Graphic Design

Grant J Everett Writing

Warren Heggarty Writing

Jasmin Moradides
Development Projects Manager

Peter Neilson
Chief Development Officer

WE PROVIDE PRACTICAL

Care for Carers

Flourish Australia is committed to working closely with families and carers in their important role of supporting people close to them with a lived experience of a mental health issue.

Using a family inclusive approach, we work directly and in partnership with specialist organisations to provide support and education services for families and carers.

A list of helpful resources and Carer organisations for family and carers can be found on our website:
flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers

SCAN QR TO FIND OUT MORE



IN PANORAMA MAY 2025

Rosie Batty has devoted her life to bringing family violence out of the shadows, and she gave an inspiring talk for Internation-

al Women's Day; **Adrian** shares a message with anyone experiencing bereavement or grief: there is a light at the end of the tunnel, it does get better. **Shakaya** is a member of the Youth Reference Group at Flourish Australia's Broken Hill service, a council of young people who listen to the needs of *other* young people in order to tailor services to what the youth want.

We have new Panorama Puzzle Pages, and if you need some hints, all the clues and hidden words can be found in other stories!

We have a number of articles that touch on the value of good physical health: one is about the latest research into Flourish Australia's **PhysiCards**, and how they can help you to identify potential health issues early; the second is about how the **Addi Moves** program is

getting people moving and fit; number three is a story about musician Louie, more famously known as **Texas Rose**, and her heart health recovery journey; the fourth is **Edwina's** achievements at the Mardi Gras Martial Arts Championships 2025, and there are also articles about **Parkinson's Disease** and **Irritable Bowel Syndrome**

COMING UP IN JUNE PANORAMA...

- Treading The Boards, Splashing The Canvas
- Mental health support for Veterans
- Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. Find it early!

Spread Hope...
Your Mental Health Journey
will Inspire Others!



Did you know that sharing your own mental health recovery story can spread hope and inspiration?

Don't worry if you're not a writer – that's where we jump in! At Panorama, every story is valued! We're constantly on the lookout for stories from those living with mental

health issues. But hey, family members and caregivers, your stories matter too! Not sure where to begin? Send us a message, we would love to hear from you!

Email: panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au
or Call: 1300 779 270

International Women's Day 2025 "Let's Do Lunch" with Rosie Batty AO

Bringing Family Violence Out Of The Shadows

As reported by Grant J Everett



International Women's Day acknowledges women's achievements, opposes discrimination, and promotes the march towards gender parity. 2025's theme is #AcceleratingAction, calling for greater urgency in taking swift and decisive steps to achieve equality for women everywhere.

To celebrate International Women's Day, guest speaker Rosie Batty AO shared her powerful and heartbreaking story during Flourish Australia's annual "Let's Do Lunch" online webinar. After her 11-year-old son was murdered by his father at cricket practice, Rosie has spent over a decade traveling far and wide to bring family violence into the spotlight and empowering women to safely leave toxic relationships. Rosie has become a beacon of hope and a powerful catalyst for systemic change.

Here's a summary of her presentation...

Family violence can happen to anyone, no matter how nice your house is, or how intelligent you are. It's a result of structural inequality,

and the more we expose it the easier it will be to ensure victims receive the support they deserve to get out and be safe.

I've spoken to countless people about family violence, and great strides have been made because of sacrifices made by women. We need to keep reinforcing the importance of this societal issue, and the ways we model respect and disrespect go a long way to influencing societal change. But our systems are still failing women and children, and so many people simply don't feel safe.

Unimaginable

Losing a child to family violence is an experience that nobody can truly understand. Many people don't know what grief really is, but we will all experience it at some point. It is an isolating, painful journey. But I found it was bearable with family support, friendships, and some professional help. I am lucky, and I know I will always be okay.

A life without Luke was once unimaginable, but here I am. A lot of people who have gone through a similar situation to mine have shared their stories with me. Knowing that I provide hope to so many has given me a reason to get up in the

morning, to support others the way I have been supported. My work has also been a distraction that helped me to cope with my loss.

I've found tragedies are survivable. Grief can be used to help and educate others, and to advocate for change. It can also provide a sense of purpose.

The wrong question

Domestic violence is being more openly spoken about now, and thankfully we are moving away from victim blaming. Sadly, people still ask questions like, "Why doesn't she just leave?" It could be for many reasons; they may not want to break up their family, or they fear making the violence worse, or they may not have the resources to leave. The barriers can be insurmountable, and many women can find themselves homeless, which only drives them back into danger.

Being heard

For the last decade I have been on a mission to shock people into action, to let them know how prevalent family violence really is, and how we each have a duty to do something about it. The horror of my story got people to listen, and the ripple effect

has been enormous. We have much more to do, but we are making an impact. Educating young people is of critical importance in addressing this issue.

Since I began campaigning across Australia, I've met with Prime Ministers, Premiers, and other powerful and influential people. We've had especially strong support from the Victorian government in the goal of gender equality. In my first year, I spoke at 250 events, and 180 the next year. I stopped counting after that.

We had a royal commission, and things have improved since then. The way victims of domestic violence are treated now is a huge improvement compared to just a generation ago. I hear a lot of good stories about people leaving toxic relationships, and safely making a new life for themselves. These things bring me hope.

We're working towards a more accepting, respectful world, and there are many others like me who have inspired me through their strength and bravery. People are relying on my advocacy, and I am glad that they found strength through my words. We aren't alone.

Change, or tokenism?

Of course, without the result being true equality between the genders, all of this is just talk. For instance, the gender pay gaps are still ridiculous. It's astonishing that we are still fighting for such a no-brainer in Australia. We need to keep up the pressure against the organisations and companies that keep doing this.

We know now that domestic violence covers all kinds of abuse and coercion, weaponised to manipulate and to remove power and agency. Just a few decades ago, "domestic violence" only really covered physical harm, and the modern legal understanding of "sexual harassment" didn't come about until the 1970s.

This reminds me of the effect that those anti-smoking campaigns had when I was young. A few decades ago, you could smoke anywhere you liked: planes, theaters, restaurants. Now we condemn and exclude smoking, which has been a

sweeping societal change that I am sure we can repeat.

Rosie's mental health

We can't deny our emotions, our frailty. We have to give ourselves permission to feel difficult things sometimes. I still experience anxiety, but I have strategies to keep it at bay. It's a part of me, something to manage.

