

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

panorama

Monthly Issue August 2025 #98B

On The Trail to
Good Mental Health

A Different
Way of Working:
Flourish Connect

Giving Back
However I Can

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AUSTRALIA

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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 (option1) 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...
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Prefer snail mail?

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Disclaimer

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

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Photo by Rebecca Zilionis

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Contributors include...

Mattie accesses services at Flourish Australia Griffith

Tracy and Steven are process workers at Flourish Australia's Prestige Packing at Harris Park.

Harrison accesses services at Flourish Australia Katoomba.

And thanks to Flourish Australia staff Luisa Linares, Cassandra Williams, Sonny Villanueva, Rebecca Zilionis, and Kirsten Cameron.

Contributions are welcome!

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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 August 2025

We have recovery stories from Mattie, the resident artist at Flourish Australia's Griffith service, and Harrison, a young creative at our Katoomba service (see one of Harrison's works, below).



We cover what's happening at several Flourish Australia services, like how the cooking group at Moree is assembling a cookbook, people learning instruments and jamming together at Derby Street, Penrith, for the good of their mental health.

42 employees at Prestige Packing recently completed a course in digital literacy to equip them with the skills necessary to perform at their best in a modern workplace, and they're keen to keep on learning skills that will add to their resumes and make them more desirable employees in bigger and better things.

Read about how you can bring positive change to your life by getting out of your comfort zone and moving into your growth zone. See 'Routine Disruptors.'

We also cover Loneliness Awareness Week. Isolation and loneliness can affect anybody. Even if you're surrounded by people, if relations with those people are unsatisfactory, loneliness can still exist.

And more!

Coming up in September Panorama...

- NAIDOC Week events
- Guarding The Land for a Living
- Bridging The Gap: Recovery Is More Than A Bed
- And more!

- Editor

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



THRIFTY IS NIFTY

For volunteering, and for bargains

By Warren Heggarty



Thrift shopping (or “Op Shopping”) has become a bit posh. One report claimed this is because more people are embracing sustainability, affordability, and their own unique style, with environmental concerns and digital innovations shifting consumer attitudes (Orozco, 2025).

This is not to be confused with rebranding junk as art and selling it for ten times its value, where certain posh boutiques will sell an old wooden chair for a thousand dollars because a local artist painted it a whimsical shade of turquoise. We mean actual THRIFT, for cost conscious shoppers like us.

Some of the reasons why even well-off people are turning to thrift include...

- People need to save money, as the economy is tight
- You can get unique items second-hand that you cannot find anywhere else
- Environmentalists are pushing what they call the “circular economy,” with the idea being to waste less resources by using second-hand goods
- Some big brands have introduced buyback schemes. Levi Strauss introduced its second-hand

scheme in 2020 where you get trade-in credit for your old jeans, which are then sold second hand

- New second-hand digital platforms (ThredUp, Depop, Poshmark) make it easy to trade online.

Kathleen of the YouTube channel “Kathleen Illustrated” says visiting a thrift store and trying stuff on will be “a little more experimental, a little more out of your comfort zone.” Don’t you just love the sound of that? It sounds like something you’d do on the mental health recovery road. For this reason, Kathleen recommends that you dress up when you go to the thrift store. If you look and feel your best, you are more likely to move further beyond your comfort zone and become what Kathleen calls a “certified thrift goblin.” (Kathleen, 2024)

Influencers like Australian style icon Louisa Bella Jian have helped normalise or even glamorise wearing pre-owned or thrift clothes. Her review of UTURN thrift warehouse in Punchbowl inspired Panorama to do a little shopping (Louisa Belle Jian, 2025). The staff confirmed that people from all walks of life shop there, from people trying to stretch out a low income to trendy fashionistas looking for something special. UTURN does not, however, BUY used clothing from the public. Rather, they have donors who pass on merchandise

that they can’t sell due to flaws or changing fashions.

If you are not a fashionista, the Salvos Thrift video on the “Frugal Fun Mum” YouTube video channel gives a down-to-earth review of the merchandise from a mum’s eye view, including gift ideas. Salvos and Vinnies still take donations, and you may even be able to organise for them to come collect your pre-loved goods. Check with individual stores.

ABOVE: The bric-a-brac bargain bins at UTURN Punchbowl are overflowing. No wonder they’re selling by the kilo! Photo by Warren Heggarty

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LEARNING TO DEAL WITH LOSS ...WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

By Leonee

I feel like I'm the resident artist here at Flourish Australia's Griffith service, as the walls are decked with my canvases. I've only been painting for 2 years, but it's become a true passion that greatly helps with my mental health and wellbeing. Thanks to that and the support I get from Flourish Australia, I've come leaps and bounds in my recovery.

We do a lot of arts and crafts here, as there are many creative types. On the days we do painting workshops, I'll come in early to help set up and run things. We recently had a project painting little inspirational messages onto rocks, and hiding them in local parks where people could find them in the hopes we'd brighten their day. A lot of us are enjoying that.

My paintings are abstract style, and I've also practised on pre-printed canvases where you paint inside the lines. I have a special designated area for painting at home, too, though most of my artworks end up here at the office!

To Call Home

Griffith is a farming area, very big on citrus and wine. I moved away 20 years ago, but I'm finally back. My partner and I are sharing a house with our best friend, as the cost of living is so out of control nowadays. Thankfully, our rent also covers electricity, internet, and gas, so that makes life easier.

