

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

panorama

Monthly Issue **August 2024 #94B**



**Being Drawn to Kindness
in My Work has Brought
Me Full Circle**

**Improving My Health to
Work My Dream Job**

**Community Business
Open Day at Marrickville**

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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?

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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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Contributors include...

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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

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Flourish Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and recognise their strong and continuing connection to land, culture and spirit.

Panorama magazine would like to recognise all people who live with a mental health issue, as well as those who encourage and support loved ones. Our universal right to lead full and inclusive lives is the driving force behind why Panorama exists. We also recognise the strength it can take to share our stories. The impact of reading about people's journeys cannot be overstated. Sharing our experiences has the potential to change lives and we hope by reading true recovery stories, it gives hope, optimism and support to our readers, especially those on their mental health recovery journey.



SPREAD

H



P E

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



Becoming Who I Truly Am

By Courtney Goulthorpe

Connecting with Flourish Australia's service at Parkes at an early age definitely helped me.

I've been accessing services at Flourish Australia's Parkes service since the age of 17, when I was still in high school. In that time, Flourish Australia has continued to support me in more practical ways than I can count, like supporting me to pass Year 12, and applying for my NDIS funding.

Flourish Australia also provides lots of opportunities to socialise. I regularly go out with friends and other people who also access support from Flourish Australia, like going for coffees or milkshakes, shopping, bowling, the movies, and even the occasional trip out of town. This has been a great opportunity to develop my confidence, as I was once a very shy, meek, mild teenager, but I've been told I've really come out of my shell!

Artistic expression

I really like to be creative and crafty, always have been, so I enjoy running a resin pouring art group at the Flourish Australia service. I taught myself how to create things with resin, and I've been passing on these skills. People are always very excited to do this group!

Goals and Dreams

There's a lot I'm planning to accomplish, however I would prefer to take my time to get it right, instead of rushing. I want to grow my skills and my understanding in my own way and time. I want to keep going and meet my goals.

For the last 4 years, I've been working part-time at the library of the primary school I attended as a child. This is something I really enjoy. I heard that some of the kids rave to their parents about Miss Goulthorpe, and how nice she is, and how good she is at drawing! It's so great I can have an impact on these little people.

"To people on a mental health recovery journey, my advice is to take things at your own pace."

Working in a positive environment with good co-workers and adorable kids lets me be myself. I love it there, and I can see myself doing this job long term. It's wonderful to see the kids grow up and finish Year 6, and move on to high school.

Recovery

Growing up, I experienced suicidal tendencies, and being able to talk to a support worker at Flourish Australia who listened and understood was a very big deal for me. Having someone support you unconditionally is lifechanging, really.

I am also supported by my local community health service and a psychologist I receive through my NDIS funding. I think these two things made a difference, as well.

You don't need to rush. Even the smallest steps towards improvement, one after another, is enough. Just getting out of bed is a good place to start. Those little victories matter, so celebrate having a shower, cleaning your room, whatever. At the end of the day, you've achieved something.

Don't give up. Everything may seem super challenging at times, like you're pushing a boulder up a hill, but keep at it. It will get easier. Just give something a go, because you won't achieve if you don't try, and failing is better than not trying at all.

Courtney spoke with Grant J Everett

ABOVE: Courtney teaches an art class how to pour resin. PHOTO BY STACEY NASH

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DECLUTTERING FOR A HEALTHY MIND

By Titania

I loved Grant's article on clutter-clearing and council clean ups from Panorama's Autumn issue so much that I decided to write my own story about it!

Clutter clearing is a wonderful thing to do, as it frees not only space, but brings peace of mind. Clutter can cause depression and too much can even pose a health hazard, such as the risk of tripping over. I can recommend some wonderful books on clutter clearing and the environment; *Stuff Off* by Tanya Lewis, *It's All Too Much* by Peter Walsh, *Quitting Plastic* by Clara Williams Rolden and Louise Williams (I went to their inspiring author talk), *Waste Not* by Erin Rhoads and the documentaries *Drowning in Plastic*, *A Plastic Ocean* and *A Clean Bin Project*. And my favourite, *Spark Joy*, by Marie Kondo.

I was fortunate enough to see Tanya Lewis speak at an event a few years ago. She's passionate not just about clutter clearing, but doing so responsibly and ethically,

i.e., not cluttering the environment by sending unwanted stuff to landfill. Sadly, many people clear clutter without a thought for our beautiful world.