But do we ever truly recover from trauma? The grief has changed me, and I know I'm never going to be the same as I was. I am more understanding and patient now, and I want to believe that I'm growing into a better person. Something I've learned in the toughest times is that we can get through it with the right support and by doing fulfilling things.

I find joy in walking, and I did a coast-to-coast walk in the UK with friends a few years back. It was grueling and challenging, but crossing my homeland on foot helped me find my way back to being myself: having a laugh, appreciating what I have. I've walked other parts of the world, and each one has helped me further along my journey.

I've been eating healthier and getting back into regular exercise. The last thing I felt like doing when I was depressed was exercising, but it really helps my mental health. I also make time to be with the friends I trekked around the UK with, and walking my dogs wakes me up in the morning.

Final thought

There is strength in vulnerability. Be the embodiment of hope for those around you. For everybody who has had challenging and tragic backgrounds, it's so important that they be supported in the ways that they need.

OPPOSITE: Photo of Rosie Batty AO

Rosie was Australian of the Year, holds the Order of Australia, is the Board Director for the Royal Women's Hospital, and founder of The Luke Batty Foundation. She has written two books about her experiences; **A Mother's Story**, and **Hope**.

The Right to be Safe at Home

1800RESPECT is a 24-hour national counselling line for Australians who have experienced, or are at risk of, family violence, domestic violence, or sexual assault. Their website provides information, counselling, and support services for every state and territory.

You can call their counselors on 1800 737 732 or text "HELLO" to 0458 737 732 at any time. Online chats or video calls are available between Monday and Friday, 9am to midnight AEST. Services are available regardless of what language you speak, or even if you have some form of disability, sensory issue, or a communication issue, and no appointment is needed.

It goes without saying that talking about domestic, family and sexual violence can be hard, so whatever you are going through, the help and support on offer are guided by your needs and your feelings about what is right for you. Even if you aren't sure that what you are experiencing is violence or abuse, you can still contact 1800RESPECT to talk with a counselor about what's been happening at home.

If you are worried about someone you know or their children, you can contact 1800RESPECT to find out what you can do to support their safety. The person you're worried about could be a friend, a family member, a co-worker, or anybody else.

All children in the country have the right to grow up free from violence at home, and every state and territory strongly encourages reporting violence, abuse or neglect inflicted against any people under 18 years old.

To learn more, scan this QR Code





HOPE BEYOND BEREAVEMENT

Light at the end of the tunnel

By Adrian

Left behind

Sometimes I could think of almost nothing except the people I've lost, and this has led to major depression. It's taken away my appetite, and I've lost 20 kilograms of muscle over the last few years. Depression has led to me spending days in bed.

I lost a friend I'd known for decades to suicide, and I still miss him. We were like brothers. As his missus knew how I'd been close to ending my life a number of times, she told him to go and talk to me, but he didn't want to "add to my problems." I really wish he had talked to me about it, as he might still be here.

My partner, Karen, passed away in her sleep next to me in bed. We were only ten weeks away from our wedding, and I still reach for Karen's hand when I go to bed. I'm on good terms with Karen's parents and her children, and those kids have now grown up and have children of their own. Karen's family have really been there for me and kept me close, and they're only ever a phone call away.

I inherited Karen's dog, by the way. That dog actually prevented me from harming myself by barking at me, and sat with me until I calmed down.

I lost my mum in 2018, and I held

Although my story is one that contains much loss and sadness, I want to share it with you to reassure you that there IS light at the end of the tunnel. Lean on your support people, because you have no idea how much they really care for you. And don't hesitate to put your hand up and say you need help!

There was a long period in my life when I'd barely finished grieving one close friend or family members when another passed away. I'd become scared to let anyone close, because it felt like anyone who came into my life would die, so I cut contact with pretty much everybody.

My son died in 1990, and I found it so impossible to cope that I used to sleep at his grave. All through the pregnancy he was fine, no problems with the birth or anything. But then he died of cot death at three months for no apparent reason. Everyone told me that there was nothing I could have done, but I still felt responsible as I wasn't at home when he passed. I came home to his mother and a nurse trying to revive him.

I was only 21 at the time, and the grief was so terrible it pushed me towards suicide. Alcohol and drugs became a serious problem, and I ended up running with the wrong crowd. I didn't care if I lived or died. I took a lot of risks, did a lot of stupid things. Didn't hurt anyone, thankfully. But I survived it.

my father’s hand as he passed from cancer in 2021. Dad was my hero, and when i lost him, I didn’t want to be here anymore. I lost my Aunt not long after, and she was the last of that generation of my family. So now I’M the older generation!

What keeps me going is I don’t want people to experience pain from my passing in the way that I have felt pain from the passing of others. This helps me to stay alive.

A Different Time

When I was younger, blokes weren’t allowed to show emotion.

We had to be big and tough. So I hid my pain, but turning it inwards leads to anger and depression. Thankfully it’s a different world now, and it’s become normal for men to deal with our emotions in a healthy way without being shamed.

Coping with interests

Nowadays I do healthier things to cope. I live up the mountains, so I enjoy going bush sometimes for a few days with the dog. I’ve also done some training with samurai swords, and I’m pretty good with them now. It took three weeks before I could outdraw the sense!

I’ve always enjoyed driving. My Dad had trophies for driving Rally Cars, and he taught me how to do it from a young age. Those lessons have kept me alive. Dad left me a 1938 Dodge, never been restored, with only 71K miles on the clock. I take it to the Chrystler Day each year in October.

I also like motorbikes. I hadn’t gotten on a bike for about 20 years at one point, but I started riding again when my partner’s kids started getting into it. I have a Ducati that does 9.1 seconds down the quarter mile, which is considered EXTREMELY fast!

Finding the right support

When my brother heard about my recent suicide attempt, he immediately took me to the doctor. I explained what I’d tried to do, and they linked me up with a community mental health service, a psychiatrist, and Flourish Australia.

Things have definitely improved in my life since connecting with Flourish Australia. I’ve been linked up with a Peer Support Worker called Sonny, and there’s nothing I can’t discuss with him. We just clicked, and it’s like I’ve known him for 20 years. He’s had a massive positive impact on me, and is one of the nicest blokes you’ll ever meet.