I love the sense of community at Griffith, as we are very big on helping anyone who's battling. I volunteer every Monday and Wednesday with the local Salvation Army Corp, and giving back to the community feels like I'm contributing (see our "Don't Knock Op Shops" story in our July 2025 issue for more on this topic). We can all do our bit!

Fighting Waste

I cook up good meals at the Griffith service every Friday with the fresh fruit, veg and meat packs delivered by Meals On Wheels and Hampers of Hope. These charities collect all the perfectly edible food that the shops won't sell and put it into

hampers. It's terrible how much food waste there is.

Goals

The War Gallery at Griffith showcases the work of local artists, and it's my goal to display a canvas there (see Kiri Smith's story in the July 2025 issue for how she accomplished this goal). Another goal is to decorate the substation power boxes down the backlanes of main streets with murals for the council. There are also many businesses that cover their back walls in art, and they're beautiful to look at. I'm also interested in pursuing mental health advocacy so I can help people with a lived experience of mental health issues with their rights and treatment.

Life Changing

I started experiencing mental health symptoms 12 years ago after a serious physical incident to my head. I was at a mate's house when a home invasion occurred, and all I remember is waking up two blocks away at someone's house without any idea how I got there.

I was a Retail Manager, and doing really well in life. But since my head injury, I haven't been capable of the work I used to do. I get bouts of forgetfulness and confusion, but I've been working with the staff at Flourish Australia to learn how to manage that.

The staff are amazing. They'll go right out of their way to help you. I'm just putting in a claim for NDIS support, and the staff made the process easier than I expected. Now I'm just waiting to hear back.

I just want to thank Suzie, Amanda, and Rebecca so much. You're doing amazing work!

ABOVE: Mattie hard at work developing his artistic expression. Photo by Rebecca Zilionis

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ON THE TRAIL TO GOOD MENTAL

WALKING: WHERE TO GO AND HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF IT

By Warren Heggarty (NSW) and Penny Armstrong (QLD)

Walking is free and you can start right now!

Work through stress

Improve heart health

See interesting places

Commune with nature

Peace and quiet

Socialise

Have a picnic

Get some exercise

Living in Australia, most of us are within a short distance of wonderful walking trails and spectacular scenery.

If you aren't convinced, have a look at these pics taken at places visited by people who access Flourish Australia's services.

One of them is right in the midst of an industrial area! And you don't have to join one of our many walking groups: you can start walking now!

We hope to bring you more of the great Australian outdoors in future issues.

If you have pics, send them in!

MAIN PICTURE: Lookout over the Georges River Oatley Park NSW

Eco Day Trips

Various places in South East Qld

Flourish Australia's peer-operated service at Hervey Bay in Queensland organise Eco Day Trips. These trips are all about connecting with nature to foster improvements in mental health and wellbeing. This includes walks in nature, swimming, mindfulness, and adventure activities.

Bush scene: Utopia Falls, QLD (Nov 2024)

Beach scene: Rainbow Beach, QLD (Oct 2024)



HEALTH

ST OUT OF IT

Plumpton Park

Hyatt Rd Plumpton NSW

One of the features of Plumpton Park is a bushland conservation area. The dirt trails twist between a forest of gumtrees, and although it is a mere 8 hectares, it seems much larger. You could even get lost! I know I did. There is also a picnic ground and a riverside walk. Later, if you like, you can visit the huge industrial area nearby!



International Peace Park

Off Jean Avenue, Seven Hills NSW

Not far from Seven Hills station, you'll become aware of the sound of falling water until you come to the Lake Dam. The path is level and follows the lake's course. You can hear the sound of wind in the trees and various species of waterbird. A bridge at the far end takes you to Hadley Road and back to the station. Flourish Australia's WestClub walking group walked here in March 2025.



Woodcroft Lakes

Off Wodcroft Drive Woodcroft NSW

Flourish Australia's WestClub walking group walked here in March 2025 under leaden skies, which imbued the lake with a mysterious, almost magical aura. At one point we saw an unknown lady try to jump off the raised path to walk across a grassy field- which was really a SWAMP. Luckily, she pulled back in time. The main lake is broad and full of various waterfowl who are used to humans.



Bungarribee Park and Homestead

Doonside Road, Steel Trap Drive Bungarribee NSW

L: On a hilltop are the ruins of one of Australia's earliest homesteads, marked by an old bifurcated pine tree. TR: Playground near Heart Crossing Loop. BR: Nearby, it's amazing what you can do with some old scrap metal and imagination. While viewing these "racehorse sculptures," we could hear the roar of race car engines at nearby Eastern Creek!





Routine Disruptors

Exit Your Comfort Zone. Enter The Growth Zone.

By Warren Heggarty

We know that for most people getting into a routine is beneficial for their mental health, especially for people who experience confusion and get disorganised. However, once you get a bit of structure in your life, you will also benefit from stretching yourself. "Stepping outside your comfort zone" is another way of saying "stepping into your growth zone."

"It's too much for me!" you might say. After all, when we try new things, we expose ourselves to some intense emotions. It can get even more intense if you have to wrangle mental health issues as well. But dealing with change and the emotions it brings is a part of recovery. We feel fear, stress, anxiety, and confusion anyway, so instead of avoiding emotions, put them to work for you.