It's a fantastic feeling, clearing clutter. I've done it with help from my mother, friends and neighbours. I once hired a home organiser through my NDIS funding, and she was worth more than her weight in gold. Over the years, I've downsized from 200 boxes of stuff to around 50, and I feel so much lighter and freer.

The number of good items I've rescued from council clean-ups is staggering. About 15 years ago my mother and I rescued an entire carload from just three apartment blocks in Sydney's Northern Beaches, including tonnes of recyclables, old telephone books, toys, trinkets, bric-a-brac, and many good books. I even found two books on my most wanted list, retail cost \$90!

In a recent council clean-up, I rescued a HUGE box of 60 good children's books. Most went to a children's street swapping library in

Chatswood. These are a fantastic idea, by the way! A neighbour and I made our own local swapping library, and with help from my art therapist, we painted whales, dolphins and trees on it. These books have since all been taken to good homes.

It doesn't take much to do right by Mother Earth. Over the years I have recycled countless electronic goods, including televisions, computers, monitors, VCRs and DVD players, old gaming consoles, printers, electronic notice boards, and photocopiers. I just wish more people would care for our wonderful world (now Louis Armstrong's song of the same name is playing through my head!)

As a teenager in the 1980s, I was shocked to watch a tv exposé on council clean-ups where they did an experiment. Taking out a temporary lease on a three-bedroom home, in a council clean-up from a single Sydney suburb, they furnished the whole house with furniture, cutlery, working kitchen appliances, filled a bookshelf with books, and even had toys for the kids' bedroom and a working colour TV! I was beyond horrified and sicked by such unnecessary waste. I've even seen non-perishable unopened food turfed out in council clean-ups. Unbelievable, huh?

Clutter clear with joyous abandon, but before you toss your unwanted wares in landfill, check your local council's website to find out what household items can be recycled. And keep in mind some things like batteries, e-waste, chemicals and light globes are bad for the environment if they're just thrown in the bin.

Always ask: "Can this be sold, recycled, given away to a charity store, or upcycled into art?" If yes, then great! Because you know what they say: "One person's trash is another person's treasure."

I believe reducing clutter is good for mental health, as our external state is mirrored by our internal state. Helping the environment is good for our world, and for our mental health, as it helps us to feel better.

**ABOVE: Titania with a street swapping library that recycles old books for anyone who wants to read them.
PHOTO FROM TITANIA**



Being Drawn to Kindness in My Work has Brought Me Full Circle

By Brad McCarthy

After leaving a career in banking, I gained employment at Flourish Australia's service at Seven Hills as a Peer Worker where I use my lived experience of mental health issues to support people on similar journeys.

The organisation is really different in how it approaches support delivery, and so is their work culture. Kindness plays a big part in how Flourish Australia operates, and I was immediately drawn to that. The fact that Flourish Australia has such a high concentration of Peer Workers on board reflects a culture that earns people's trust.

My eyes have been opened to the impact kindness can have on healing, and I know that's what I want to do from now on. I've seen their care transforming lives literally every day.

Back at the age of 26, my career at the lending centre of a bank was disrupted by a diagnosis of Bipolar disorder, and I had to take time off work for a couple of short hospital admissions. I didn't really understand what was happening to me, which was distressing, and I also started facing social stigma at work. This hindered my career progression, keeping me in a holding pattern for much of a decade until I left. Now that I'm in my 40's, though, I'm pleased to say I've finally found my calling as a Peer Worker.

My eyes have been opened to the impact kindness can have on healing, and I know that's what I want to do from now on.

Working in such an accepting environment has nurtured my openness about my lived experience, supporting me to live my truth and to promote awareness as a way of being. It's been amazing

to find a professional role where my lived experience is valued, instead of something to be glossed over. That frees me to be myself, feel comfortable, and connect with the people I support and my colleagues. When I share my story with people who access services, I can see that they feel understood, and that they know they aren't alone in whatever challenges they're facing.

I love that Flourish Australia's approach to supporting people is focused on recovery and that they don't pathologise everything. I'm surrounded by people who are accepting and respectful of differences, and working with the organisation has shown me how powerful genuine empathy and care is in making a connection with people. We tailor our support to each individual's wants, needs and dreams, which humanises the process.

The funny thing is, becoming a Peer Worker has literally brought me full-circle: not only did the building of Flourish Australia's Seven Hills service used to be a bank, but it's the same bank where I was working when I first became unwell! What are the odds?