I’m fairly housebound at this point due to my health issues, but I do attend the Flourish Australia service at Penrith, and my Peer Support Worker comes to check how i am. I got onto a pension due to serious liver damage, as doing anything exhausts me within five minutes. Once, I could easily pull a slab of beer out of my car with one arm. Now, I struggle with the kettle.

I also have scoliosis in my back, and that’s painful as well. Everything creaks and groans.

For many years I worked hard as a supervisor running three crews for traffic control, and I used to be on good money. I had a 100% record of zero injuries on my job sites, as I always went the extra mile to keep everybody safe. We became a big family at work, and had each other’s backs. A lot of my employees are supervisors now.

I find it difficult to rely on others, but I have so many amazing people looking out for me. For example, my brother mows my lawn, and my neighbour takes the bins out.

Returning to life

Every second Friday night I attend a group called Roses In The Ocean for people who have been through trauma. Because I’ve been through so much, everyone listens when I share how I’m managing each day without any self-harm. I attend every meeting, and I’m planning on talking one-on-one with people. They’ll give me their input, which I’ll take on board.

I still think about ending it every day, but there’s always tomorrow, and I do all I can to reach it. I always hope that something might change it for the better. I am improving, but I am not out of the woods just yet. Sonny believes that I will be able to help others who are experiencing suicidal ideations, and that makes me want to keep on going.

Empathy

I always do the best I can, and at the moment I want to help prevent people from making the same mistakes I’ve made. I want to be there for others, as I feel I have a lot to offer.

Many people fear getting scheduled if they admit they need help, but don’t let this stop you! The hardest part for me was to admit I wasn’t okay. Don’t bottle it up until it implodes, or it won’t end well. Since asking for help, my life has improved so much. I’ve met so many warm, caring, sympathetic people, and it’s made such a positive difference to my world. Live life to its maximum enjoyment, rather than dwelling on the past.

It’s a beautiful place!

OPPOSITE: Adrian, spending time with his best mate, Gizmo. PHOTO BY SONNY.



Lifeline
We're here for you
13 11 14 lifeline.org.au

**Flourish Australia
Penrith**
Darug Country
232 Derby Street
Penrith NSW 2750
02 9393 9799



MARDI GRAS MARTIAL ARTS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

Kicking For Inclusion

By Edwina



I participated in the first ever Mardi Gras Martial Arts Championships on the 15th of February 2025, held at the King George V (KGV) Recreation Centre at The Rocks.

People flew in from Perth, Western Australia, Melbourne and Victoria to spectate, officiate, and participate in the tournament. Some were from the trans community, with one trans woman being a black belt, and another having an orange belt. It was a very interesting crowd!

Insert Training Montage

I've been doing kickboxing for three and a half years. In that time, I've earned a brown belt. Doing martial arts has been good for my health, and I've lost about 16 kilos. All my friends tell me I look thinner. My exercise routine is simple: I just move a lot.

Kickboxing has also helped with my brain fitness, and sports are a great way to connect with your local community if you have a lived experience of mental health issues.

I had a 3-month absence from training a while back, but my Mum encouraged me to stick with it, and so did my Sifu (my instructor). I've been training twice weekly, plus Saturdays. This gave me enough time to prepare for the tournament.

The Big Day

My Mum has been so supportive of my kickboxing, and she flew down from Brisbane to watch me compete. When she arrived at Sydney Domestic Airport I welcomed her with a Haka war dance and a Pukana tribal dance. I got huge smiles from the crowd

disembarking the plane. From Paris to Argentina, the Haka is as well-known as Aloha!

I woke up at 3am on the day of the tournament, as I was so excited I couldn't sleep! We cabbied it to the event, and I helped set up the mats before the competition started. The competitors from New Zealander backgrounds did the Haka for the judges.

While I didn't expect to do very well, I won the Women's Empty Hand Forms Beginner and came second in the Women's Point

Sparring Beginner. It seems I was worried about nothing! I meditated on my kata like Sifu taught me, did breathing exercises to concentrate, and just kept moving while my training kicked in (excuse the pun!).

It was nice that so many people showed up to spectate and show their support. My Mum was so excited when I did well in both events.

Flourish Australia

I do data entry at Flourish Australia's community business at Marrickville. Sometimes I'll work the factory floor if there's a major contract. Kate, my Manager, is always happy to support me whenever I need it, and I can always turn to Bao or Justyn, too. The staff are great at making me feel valued and wanted, and so do all my colleagues.

Flourish Australia has really been there for me, and I've gotten a lot out of peer support, even if it's just having somebody pop by to make sure I'm okay. I wish more people realised how great peer support is, as it's really kept me going.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who helped the Tournament run so smoothly, and congratulations to everybody who placed in their events... especially Haley, who gave all those tall guys a run for their money in the Open Under Black Belt Sparring. You gave them a real shock! I also want to acknowledge Penny Gulliver, my Sifu, Tournament Director and Instructor at Team Sydney, and the IAGLMA (International Association of Gay & Lesbian Martial Artists).

OPPOSITE: Zephyr, Edwina, Sifu, and Olga.
PHOTO BY EDWINA

**Flourish Australia
Marrickville**

Gadigal Country

6a Rich Street
Marrickville NSW 2204

World Book Day was celebrated on the 23rd of April, and its aim is to create lifelong reading habits.

People marked the event with live readings, dressing up as their favourite characters, and recommending books to their friends. They also attended local book clubs, writer's groups, bookstores, or a library to discover new titles. It's a good opportunity to donate your pre-loved books to a charity or a school, and post about your favourite authors on social media. Anything that helped people to engage with books and reading in a fun and communal way!

And for the storytellers among us, it was the perfect day to open Word and get stuck into your latest work in progress.

Branching

All readers have a genre of choice, but World Book Day encourages us to also explore other kinds of writing. Every book can teach us something, offering new worlds, characters, lessons, and insights. Books are truly a portal to every possible reality.

<https://www.bluey.tv/blog/bluey-joins-world-book-day-for-2025/>

<https://australiareads.org.au/news/benefits-reading-mental-health/>

<https://www.twinkl.com.au/event/world-book-day-australia-2025>

Reading's many benefits

A 2023 study showed adults who read almost every day have a substantially lower risk of depression and anxiety, and are more likely to experience major improvements in their mindfulness, optimism, emotional regulation and mental health. As half of all Australians will face a mental health journey during their lives, this is relevant to us all.