Trying out something new - like volunteering - can be easier with a friend, and more fun, too. Changes also don't have to be radical.

An example is given by Ashleigh Austen in *The Women's Weekly*. "Dress for dopamine," she calls it, "if your clothes are all black tee shirts and grey tracky-dacks, why not add a bit of colour?"

I knew someone who could not get out of the habit of wearing blue shirts, grey trousers and black shoes. He was quite anxious about wearing anything different. He possibly felt that a wardrobe change would draw unnecessary attention and invite "evaluation." He completely ignored the fact that this evaluation would likely be positive. He knew that people around him had been encouraging him to become a little more colourful, and that if he did so they would be impressed. Ultimately, I suppose his inertia outweighed his desire for compliments.

Another approach to stepping out of your comfort zone is to LITERALLY do something uncomfortable. Like taking cold showers, or swimming in a non-heated pool. I remember going for a dip in 17 degree water; I was invigorated for weeks after! But seriously, people who endure cold showers say it leaves them with a positive mental state.

According to Austen's article in *The Australian Women's Weekly*, the benefits of "stepping outside the box" include...

- Building new nerve connections in your brain
- Helping your emotional health by introducing you to new things and new people
- Boosting your confidence by showing that you can take on new tasks
- Widening your social circle
- It helps manage stress, but note that it might actually increase it a bit at first

Here are some more pointers to help you think about entering the GROWTH ZONE.

- Ask yourself: what are you really scared of?
- What fear would you like to overcome in entering the Growth Zone?
- Can you get comfortable with being uncomfortable? Practice helps.
- Failing opens the door to learning from it. Fail well!
- Everyone has to take baby steps if you're new to something.
- Hang out with people who are more daring than you are.
- Don't take yourself too seriously!

ABOVE: The box might feel comfy and safe, but is this familiarity holding you back from bigger and better things? Picture from OpenClipart-Vectorson Pixabay

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ASSEMBLING A RECIPE BOOK

Upskilling at the Moree Cooking Group

By Luisa Linares

The Flourish Australia service at Moree has been running a cooking group for the people who access our services. The group aims to have a positive impact on their confidence, social connection, and enjoyment in a kitchen setting.

The Cooking Group at Moree was started to support participants in making healthier lifestyle choices. Many participants live with chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity, which are sometimes linked to poor dietary habits and reliance on takeaway or processed foods. Our goal with the Cooking Group has been to show that preparing healthy meals can be easy, affordable, and enjoyable.

We focus on using easily-accessible ingredients from local supermarkets, keeping meals budget-friendly. We have also introduced international dishes to promote cultural awareness and add variety, allowing

participants to explore new flavours and cooking styles in a fun and inclusive environment.

We've been adding every recipe into a cooking book, and everyone who takes part in the group will be able to take home their own copy of it so they can continue to whip up their favourites!

ABOVE: Good times at the Moree Cooking Group. **Group photo (L-R):** James Gillon, Aubrey Duncan, Adam Duncan, Luisa Linares, Warren Pitt, Paul Adams, Dennis Binge. **TOP RIGHT:** Stanley Karkoe. **RIGHT:** Christopher Briggs-Pergus. Photos by Luisa Linares

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What did the budding chefs at the Moree Cooking Group think?

- "I really enjoy learning how to cook. It makes me feel more confident in the kitchen."
- "I've been trying out these recipes at home, and my family loves them!"
- "I like trying food from other countries. Everything is so tasty!"
- "Luisa's guacamole is the best, I love her recipe!"
- "Cooking together helps me feel more connected with the other people in the group and less alone."
- "Cooking is fun and relaxing, and I learn something new every single week."
- "I didn't think I could cook, but now I know I can!"



More Than Calls & Texts

Staying Current with Digital Literacy at Harris Park

By Grant J Everett

Being employed in a modern workplace will often require digital skills specific to the job. However, people with complex mental health issues often don't get the opportunity to develop these basic skills.

Flourish Australia's Prestige Packing community business at Harris Park ran a "Use Digital Technology" course to up-skill 42 packing assistants in this way, and a teacher from Navitas Skilled Futures, Sue, was brought in to teach on Mondays and Thursdays for 14 weeks. Every supported employee had the aim of working on their practical technological skills as a part of their future employment goals, and there were so many people lined up to do the course that they had to be divided into four separate groups!

In addition to learning valuable skills, the graduates also earned a Statement of Attainment, a nationally recognised qualification that can get you into further studies, and prove to employers you possess these foundational abilities.

ABOVE: Tracy, recent graduate of the "Use Digital Technology" class. Photo by Grant J Everett.

Flourish Australia Harris Park Prestige Packing Dharug Country

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Kirsten "This course has been life-changing for many of the participants, and has given them the digital foundations for bigger things," said Kirsten Cameron, Training and Assessment Coordinator at Prestige Packing, who worked alongside Sue from Navitas to set up this course. "For most employees, this will be their first qualification."

Steven "I really enjoyed the course, and I learned a lot," said Steven. "We covered smartphones at the start, then laptops, and then we developed skills with Google applications like Gmail, Google Drive, and Google Docs."