Thankfully, I'm in positive times now, I have a healthier career environment, and I'm holding even brighter hopes for my future. I have started being kinder to myself, and I've been building a nurturing network that supports my wellbeing.

Brad spoke with Tina Irving

ABOVE: Working at Flourish Australia Seven Hills, Brad has learned what an asset having a lived experience can be with supporting others. PHOTO BY TOM GREENWOOD MEDIA

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Darug Country

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RECOVERY CAMP

*Have fun and
make friends*

By Grant J Everett and
Warren Heggarty



Would you like to get outdoors and make friends? Rock climbing, bush dancing, trivia, giant swing and craft are just some of the activities at Recovery Camp. It's "an award-winning, evidence-based program facilitating mental health recovery, an empowering week-long adventure camp of structured, therapeutic activities."

One person who can vouch for Recovery Camp is Jae, who attends Flourish Australia's New Outlook service at Wollongong. 'I visited the Recovery Camp back in 2017. I was there for four nights, and I had a great time,' said Jae.

'They had lots of fun things to keep us busy, like going on the flying fox, and doing bush dancing as a group. Someone would start playing the guitar, and we'd all get dancing! The other campers came from many different places, so it was a great opportunity to meet new people. I formed a few friendships while I was there.

'It felt great to be there the whole time, and I found the Recovery Camp very encouraging and helpful for my mental health....I'd definitely recommend it. I'm actually going to go back to Recovery Camp in September this year, and I can't wait!'

We asked Anna Feggans, marketing and communications coordinator

at Recovery Camp, what interested readers of Panorama might expect. The camps are for five days and four nights and are suitable for anyone 18 or over who is living with a diagnosed mental health issue and can spend four nights away from home.

Forget about any unpleasant memories of school camps, Recovery Camp caters specially for people with lived experience of mental health issues. 'At the beginning,' says Anna, 'some campers might find it a little overwhelming, but most people by the second or third day are having the best time!'

As with all worthwhile adventures, if you can get over the initial 'speed hump' you will be coasting before you know it.

Nobody is forced to do anything they don't want to. And besides the main idea of the camp is to get outdoors and make friends, like Jae says. 'Friendships are often struck up and they last beyond the camp as well.' Anna agrees. 'If you want to make friends, this is a great way to do it! You won't feel alone.'

Payment is usually covered by NDIS packages. If you are unsure about this, you can call Tara from Recovery Camp on (02) 8488 0802 to find out. Campers stay in men's and women's cabins, meals are included, and are taken communally. Transport is also covered.

The staff facilitators are Registered Nurses specialising in mental health. In addition, health students have chosen Recovery Camp for their clinical placement, creating a unique, collaborative program. Here, health students and experts by lived experience come together to learn and grow side-by-side.

Besides YMCA Yarramundi, there are also other Recovery Camp venues including Grassy Head in NSW and Warrawee Queensland. Nine camps are already planned for 2025.