Unlike watching television or scrolling through social media, reading a book before bed improves your quality of sleep. Those of us who enjoy reading know the calming effect of a good novel well.

Reading is a solitary act, but people who frequently read fiction report feeling considerably less lonely than those who don't. Reading also brings a sense of belonging, particularly for those who are socially isolated.

Reading helps us to understand difficult and complicated situations, growing our empathy and encouraging us to see the world through a new lens. Research from the University of Liverpool shows 23% of people who read a book about something they are struggling with reported feeling better about their situation.

And of course, reading is the best way to greatly develop your communication and literacy skills.

Below: Picture by Hermann On Pixabay





Getting thru HEART times!

TEXAS ROSE SINGS OUR PRAISES

By Warren Heggarty

Louie, known in musical circles as Texas Rose, can tell you why it's vital to develop a professional relationship with a good doctor.

"I went to see a doctor about a goitre (thyroid) problem," Louie said, "and as soon as she listened to my heart with her stethoscope, she said, 'Before we deal with your thyroid problem, we'd better get your heart fixed.'"

"It turned out that I needed a replacement heart valve. I was shocked to learn I'd have to undergo such a major surgical procedure, but I also felt lucky my heart issue was discovered in time, when something could be done."

"At the time, my upcoming open heart surgery was sitting heavy on my shoulders, and I was feeling desperate. As I would have to travel from Narrandera to St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, taking me a very

long way from my family and all my other support people, I was worried I'd feel lonely. As I was going to have to spend five weeks recovering, this was a big deal."

"Thankfully, Flourish Australia's Leeton team arranged an Air Ambulance to fly me to Sydney, and Nikola and Brittany worked through a lot of red tape to get this done. They also sorted out the NDIS angle."

"The staff also got in touch with Flourish Australia's Buckingham House service down in Sydney, and the Buck House staff supported me through my surgery and my recovery. They made me feel very valued and loved, and with their support I started looking at things differently. They really walked the talk, as they came to visit me in person regularly. I also had calls from the Leeton service. It was like we were all one big happy family. They were awesome!"

"The staff at St Vincent's were fabulous, too. I can't talk them up enough!"

"Not everything went smoothly, though. The operation had to be delayed because I caught pneumonia, and it also turns out that I'm fairly infection prone, so at one point I had lots of tubes poked into me."

"When the infection finally cleared up, everything happened so fast. But right when I was stating my recovery, I got yet another infection following the operation. Like I said, I'm prone to these things."

On Stage

"I'm sort of a country music performer, but it's more hard-edged. I think there's a little bit too much Nashville influence here! I have sung at almost every big festival in Australia, and performed for all ages."

I do some original songs, too, and they go off like a stock whip!"

"As my career progressed, I kind-of became a boss to ten or so people. In 2003, I did 78 shows in six months. But then puff, something happened that turned it all the other way around so that I needed ten people to look after me!"

Aneurysms

Louie had already overcome some serious health challenges long before her heart issues.

"I come from a great family who always made me feel safe, but I inherited a genetic problem with brain aneurysms. Years ago I had three burst all at the same time, which changed me from a know-it-all to knowing bugger-all just like that!"

"The neurologist said I was very lucky I wasn't in a wheelchair, but I did acquire some frontal lobe damage that affects my impulse control. For a while I couldn't walk properly, talk properly or think properly. My quality of life went steeply downhill, and I started relying on welfare checks to get by."

"All up, I have had six craniotomies between 2005 and 2015. At this point, they might as well just install a hinge on my skull so they can pop it open whenever I'm due for some maintenance! I'm actually due for another craniotomy soon."

Flourish Australia support

Louie began accessing Flourish Australia services at Leeton following her aneurysms.

"Before I was involved with Flourish Australia, I couldn't have given a rat's behind about anything. I'd felt so low for so long that I'd gotten used to it, but thankfully I found that the Flourish Australia staff really do care. Now I'm on the mend, and I've recently started coming back to my music. I miss my career, and I miss being on the road something bad. I love being asked, "How did the show go?"

"Flourish Australia are great, and they remind me if I don't keep both feet on the ground in the future, it will eat me up. Thanks to the support I have received, sometimes I amaze myself!"



Texas Rose Live in Tamworth



Readers, if YOU want to be amazed too, watch this YouTube of Texas Rose singing Leonard Cohen's famous song, "Hallelujah" on YouTube from a concert in Tamworth back in 2015.

Keep your eyes and ears open. You never know when she might be back in your town!

OPPOSITE: Louie, known by her stage name Texas Rose. **ABOVE:** A publicity poster for a Texas Rose gig. PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY LOUISE

**Flourish Australia
Leeton**

Wiradjuri Country

18-22 Kurrajong Ave
Leeton NSW 2705

1300 779 270

**Flourish Australia
Buckingham House**

Gadigal Country

43-45 Buckingham St
Surry Hills NSW 2010

1300 779 270



YOUTH REFERENCE GROUPS

MEETING THE COMPLEX NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

By Larni and Shakaya

Flourish Australia's headspace service offers all kinds of support to young people aged between 12 and 25 for things such as being in a healthy headspace, managing bullying, navigating peer pressure and troubles at home, as well as alcohol and drug dependence, domestic violence, and school avoidance. But it's also a great place to hang out, make friends, have fun, and receive guidance in making plans for the future. We have an amazing Youth Reference Group, which is made up of local young people to help steer our service in a youth focused direction.

Aged in the same range as the people headspace support, the Youth Reference Group is made up of five members, and they have a lot to offer. The YRG...

- Listen to what the young people require, and offer guidance and support
- Help headspace to tailor its services, ensuring we're going in the right direction for the good of the young people
- Arrange and attend major

community events, like Youth Day

- Take part in training to increase their skills, qualifications and knowledge
- And participate in job interview panels for new headspace staff

We had two YRG members travel to Brisbane for the headspace forum in 2024, which was really cool, and they attended a Youth Forum to make a contribution to the NSW Government's plans for 2025 to 2034. One member was able to explain to the Minister how opening a drug and alcohol rehab at Broken Hill would help many locals.

Another achievement of the YRG was when the members helped our Head Clinician with a huge paper she had written on the local area (it was 94 pages long) to see if her research and what the YRG were seeing on the ground matched up. And it did!