"I now know how to use my phone to download tickets electronically, so when I go to the movies or a play or Supernova, all I need to do is show a barcode on my screen to get in. No more printing out tickets!"

"I can also do different practical tasks on my phone like banking and paying my bills, and I've started using a grocery delivery service app, something my family has been doing for ages. All from my lounge!"

"The biggest rule of cybersecurity I learned was to NEVER share my password with anyone. Even friends! That kind of access can cause you some severe financial damage. I also know how to easily spot scammers and spammers, who I just report, block and delete."

"I would like to keep on studying, as it's never a bad idea to learn new things."

Tracy "I've learned so much from this course," said Tracy, one of the graduates, "and now I get so much more use out of my phone. I'm sure the things I've learned will come in useful when I apply for another job in the future."

"This course helped everyone to use their mobile phones and laptops more effectively. For instance, we set up new email accounts with unique passwords and learned how to attach photos and other files to them, as well as how to email a number of people all at once. As we get our payslips from Flourish Australia electronically nowadays, we can see our financial details on our phones right away."

"Sue also helped us with surfing the net safely. We were taught about spammers and scammers, and how to recognise their techniques. Putting up with them is the worst thing about being online! I hear from scammers every day, but my phone normally tells me if it's an untrusted number, so I just don't answer."

"Sue is a great teacher who is very patient and knows her stuff, and we're all hoping she comes back to run another course!"

West Club Party!

Learn an instrument at Penrith

By Warren Heggarty

Music enhances memory, connects people, helps with insomnia, uplifts the spirit and relaxes. And it's fun, too! So naturally a lot of people want to include music in their recovery journey. At WestClub, located at Flourish Australia's Penrith service, they run a regular group called "Learn to Play a Musical Instrument." Panorama joined the fun with Lisa, Karl, Anthony, and all the other members.

It was a week following the group's performance for Harmony Day. The Harmony Day gig featured songs from all over the world. For example "On My Way" (pronounced aan ma wee), which was a hit by the Proclaimers many years ago, is from Scotland. "Aha! Aha!"

Today's Karaoke-style session (more with instruments than voices) included a German song, Neun und Neunzehn Luft Balonen, made a little easier to sing in its English version, 99 Red Balloons. I guess "Werewolves of London" by Warren Zevon is a song set in England about a Transylvanian performed by an American, but WestClub has put its own special stamp on it with Anthony's keyboard accompaniment. Ahooooooh!

Moving to Ireland, we had U2 doing

"When Love Comes to Town" along with B.B. King. This segued into the educational part of the session in which facilitator Lisa Crawford recounted the illustrious career of B.B. King.

Now B.B. King lived to a great age, but he was still able to play the "diddly bits" as guitarist Karl called them, well into his seventies. These "diddly bits" have long been imitated by aspiring guitar heroes worldwide.

Karl, who is the longest performing member of the WestClub music group, started out playing guitar right-handed until a motorbike accident on his farm in his twenties damaged his arm. This meant that he had to relearn (not to mention restring) his guitar so that he is now a left hander like Jimi Hendrix.

"I was getting quite good at the guitar until the accident," Karl reminisces. "Learning to play left-handed took a long time, but I kept it up! Music really lifts my mood and makes me feel better. I have a mate I sometimes jam with, too. I love Rock and Roll, the Beatles and Led Zeppelin."

Penrith's resident drummer who was not able to be present today, is a big fan of ACDC. What a pity the drums remained silent today! The muso who normally plays bass also just had an operation, so he had to take it easy, playing the maracas to keep the rhythm steady.



Keyboardist Anthony likes music with a theme. For example: Halloween. You can tell he was the one who chose "Ahooh! Werewolves of London" today. Other favourites include the "Purple People Eater," plus macabrely twisted tunes like "Time Warp" and "Devil Woman."

Lisa tells us that they had an idea to adapt the song "S Club Party" to become "WestClub Party" and use it as WestClub's theme song. If you listen to "S Club Party" by "S Club" you will see that it fits perfectly and would make a great theme song.

ABOVE: Get in the Flow! **LEFT:** Anthony is in the groove zone. **RIGHT:** Karl is deep in concentration on the guitar. Photos by Warren Heggarty

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MODEL RESILIENCE

For parents and peers

By Warren Heggarty

We talk a lot about resilience, but how do you learn to be resilient? And who teaches you? According to Anthony Dillon the most important teachers are often our parents, but we can find other people to model it for us if need be. Importantly, too, once we acquire it, it falls to us to model it for our children and our peers.

Anthony Dillon is honorary fellow of the Institute of Positive Psychology at Australian Catholic University. He speaks from the perspective of child-rearing but we can all learn from the lesson. "It is important," he says, "to let children experience some discomfort in their lives." The German philosopher Goethe is thought to have said, "Too many parents make life hard for their children by trying too zealously to make it easy for them."

The fact is if you have things done FOR you, how are you to learn to deal with those things yourself. If you are protected from every hardship, how will you cope when that protection is taken away? Our safety conscious society sometimes

undermines our potential for resilience. If we subsequently have children, the gap in our experience may affect THEIR development as well.

"Kids [indeed all of us] need to learn that while it's normal to have setbacks and disappointments, they can move on from them." We can learn this by looking at how people we admire (like our parents) respond when they are in trouble. The same goes for dealing with other people's nasty words.