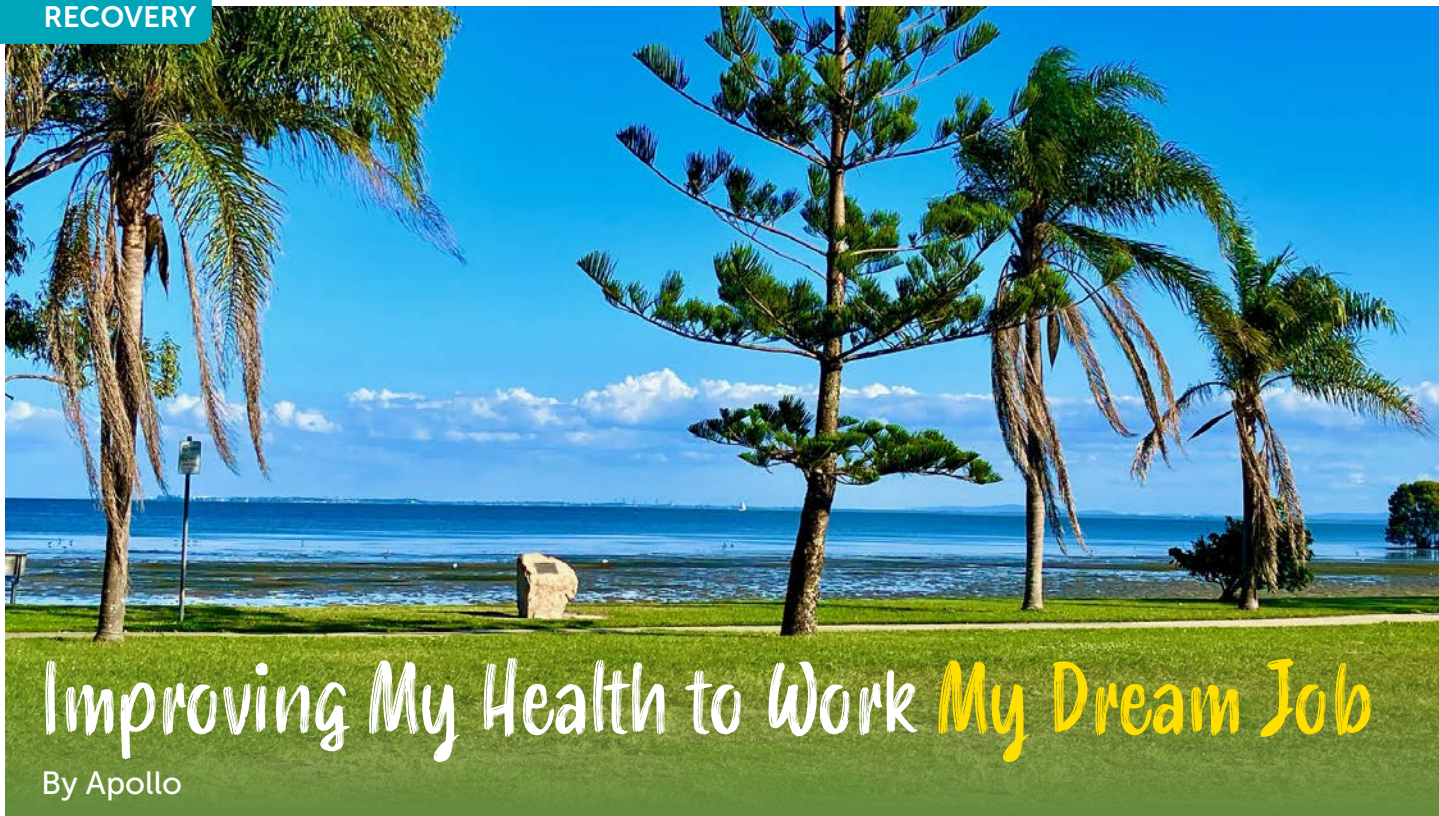
Social Programs

It's not just camping! To give you an idea, some of the other activities already run by Recovery Camp so far in 2024 include horse riding at Otford, a visit to Featherdale Wildlife Park, a three week online recovery course on self-determination theory, a tour of a working farm, indoor skydiving (honestly how do they fit the sky indoors?), 10 pin bowling, a tour of Mt Annan Gardens, a pottery and ceramics class and still more!

ABOVE: One of the activities at Recovery Camp PHOTO COURTESY ANNA FEGGANS

Interested in
finding out
more about
Recovery
Camps? Scan
this QR Code.





Improving My Health to Work My Dream Job

By Apollo

Over the last year I have found the Flourish Australia mental health workers at the Caboolture service very understanding and welcoming, and their support has made it easier to manage my mental health issues. Thanks to their help, I now have more insight into my mind and how it works, like accepting my voices are just a part of my symptoms, and learning to manage them.

I was previously on more medication types and higher doses than now, but as I've been getting better, I've been reducing my doses (with my doctor's help). This means I've been less sleepy, and it's been easier doing what I need to do in life. Reducing my medication is something I'm doing gradually.

Getting fitter

With Flourish Australia's support, I've been eating healthier and exercising daily so I can watch my weight and improve my overall health. The Flourish Australia staff take me for long walks along the beach near my house (see the above photo), and they help with my motivation. So far, I've lost six kilograms. I'm also doing meditation and mindfulness exercises, and I've also decreased my smoking, so I'm breathing easier.

The staff from the Caboolture service also helped me to identify and work towards some goals, so now I'm now doing a lot more domestic tasks around the house, such as cleaning my room and maintaining my self-care.

I know they can also direct me towards other support in the community if I'm after something that Flourish Australia doesn't offer.

Connecting

I originally met staff from Flourish Australia when I was in Caboolture hospital, as they came onto the ward to visit people who were staying there. After I returned to the community, I connected with the Caboolture Adult Mental Health Team, and they often refer people to Flourish Australia to make it easier to stay out of hospital. I decided to give Flourish Australia a go, and I'm glad I did.