While the attendance rates in local high schools near Broken Hill is 67%, much lower than the 80%-plus of the rest of New South Wales, the YRG have found a lot of kids who start attending headspace after leaving school will go on to do a TAFE equivalent.

headspace fully supports the goals and skills of the YRG. The members

have all completed a Mental Health First Aid course, and also gained a Working With Children's Check to further open up their future employment options. One member is currently studying psychology, and she did her work placement with us. Her dream is to work at headspace Broken Hill once she's graduated.

I am certain the best things from the YRG are still to come!

Places to connect

The YRG created our popular Anime Club. Many friendships have been formed based off this shared interest, and a lot of the young people love to draw manga, with some of their pieces on display at the headspace centre. We've also found a lot of Anime incorporates mental health content, and after each screening we'll discuss what mental health issues the characters had, and what we could have done to help them.



RYLIE: THERE IS SUPPORT

"In High School, a friend of my brother's was in the Youth Reference Group, and she thought that I would be pretty good at it," said Rylie, another YRG member. "So I went to some meetings, and found that I enjoyed it."

"In this town there are a lot of young people managing multiple mental health issues. I want to be able to help if I can by using the Youth Reference Group and headspace as a kind of gateway to support."

"There is still a major stigma with mental health, and the view by some people that you are

This exercises everyone's mental health literacy and awareness, which is very useful. Anime Club has become so popular that it now runs weekly instead of fortnightly.

somehow 'not right in the head' is common. When you live in a little town, it seems that everyone knows your business. So, even more than in a large city, there is an incentive to keep your problems to yourself, because you don't want to be labelled."

"There are so many more options to everything these days. Ironically, the existence of so many options in life means that there is no clear path set out before young people."

"We want young people to know that difficult times do happen, but the important thing is that people will be there to support you!"

We've run a Dungeons & Dragons group for a long time, and it's gotten to the point where we are looking for a bigger space to fit everyone in! And we started an LGBTIAQ group in 2024 due to popular demand. We've received funding from the Office Of Regional Youth, and we used that to host a Rainbow Masquerade Ball in July 2024. The YRG helped out with the planning and on the night to show their support.

OPPOSITE TOP: The Youth Reference Group. Photo by Larni. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Hollie Fablia, LHD Health, and Rylie, YRG member. PHOTO BY NEIL FENELON.

**Flourish Australia
Broken Hill**

**Wilyakali and Wiljali
Country**

231 Blende Street
Broken Hill NSW 2880
02 9393 9699

Q&A WITH SHAKAYA

How long have you been a member of the YRG, Kaya?

I joined the YRG at the start of 2024 in March, and I'm very grateful and glad I did!

How did you join this group?

I joined the YRG through social media like Instagram and Facebook after some of my friends and family encouraged me to look into it. The YRG drew my attention as I have a passion for helping youth and advocating for change where needed, especially in rural areas like Broken Hill.

What does your role entail?

As a member of the Youth Reference Group, I provide guidance where I think support is needed amongst Broken Hill youth. As everyone in the YRG is aged between 12-25, our opinions and experiences are relevant to the youth we support.

What do you like most about your role?

I enjoy the meetings, as we all know how to have a solid laugh, and we also get free food! The YRG is just a group of friends having a chat, and trying to make positive change where we can.

Do you spend a lot of time talking with the young people?

My involvement in the YRG allows me to actively engage in community events and help plan them with our team at headspace. Some events we've been a part of include our local Agfair, Headspace Day, and Youth Day. It's awesome to see behind the scenes of these events, as you never really know how much time and planning it takes until you witness it for yourself!

Do young people come to you for support? What kind?

When we are at community events, it's very common (and rewarding) for young people to interact and open up to us. Whether it's about

their favourite colour, how they're going in school, or what they're feeling, it's reassuring to know that they know they can speak to any of us at headspace. If needed, we can arrange to speak with their parents if we believe they require further support beyond us.

Is the YRG having a big impact on how things are run?

I like to think so, though I might be a little biased! YRGs definitely have an impact on things like community events and contributing ideas to how we can increase social media interaction. We like to have fun with these ideas, and have plenty more planned for the future!

Any exciting plans?

The whole YRG recently agreed that we are going to stay on for another year, and hopefully get some new people on board. So that's exciting. There have been conversations about offering peer support work with students at local schools, which would be an amazing opportunity for the students!

RECOVERY GAMES

Panorama's Puzzle Page

Time give your brain a workout!

The Panorama Puzzle Page aims to not only entertain and amuse, but to help you learn and retain some terms that you'll encounter when dealing with mental health recovery.

On this page we have a SCRAMBLE of some long words which we challenge you to rearrange, and we've set out a CROSSWORD and a FIND-A-WORD on the opposite page.

If you're having trouble figuring out a clue, every answer can be found in May's articles. Some encouragement to really get the most out of Panorama's stories! Answers will be published in the JUNE 2025 MONTHLY online issue. Enjoy!

Panorama Word Scramble

1. You need to meet these to be eligible for a job: SUIINLTAOACQIF.....
2. When you learn, you build your: WDKLEGEON
3. A possible outcome to sex is: CANEYGRPN.....
4. An organisation that supports the needs of young people: HESAACDPE.....
5. Substance abuse may require: TABTALINREIHO.....
6. A common issue with young people is school: ODICVANE.....
7. The YRG are made up of: EERMSMB.....
8. Headspace holds events in the wider: OMUITNCYM.....

The Mental Health Benefits of Solving Puzzles

Keeping your mind sharp is important. Although the lockdowns are long passed and we aren't stuck at home as much, we still need to stimulate our brains everyday, whether that means going into the office, attending social events with friends and family, changing up your daily routine, or playing mentally stimulating games. Word Scrambles and Find-A-Words aren't just for fun, or a way to pass the time: they also give your brain a proper workout.

According to Rebecca Marcus, LCSW, licensed psychotherapist specialising in mindfulness, brain games:

- Increase our focus, concentration, and memory.
- Help us to be more present day-to-day.

- May slow or delay age-related cognitive decline and dementia.

"We are more likely to feel scattered, have trouble focusing, or experience forgetfulness if we don't do things to exercise and keep our mind sharp," says Marcus. "It's important that the game you choose needs to constantly increase in challenge and variety...If [you're] only playing the same thing over and over again, the mind isn't challenged anymore and begins to run on autopilot."