Years ago, a High Court Judge Michael Kirby was accused under parliamentary privilege of some terrible things by a Senator. The Senator did not have to account for his slurs. Kirby did not fly off the handle, but calmly rebutted the charges. He did not lower himself to political mud-slinging and his good grace was seen by a lot of people as a demonstration of his credibility and innocence. Good grace under fire breeds respect.

Dillon speaks of a parent's love for children, but he defines it as 'unconditional positive regard.' This applies to everyone, not just children. It means that we wish the best for other people. Sometimes that might involve dealing out appropriate consequences and

discipline. We do this not out of anger but out of a desire for the child or other person to grow.

Today, according to Dillon, we are too quick to diagnose, to medicalise and to treat problems as illnesses. Worse, "there is a growing tendency for parents to seek these labels for their children." He implies that if parents were more diligent in modeling resilience, there would be less need to use diagnostic labels.

What sort of actions model resilience? One of the best is to show that you can take criticism or being wrong. Apologising for mistakes, especially if people have been inconvenienced, shows what you are made of. But avoid apologising for things that are not your fault.

Being able to view setbacks as opportunities and focusing on what you CAN control are two other ways of modeling resistance. Controlling your temper is another. None of these things are easy to do for ANYONE. That is why if you put the effort into doing them, people will be rightly impressed.

ABOVE: Parents can be models of resilience. Kids copy the way they behave in difficult circumstances. Photo by Olaksandr Pidvalnyi from Pixabay



BIG CHANGES

To Rental Laws In NSW

By Grant J Everett

There have been changes to rental laws in NSW. Overall, renters are now better off, hopefully this soothes the cost of living crisis. This includes...

Landlords cannot end your lease without a valid reason. This applies to periodic leases and when you reach the end of a fixed-term lease. Valid reasons to terminate a tenancy include breach of agreement, non-payment, serious damage done to the home, or using the premises for illegal purposes.

No matter your lease type, rent increases are limited to one per year, and people who live in social housing may be subject to a review of rent rebates more than once per year.

Rejoice, pet people! Landlords may only refuse pets for certain reasons. They can set a limit on how many animals you can have, require sufficient enclosures and space to keep the animal humanely, and the pet must not damage the property. Once you've applied to keep a pet, your landlord must respond in writing within 21 days, or your request is automatically approved.

Paying "extra" fees at the start of a tenancy is illegal, including charging fees for background checks or preparing a tenancy agreement.

There must be free rent payment methods on offer, including bank transfer.

Landlords now require a longer notice period to end a fixed-term lease, depending on the length of your agreement.

Note: These changes apply to NSW only. Different circumstances apply to other states and Territories.

Source: www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/fair-trading/changes-to-rental-laws

July 2025 Recovery Game Solutions

KEYWORDS

1. DISABILITY
2. AUTISTIC
3. ARTISTIC
4. INSTALLATION
5. CONNECTION
6. BELONGING
7. COMMUNITY
8. VOCATION
9. EXHIBITION
10. WE ARE STUDIOS

CROSSWORD

Across

3. Benefits
5. Holiday
6. Galleries
9. Reverse
10. Commissions

Down

1. Volunteers
2. Reasonably
4. Techniques
7. Supports
8. People
11. Mimicry

Panorama Find-A-Word

WNNKVEVINVRYNZPLGIYFEDDATXGTKN
 RNNFYORFTGZHRADAQXRTPWOGIDBMP
 WBQMUFZZTUZGYBMSXFDLJRLNMNCN
 WKKKJPTXSZVBNBWL CONNECTIONZVON
 LFOSZYHI EMERGINGJQJQACCEPTANCE
 OJCIAARQLRPIUEFUDFAVETVYBUXTZA
 AOSQODPZBDNYSFKQDDJQBDKMBYFRNE
 VRLEFSPDQGJSPZCDTRMUWLJTTEWPK
 TTVNWHEONGCNZMBLUTJXQWVYIUEZEQ
 MCBAGFINFJSYDGLPIEZSSTXLUCCSNN
 FJPKMMWDGJSPIUTAMLQXMFPTLFIYU
 SBKLQWTTTRPHNAEJFZAXWMNVEANW
 SIJVFXPFGIVMMYIFQNEPKFBARGAINS
 ZCARUSJRRQEVKLSWIDSGAJZNGOLYM
 AGHWZQXOFFNUMSMIEXPERIENCEBOQN
 IXXSNUVGNBTBKVOHBCEZJQMWVALWROZ
 LDWCXBPBRUMYGPJSAANHPUEHFPIIDH
 ITEKJSUAHFRZALEQSWRQMIVRGLLNV
 VHJNNMTMRGBJWRSMOHWDYGODLCVGLJ
 ERXVTIGTQJZKZQDHPNUSLLWGHUPRL
 DIHDXIMVCOUTSYWEZVKGKHJBNCRCFUL
 SVSVVYTABRHEYJZNWRSMXBWSUTBHG
 MEAOCIRYGSAALVWYXHMOTLCSXSIGNU
 FVUMBVBBAEKLVKKHQKHNNITIGYSFLAB
 QAPDDAGIBECHUZFOMVRGUAGMVXDFGN
 MKFQLNONIKNMMOPHXPBCLPFIINTCPQG
 PCAGWRSETEQUWMKZNUIOYYMCIOVBA
 BJJEJKKDHAROUYBKKDKWTXDXSQIZMF
 PZZVHONZBSQDVZBCCPDZSCXZIIITFJ
 YEDUCHUXZFNUFNROVEGEVFLWTS HA



A New Phase in Life

Working towards a career in the creative

By Harrison

While I've had a few jobs, I've always dreamed of being an artist. I've been a creative type my whole life, and I enjoy drawing original characters and creating worlds for them to live in. Flourish Australia has always supported me with my art.

As I really like playing video games with interesting or unique settings, especially artsy, story-driven ones, I'd love to work in the video game industry in the creative and design side of things. This could be creating concept art, or designing character models, or world-building. Ideally, as I have ADHD, I would like to wear many different hats, as my brain likes to have different tasks to switch between! I've completed a number of courses

relevant to the game industry at TAFE, including most of a Diploma of Visual Arts and a number of smaller art courses. My favourite art course was drawing with charcoal, and I really got a lot out of that.

I studied a game design course, and I've dabbled in programming in the past, too, so I've already created a few little games by myself.

As creative jobs like this are in high demand, I'm going to continue with my studies to be better qualified, and that includes completing my Diploma.

Recovery through Independence

When I first connected up with the Flourish Australia service on Derby Street, Penrith, life was particularly tough, as COVID had basically shut

down the whole world, and I felt very alone. Once I moved from Emu Plains to my own place at Katoomba, I quickly made a number of friends at the local Flourish Australia day-to-day living centre. I've attended all sorts of groups and activities there, but I get the most out of my one-on-one support from the staff. We might just go out for a walk and a talk, or they may come with me to a doctor's appointment.

My Flourish Australia workers are currently supporting me in figuring out my goals, but I'm always the one who makes the decisions. They've connected me up with a number of local support services for young people, and this has gotten me out of my apartment and interacting with people. Lately I've been going to a group called Safe Space, a suicide prevention

volunteer organisation in the Blue Mountains, and I'm interested in helping out there as well. It's a very good service.

While being an artist is still my dream, I'm also considering getting into peer work, as I've seen and experienced how great it is, and I'd love to be a part of that.

My Own Place, My Own Space

On the subject of my flat, this is my first place I've lived in since moving out of home, and it was provided by Platform Youth. It's a much better environment than before, and having my own space really helps me to recharge. Living with people who drain your energy can make life so hard. One of the best things about living in Katoomba is that everything is within walking distance, so I'm right near the shops and stuff. Katoomba also has a lot of artists and I like to go on hikes a lot, so those are two more good reasons to live here!

Something that was fantastic for my wellbeing was adopting a cat from the RSPCA in 2022. That was a hard time, as I was isolated and feeling suicidal, and I needed to be responsible for something beyond myself to make it harder to give up. Clearly, it worked! Before I got her I'd never been so depressed, and she immediately made the lows

more bearable. It's been great to have the structure of feeding the cat and cleaning her litter, and the affection and cuddling I get from her in return is wonderful. Like a lot of cat owners, I talk to my cat as though she can understand me. Sometimes she eats better than I do!

I was careful in adopting her, as I'm the sort of person who takes responsibility seriously.

Breaking the Cycle

I used to have a cycle where I'd start a full-time job and try to maintain a social life, and then I'd crash really hard and stop everything for months. I couldn't continue starting to build a life only to have it fall apart over and over again, but when you feel really anxious and depressed, it can prevent you from achieving your goals. This led to me being hard on myself, which only made things worse.

It's taken time to learn to sit with myself without being so judgemental, as I used to attack myself all the time. I was my own worst enemy, my own worst critic. Now, I challenge negative thoughts and feelings, and I've been working on the language I use to identify myself. I know things aren't going to improve overnight and that mental health issues are going to continue to be a part of my life, so

I'm learning to live and function with them there. I still have moments where everything just feels like it's too much, where I just have no motivation, but my lows used to be far worse, and last much longer.

I've found I'm good hanging out one-on-one with people, but I've always been bad at being in groups due to low self-esteem and being anxious about being judged, so I've been challenging myself to get out of the house more and engage with people. I recently started seeing a psychologist, a goal I'd had for a while, and she's very good.

I'm planning on applying for the NDIS, something I found too overwhelming as a teenager, but now that Flourish Australia can support me with it, I'm interested in applying for it.

Be Kind

I've had many people treat me like I was making up my depression and anxiety, as though I was exaggerating so I had an excuse to be lazy, or that I just wanted attention. If people haven't experienced mental health issues, it's natural for them to compare it to their own life. They will think, "Well, if I can do it, you should be able to do it, too!" The problem is that it's common for people who are struggling to feel guilty about reaching out for help, as though they don't deserve support, or they don't want to be a burden, or that the support should only be for people who are in greater need. But there is so much support on offer, so if you don't know what to do next or life feels unmanageable, reach out to an organisation like Flourish Australia.

ABOVE: Harrison, hanging out at the Flourish Australia service at Katoomba. Photo by Grant J Everett. **OPPOSITE:** Some of Harrison's stunning art. Photos by Sonny.



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Are We Not Allowing Kids To Be Kids?

And are there mental health ramifications?