Games are an excellent way to learn something new and stimulate your brain to stay sharp in the long term. So what kinds of games provide a mental workout, and what kind?

Scrabble will enrich your vocabulary and train your mind to focus on a sole task. With an entire dictionary of words to choose from, every round is unique. Plus you can enjoy

it with friends!

Jigsaw Puzzles exercise both sides of your brain at once, requiring logic, intuition, and creativity, and can also be done as a group activity.

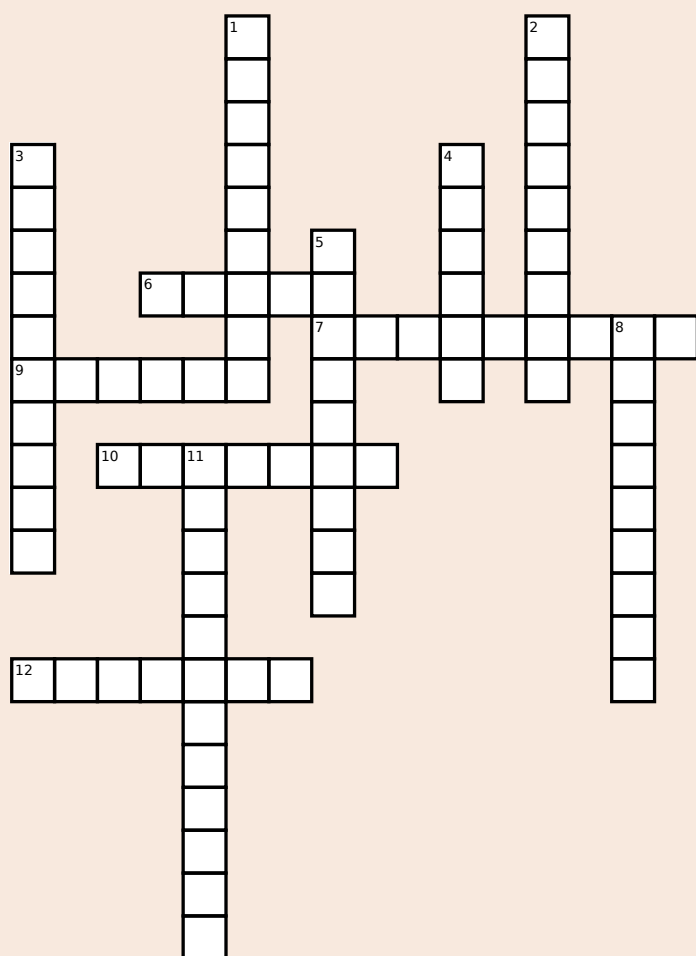
Sudoku is a grid-based number puzzle that relies on critical thinking and concentration.

Crossword Puzzles help improve your verbal skills, and force you to think deeply. They also help to delay the onset of memory decline in people who develop dementia.

Source:
"10 Games and
Puzzles to Exercise
Your Brain,"
Iman Balagam



Panorama Crossword



Down:

- 1. A is a vehicle that ferries people to the hospital
- 2. Many young Australians visit Bali for S Week
- 3. P are a Flourish Australia tool that identify physical health problems early
- 4. Headspace has a service at B Hill
- 5. Getting your hands dirty G
- 8. Hilltop Golf Course has been called the Ultimate C
- 11. Getting your license will greatly boost your I

Across:

- 6. Japanese comic art M
- 7. The Youth R Group listens to the needs of young people
- 9. The luwak eats and excretes C beans as a part of its diet
- 10. W can be an amazing creative outlet
- 12. When vegetables are ripe it's time to H them

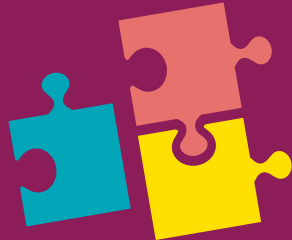
Panorama Find-A-Word

- BOTTLEBRUSH
- CHAMPIONSHIP
- COMPLEX
- CONNECT
- CREATIVITY
- GREEN
- LIFETIME
- MANGA
- MEETINGS
- PASSION
- PREGNANCY
- REASSURING
- SCHOOL
- SCREENING

Q F R E A S S U R I N G W V L
 Y R C H A M P I O N S H I P I
 N S F J M E E T I N G S C Y F
 G P C O I C Q N P E C J O D E
 N N A R B W S O H W O U N S T
 W T P S E O U Z U S M Y N C I
 S T N U S E T U H J P I E H M
 G B H Q T I N T F T L B C O E
 R E A X D V O I L J E S T O X
 E U L M V A U N N E X J J L M
 E Z J J Y Z Q E N G B L K W A
 N P R E G N A N C Y S R U T N
 C R E A T I V I T Y N Z U S G
 F U P N J Y Z O D C H E O S A
 U A I W Y C B U N M V W P X H

WORLD AUTISM Acceptance MONTH 2025

By Grant J Everett



World Autism Awareness Month is dedicated to promoting the understanding, acceptance, inclusion, wellness and support of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). The key message is to foster respect for difference and diversity, and it's also a great platform to dispel the misconceptions and stigma surrounding autism.

Together, we can create a society that supports autistic people to be all they want to be.

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental spectrum that affects how a person's brain develops and functions. Autism appears across all ages, regardless of cultural backgrounds and socio-economic status, affecting millions worldwide. Autism can impact an individual in a multitude of ways.

For instance, many autistic people feel uncomfortable in complex social settings, and may find it easier to connect through online chat, games or video calls. They may prefer their own company, and find it challenging to build and maintain friendships. They might need to isolate when they're stressed or excited, or perform repetitive movements (stimming) to regulate difficult emotions.

It's also common for autistic people have heightened sensory awareness, making them more sensitive to

sounds, smells, tastes and physical touch. Even something as simple as getting a haircut can be confronting and stressful.

Autistic people are often very good at logical or visual thinking, as well as remembering facts and figures. They have an eye for detail, and a greater understanding of technology. Having a very deep interest in a specific topic or activity is a common characteristic, making people with autism experts in their chosen areas.

People on the spectrum tend to be loyal, reliable, persistent, fair, and kind. They may also be overly honest and direct, even to the point of being blunt, and may have difficulty understanding sarcasm or humour. They might also find non-verbal communication (gestures, facial expressions, social cues) hard to read, and will struggle to understand the way non-autistic people think.