By Warren Heggarty

Biologist Heather Heying said in a speech on 1 October 2024 that humans, unlike some creatures, need to learn what we are going to become. 'Born utterly helpless,' human babies have many years of development ahead of them during which they 'explore, imagine, create, play, experiment and make mistakes.' (Heying, 2024)

This all took time and children HAD time to 'climb trees...build hideouts, and have battles with sticks and cones... to sit with friends and talk... to think, and to be alone with their own thoughts,... to imagine the most amazing things.'

Parents had the full authority to

provide children with the structure that made all this possible, allowing children to 'explore and take risks.' What is more, play was preparation for dealing with reality, it was never confused for the reality itself; at least not by the adults!

Today, Heying claims, children are subject to a very stringent 'safety culture' in which they are made to feel scared of exploring ideas and of disagreeing. If a person avoids disagreement they may not learn how to co-exist with those they disagree with, other than by attacking them or backing down to them. Lenore Skenazy, who became infamous for letting her child ride the New York subway on his own, similarly holds that overprotecting children can be a way of socially

crippling them. (Skenazy, n.d.)

'Our children' says Heying, 'are being treated like mental patients... and many of them are thus becoming mental patients. Our children are being drugged and drugged and drugged some more...'

Instead, Heying says 'children need to spend time OFF their screens and IN the dirt, growing food and flowers; they need to spend time with pen and ink and colour and clay... they need to spend time moving their bodies with speed and skill;' They need to become curious about the world around them and to ask their own questions.

Heying says that the undermining of Parental Authority has been matched by an increase in the Authority of Governments and their agencies. Parents impart a system of values within which the child can develop into adulthood even though it may be that the new adult adopts different values from their parents.

More than ever, Governments are taking over the teaching of values from Parents. Look for example at the recent Federal Government Campaigns about 'consent.' What does this say about our society if adults are deemed to need an advertising campaign to learn basic manners and basic legal obligations.

Kids are kept inside because the outdoors is dangerous -even though we know being in nature is good for mental health! Kids' time is so over scheduled that they have no time of their own to wonder- which we know is bad for mental health. Kids lead highly sedentary lives- which is bad for mental health. Kids socialise through algorithms (rather than through natural networks of families and friends)- which is proving more and more dodgy for mental health. And then there are the highly processed foods and drugs!

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Skenazy, L. (n.d.). Let Grow. Retrieved from <https://letgrow.org/author/lskenazy/>

ABOVE: Being a kid is very different than from decades past. Experiences that were once universal are now much more uncommon. Are our kids missing out on vital life experiences? Photo by Surprising_Media on Pixabay.



A Different Way Of Working

Introducing Flourish Connect

By Cassandra Williams

Flourish Australia has been working behind the scenes to bring in a new system for collecting, updating and safeguarding the information that we need to run our support programs. Called "Flourish Connect," this system has now been launched. We think that some of its innovations will actually make things better not just for staff, but for the people who access our services as well. Here are some of the new features that we think demonstrate this.

Participant Portal

We have introduced a "participant portal" so the people who are engaged with Flourish Australia services (and with programs that are part of the Flourish Connect system) will have access to their own portal. Through this, you will be able to view your own outcome measures and your recent and upcoming supports, make requests for changes or additions to your supports, and provide feedback as well.

How will participants know how to use the participant portal? We

have a short training video, or if you prefer, step by step instructions on how to access and use the portal. People who access services will be able to use these resources and, of course, staff will also be able to support you with the process if need be.

Getting To Know You

We have created a new intake tool called Getting to Know You (GTKY). GTKY is where you can provide answers to many questions that will help support workers to gain a better understanding of you and your particular needs. It can automatically transfer responses to several other components in the system, such as safety appraisal and CANSAS. This reduces the number of times you will have to repeat the same information, and minimises the number of forms that require completion when accessing Flourish Australia's services.

Schedule of Supports

We are introducing a service agreement and schedule of supports for ALL participants within Flourish Australia, not just NDIS services. The idea of the service agreement is to make sure that participants who are being provided support understand

their rights & responsibilities in being a part of the program they are engaging with. It's a formal way of agreeing to engage with support and being actively involved with all that is entailed in your program. This lines up with Flourish Australia's long-standing view that your recovery journey starts with you being actively involved in it, rather than just being a passive recipient of support. The purpose of having the schedule of supports is to create consistency in support provision for both participants and staff.

Mobile App

We have developed an app that specifically fits to mobile device screens. This will be more user friendly both for staff and participants who will be completing outcome measures, consents and service agreements online during support visits.

So those are the main points of relevance for the people who access services and our support staff. There are also quite a number of system changes that are related specifically to staff, and these will be covered in staff training.

ABOVE: Through a participant portal into a new way of working. Painting by Blak Douglas.

THE PROBLEM WITH FAWNING

AGREEABLENESS VS HAVING BOUNDARIES

By Warren Heggarty



We all want to be liked; and who doesn't like people who are kind, cooperative and easy-going? Being agreeable seems attractive, but being TOO agreeable leads to becoming overcommitted, self-censoring and getting burnt out. How do you strike a balance? (Sauer- Zavala, 2025)

At the extreme, a 'people pleasing' personality may be a sign that a person fears abandonment from others. (Litner & Moore, 2024) 'Some people want to be liked so badly that they will sacrifice their wishes and desires to prioritize fulfilling others' desires.' This 'fawning' can be unhealthy. Wanting to be liked is not the same as 'needing' to be liked.

Bear in mind that not everyone to whom we are agreeable is actually exploiting us or invading our boundaries. Much of the time when people request something from us, they do not expect blind obedience. Some of us just give it to feel good about ourselves.

People who are overly agreeable or who have a people-pleasing personality could be said to lack boundaries. In this sense, a 'boundary' is the point at which you will say 'NO.'

Being too agreeable is sometimes a

response to trauma, that is, to having one's OWN personal boundaries disrespected or violated. In an abusive relationship, for example, the abuser shows a lack of respect towards us, invades our privacy or tries to control us. An overly agreeable person will keep backing down to the abuser in the mistaken belief that it will appease them. In fact, it often signals to the abuser that we have no boundaries and will not fight back. It encourages them to be even more abusive.

The answer is to set and maintain boundaries. This is not easy for a person who fears abandonment. Because such a person feels unworthy deep down, feel they have to 'do something to deserve' respect. This is where kindness - normally a great strength - actually breaks down and invites cruelty from others. A sad irony.

So what can we do? Sauer-Zavala suggests we reframe the word 'NO' as a neutral response. If we decline to do something, we are merely maintaining the status quo. For some people, saying 'NO' is almost impossible because it seems like turning down an opportunity to be liked or appreciated. But if we overcommit ourselves we REDUCE our ability to help others in the long term. We need to CHOOSE the best things to say YES to.

Your boundaries describe what YOU decide YOU are willing to DO and NOT DO. You also do not owe others an explanation for why you say no. No is a complete sentence. If you have previously said YES and suddenly change it to NO, maybe in that case you might offer an excuse.

Litner and Moore suggest you repeat a 'mantra' over and over to get used to the idea of having boundaries. Here are some...

- 'I'm allowed to say "no."'
- '"No" is a complete sentence.'
- 'A "no" to them is a "yes" to me.'
- 'I don't have to explain myself to anyone.'
- 'I'm the boss of my own time and energy.'

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- ABOVE:** Awww! Come on Bambi. We need to establish some boundaries here. Photo by CONGERDESIGN from Pixabay

August 4-10

Loneliness Awareness Week

We can all do our bit for belonging!

By Grant J Everett

With 1 in 3 Australians feeling lonely at any given time and 1 in 4 experiencing persistent isolation, Loneliness Awareness Week encourages all of us to create a culture of connection at home, work, school, and in the community for the sake of our mental and physical health.

Loneliness has become a priority for the World Health Organisation due to its links to a wide range of significant health and socioeconomic costs, including an increased risk of premature death on par with smoking, pollution, and obesity. The COVID-19 pandemic increased public interest in understanding loneliness, and this has led to the United Kingdom and Japan appointing dedicated Loneliness Ministers to explore the issue.

Grief, relationship breakdown, bullying, ill-health, being a parent or carer, moving house,

living with a disability, financial insecurity, domestic violence and discrimination can all worsen feelings of loneliness.

You're Not An Island

Socialising is crucial for our wellbeing. And while a simple "hi" to a neighbour can bring joy to your day, we all need meaningful connections in our lives. You could check your local council and library to find out about free events like cultural festivals, art exhibitions, book clubs, and other fun, and social media has groups for every interest and life experience.

You might want to join an exercise group, get a plot in a Community Garden, visit a pet-friendly park (with your dog serving as an instant conversation starter), or volunteer with an organisation. New parents can get stuck at home a lot, so meeting up with other mums and dads and their bubs is good for everyone involved.

Youth

Loneliness has historically been associated with older people, but now young people (aged 15 to 24) report the highest rates of loneliness in Australia. Leaving school, entering the workforce, fluctuating relationships, increased independence and establishing personal values and beliefs can be a volatile time. Being able to do almost everything online has dramatically reduced the need for young people to communicate in person, with social media playing a key role in reducing face-to-face interactions.

Young people who experience loneliness are more likely to engage in risky behaviours, and it can also lead to poorer academic results and difficulty gaining and keeping employment. However, teaching young people the skills and strategies they need to build social connections before they hit major life transitions could be huge.

Note

My wife and I have made friends in mental health units, chapel services, supported employment workplaces, open employment, and day-to-day living centres. We love arranging movie and pizza nights at our home, going out to the theatre, holding birthday parties, and going on day trips with friends. We've also started splitting an Airbnb property every year. We found the more affordable and accessible the activity, the easier it is to get people together!

So what's stopping you from inviting people to do something fun? Good times form strong foundations, and you never know when you might be hanging out with a new best friend! Make socialising a part of your routine, and don't worry if somebody can't make it: just being invited can be amazing for a person's self-esteem.

ABOVE: Isolation and loneliness can affect anybody, even if they're surrounded with people. Picture from Saydung on Pixabay.

Source:

lonelinessawarenessweek.com.au/

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

🌐 www.flourishaustralia.org.au

📱 Follow us @FlourishAus



Find out if you can
access the NDIS



Think about your current
needs, goals, and supports



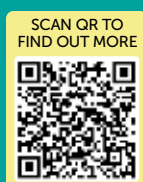
Meet with your NDIS
planner and get a plan



Decide which service providers
you want support from



Put your plan into action



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Where mental wellbeing thrives

NDIS