The way autism affects a person varies greatly, but it's widely thought that a person's quality of life can be significantly improved with early diagnosis and treatment.

Celebrating

The best way to celebrate World Autism Awareness Month is to learn more about ASDs and to use social media to promote the unique perspectives and talents that people with autism bring to their communities.

You can visit businesses that are

4X MORE
COMMON IN BOYS



ABOUT 675,000
AUSTRALIANS ARE
AUTISTIC*



AUTISM STATS:

80%

EXPERIENCE MENTAL
HEALTH ISSUES



ONLY 30%
ARE EMPLOYED

inclusive towards individuals with autism, and support policies and initiatives that promote inclusion and accessibility for individuals in schools, workplaces and public spaces. Your advocacy can help ensure that everyone on the spectrum can thrive. There are many excellent Australian organisations dedicated to people with autism you can support, such as Aspect.

Great progress has been made in the field of autism awareness thanks to many amazing advocates working tirelessly to foster acceptance, equal opportunities and human rights for people with autism.

Flourish Australia and ASD

Flourish Australia supports dozens of people who identify as being neurodivergent, whether they access services or work at our community businesses. We support people on the spectrum to build on their strengths, interests, and aspirations by identifying what they require from Flourish Australia to thrive in life.

*Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Sources:

<https://waam.autism.org.uk/>
<https://www.aspect.org.au/waud>
<https://www.awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/world-autism-awareness-day-2025/>
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/autism-day>

GET MOVING AT ADDI MOVES!

By Warren Heggarty

Let's look at a program that aims to get people moving. "Enjoyment, social support and autonomy" are what the Get Moving program offers, according to **Addi Moves Senior Exercise Physiologist and PhD Candidate Chiara Mastrogiovanni**. All fitness levels are welcome! The idea is to try out physical activity in an environment that is "not pressurised, not competitive, and tailored to what works for YOU."

Addi Moves is an initiative run by the Nutrition, Exercise and Social Equity (NExuS) Research Group at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Begun in 2022, it gets its name from its Addison Road, Marrickville location.

"Addi Moves is run by accredited exercise physiologists, who are mindful of people's culture and, in some cases, past traumatic experiences," says Chiara. "For example, some Addi Moves' clients have experienced or currently experience mental illness, food insecurity and gender-based violence."

Addi Moves offers a four week rotating schedule of free, supportive physical activity classes to help improve strength, heart health and flexibility. Currently, "Get Moving" is open to people who access Flourish Australia's or NEAMI's Connect and Thrive Program. The Get Moving program is co-facilitated by Flourish Australia and Addi Moves, and this



PHYSICAL HEALTH



partnership is all about providing the specialist support necessary for you to achieve your physical health goals.

If you access Flourish Australia services, you can enquire with your support worker about whether this might be a good fit for you. Chiara says that Addi Moves is keen to expand as well, so don't be afraid to express your interest! And even if you don't currently access Flourish Australia services, you can still get in touch with Addi Moves.

Co-Facilitator Jenny Vo from Flourish Australia's Marrickville service says, "Chiara is doing such an amazing job making participants feel comfortable with starting their exercise journey in a safe environment. It is a smaller sized exercise facility, which is designed to not feel like a gym."

"Participants have given me the positive feedback that it doesn't feel like a gym, and that Chiara is very welcoming and warm. The capacity is 5-6 people, and I've gotten feedback that participants like this small group size also."

Brooke Jerrett, Groups and Engagement Facilitator at Flourish Australia Marrickville, said, "The group will be running indefinitely at this stage. Continuity of this group offering is dependent on the generated interest from our participants."

HERE IS A RUN-DOWN OF THE 4-WEEK SCHEDULE FOR ADDI MOVES.

WEEK 1

Get Moving/ Try Something New.

Newcomers join a walking tour of Addi Moves and explore the space. They try new or familiar equipment. This first session includes a short walk, using light weights and bands for strength movements, and a short stretch.

WEEK 2

Movements for Everyday.

A mix of functional movements for muscular and heart strength. Part of this session may involve slightly raising how fast the heart beats.

WEEK 3

Gently Stretching the Whole Body.

WEEK 4

Your Choice.

Pick your favourite activity from previous weeks - weights, stretching or strength movements - it's all up to you.

ABOVE: Up! Up! And Awayyyyy. Get Moving offers a four week rotating schedule of activities. PHOTO BY MIRCEA IANCU FROM PIXABAY AND CHIARA.

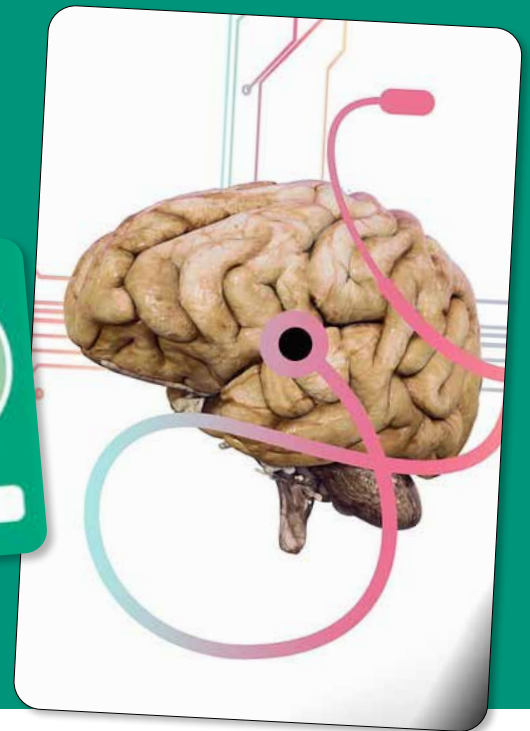
Back On Track Health

PhysiCard: Screening Tests

Parkinson's Disease: How Your Belly Affects Your Brain

Flourish Australia's PhysiCards® are an interactive, person led approach to reviewing, identifying and responding to physical health and wellbeing concerns.

If you access Flourish Australia services, you can use the PhysiCards as an easy tool to help identify any physical health issues. Just speak to your support worker to find out more.



Parkinson's disease is a chronic neurodegenerative disorder that affects the brain. It leads to tremors, problems with muscle control, and dementia. There's no cure yet, but there are treatments to help manage and slow the worsening of symptoms.

Dietitian Nancy Oliveira (MS, RD, LDN) discussed the key role diet and nutrition play in the onset and maintenance of Parkinson's disease.

"The disease process that leads to Parkinson's begins up to a decade before symptoms appear. It's absolutely worthwhile to look at lifestyle factors such as diet. They may help delay the start of symptoms and slow the progression of the disease."

"A large Harvard study on Parkinson's also showed that people with very high intake of plant foods, including fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains, had a lower risk of developing Parkinson's disease. The low-risk people also ate plenty of lean protein and smaller amounts of saturated fat."

Gut To Grey Matter

According to the article "Parkinson's Disease Diet" on the Mass General

Brigham website, what you eat can improve your brain health, such as Omega-3 fatty acids. A heart-healthy diet will benefit the blood vessels in your brain, and every cell in your body needs protein to work, whether it's from meat or plants such as tofu, beans, nuts, and tempeh. Probiotic foods like kefir, kimchee, sauerkraut, sourdough bread, and yogurt are good for your grey matter. If you want to start taking probiotic supplements, it's best to do it in consultation with your doctor.

Foods thought to have a negative effect on Parkinson's include saturated fat, ultra-processed low-nutrient foods, and excessive alcohol (more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women).

Parkinson's can also give you trouble with chewing and swallowing, so eating foods that are easier to get down – such as smoothies, soups, stews, and smaller, frequent meals – can be a good option. And be sure to drink plenty of water!

As diet and nutrition can be complex for a person with Parkinson's, a dietitian can create a customised meal plan with the foods you enjoy, while also ensuring you're meeting your nutritional needs.

Managing

Living with a chronic illness like Parkinson's that affects your walking, talking and even your eating can be difficult, but there are medicines, therapies and lifestyle choices that can make life easier.

Your care team may recommend aerobic exercise, balancing, stretching and speech therapy. Walking, swimming, gardening, dancing, and water aerobics are all good, low-impact options to improve your muscle strength. A physical therapist can help create an exercise program for you.

Lifestyle changes may help ease your Parkinson's symptoms. Non-medical options include massage, tai chi, yoga, meditation, and relaxation techniques. Support groups can be an amazing resource for learning practical ways to live with Parkinson's.

And most of all, keep doing what you enjoy doing in life. Don't let Parkinson's take away what you prize.

Read more about Parkinson's Disease and diet by scanning this QR Code.



Back On Track Health

PhysiCard: Digestive Awareness

Irritable Bowel Syndrome: More Than Gut Health

Flourish Australia's PhysiCards® are an interactive, person led approach to reviewing, identifying and responding to physical health and wellbeing concerns.

If you access Flourish Australia services, you can use the PhysiCards as an easy tool to help identify any physical health issues. Just speak to your support worker to find out more.



IBS affects between 5% and 10% of the population, yet many people are unaware they have it. IBS is the most common disorder of the digestive system, and most commonly appears between the ages of 20 and 40. Women are slightly more likely to get it than men are.

The aim of IBS Awareness Month back in April is to destigmatise the condition and to show the treatments and quality of life improvements on offer. For instance, according to Dr Smale, gastroenterologist and medical adviser to The IBS Network, studies have shown the effects and severity of IBS can fluctuate according to your mood.

"Your gut health and your stress levels are inextricably linked," she says.

As stress problems and our stomach issues impact each other, finding ways to relax is important. This could be reading, gardening, listening to music, walking the dog, or practising mindfulness. You also need to get enough quality sleep. And if you want to identify patterns in IBS flareups, it can be productive to jot down how you are feeling and what you are eating.

According to Dr Smale, it's also vital to get in some daily exercise. You could swim, run, cycle, walk, go to the gym, whatever. Aim for 150 minutes per week.

"Exercise effects gut motility and function," Dr Smale says. "It helps to establish these normal patterns and normal function, both in terms of our brains and in terms of our guts."



Common symptoms of IBS:

- Constipation, diarrhoea or a mixture of the two
- Abdominal pain
- Abnormal bowel habits
- Wind and bloating
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Backache
- Bladder symptoms

Regardless of what symptoms you experience, your GP can help. IBS treatments are tailored according to your diet, your lifestyle, and sometimes your medication regime. They may examine what you eat and drink (water is best) your soluble fibre intake, what medicines may help, and may recommend probiotics. It's important to remember what works for one person may not work for the next.

If you have bladder issues, doing pelvic floor exercises three times a day can help. Also, wait for your bladder to fill up rather than going to the loo "just in case." This will help prevent bladder shrinkage.

Flourish Australia Can Help

Flourish Australia can provide individualised support for bowel or bladder issues, which may include developing a Bowel Care Plan to identify the person's needs and preferences.

Sources:

- "IBS And Mental Health," Mind & Body
- "IBS Awareness Month," Guts UK website
- "Diet, Lifestyle and Medicines - Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)," NHS UK website
- "High Intensity Support, - Complex Bowel Care," CHIRP, Flourish Australia

**NEXT MONTH:
June is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. If caught early, bowel cancer is one of the most easily treated cancers. If you are 45 or older, scan this QR code to learn about screening kits.**



NDIS

Support for you, your family,
and your carers.



We will walk alongside you on your recovery journey, as well as help you live in the community, learn new skills, and do the things that are important to you

AT FLOURISH AUSTRALIA we can assist you to:

Our NDIS services

Flourish Australia is a registered NDIS provider. We support people who have a complex mental health issue to live the life they want to live. We have been in business since 1955 and have assisted many people to:

- Find a job
- Undertake training or study
- Make friends
- Connect with their communities
- Sort out day-to-day issues
- Find a place to live
- Stay healthy
- And much more

The most important things to us at Flourish Australia are your health, wellbeing, and recovery journey.

We are here to help

We know that applying for the NDIS or seeking support can be a confusing and intimidating process. Contact us and we will help you during all stages of the process.

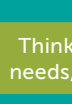
📞 1300 779 270 ✉️ hello@flourishaustralia.org.au

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Find out if you can access the NDIS



Think about your current needs, goals, and supports



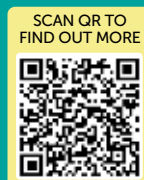
Meet with your NDIS planner and get a plan



Decide which service providers you want support from



Put your plan into action



NDIS

Where mental wellbeing thrives