We can all do our bit

I want to work, but I'm not interested in money, so I'm going to volunteer. I've been talking with my doctor and my support people from Flourish Australia about it just last week, and they're all encouraging me to go for it. I'd like to work in a charity shop, like a thrift store, folding clothes and putting them away, putting books on shelves, sorting things, talking

to customers, that kind of thing. My doctor wants me to improve my health a little bit more before I start searching for work, so I'm in the process of doing that.

I'm passionate about wanting to help people. We all have ways we can support each other. We just need to find out what it is.

Support

In addition to being supported by Flourish Australia, I receive a lot of support from my mum, and my big brother and little brother are a major support in my life, too.

I have an absolutely amazing mum. She's a beautiful person. She provides a lot of care because she loves me and wants to make sure I'm okay. She's such a hard worker with how she cooks and cleans and makes sure I'm doing alright.

Apollo spoke with Grant J Everett

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NAIDOC WEEK 2024: “Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud & Proud”

*How Does Flourish Australia celebrate
First Nations people and culture?*

By Grant J Everett

Many Flourish Australia services across the country held events for NAIDOC Week 2024, providing all kinds of fun ways to celebrate First Nations culture and society in the past, present and future.

“Flourish Australia’s Penrith service attended the NAIDOC Week events held by Penrith Council on the 12th of July 2024 from 10am to 3pm at Jamison Park Netball Courts,” said Sarah Mitchell, Team Coordinator Peer Specialist at Flourish Australia. “We had some great activities planned for the day, including creating sand art bottles (where you pour different coloured sand into small glass bottles to create different patterns) and mindfulness activities that encourage people to share their connection to the land we all live on.

“Some of our team, including Peter Harvey and Trish Standing, were running our Flourish Australia booth at the park during the day, with other staff attending sporadically throughout.

“We also ran activities at the centre based around the theme of this year’s NAIDOC theme: “Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud & Proud”, encouraging people to share their stories and memories of living on Darug land. All were welcome at these local events!”

“We celebrated NAIDOC Week with movie screenings of First Nations films,” said Caitlin Taylor, Acting Manager of Flourish Australia’s Connect and Thrive Program, which is based across five different sites.

What did YOU do to celebrate NAIDOC Week 2024? Let us know!

ABOVE: PHOTO BY itimlin PIXABAY



Making Good Health a SNAP!

By Dr Emily Hielscher

SNAP stands for Smoking, Nutrition, Alcohol consumption, and Physical activity, and is the current focus of a large research partnership between Flourish Australia and the University of Newcastle. Once completed, SNAP will support Flourish Australia staff in holding compassionate and meaningful health-related conversations with the people we support.

Recently, we ran a series of co-development workshops that focused on creating this new model of care for physical wellbeing. Flourish Australia staff and people we support from Queensland, New England, and the Hunter were invited to attend these workshops, and an incredible amount of knowledge, wisdom, and expertise was exchanged over those two days.

It truly does take a village to undertake research at this scale, so a huge thank you to everyone’s support and input. Congratulations to everyone who has supported this research project to date, including those who attended the workshops, as well as the Regional Managers and support workers from across Queensland, New England, and the Hunter who supported the implementation of this project - you are all champions!

At present, our research team is preparing a pilot trial that is due to commence in these three regions in early 2025. So you’ll be hearing more about SNAP soon!

ABOVE: PHOTO BY YasDo PIXABAY



Community Business Open Day

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT ON DISPLAY By Warren Heggarty

Have you ever wondered what we do at Flourish Australia's community businesses? Open Days are a chance for you to find out. The most recent was hosted by Kate Peraha and the team at Marrickville, near Sydney NSW on 9 May 2024.

Flourish Australia operates many community businesses. Not just our large metropolitan plants at Harris Park, Marrickville and St Marys NSW, but also in country locations like Wagga Wagga, Newcastle, Tamworth and Griffith.

At Marrickville, we found Adam and other team members were working on a large contingent of display cases for use in a major shopping chain. The workers have to stack shelves with various types of cosmetic products. It is important to have the right number of the right product in the right spot- to ensure that shoppers are able to make the right choice! Employees work from a model to guide them. This is just ONE of many roles.

Adam told Panorama that his favourite role is packing in one of the two 'clean rooms.' The merchandise here includes pharmacy goods such as

bandages. This is more complex work, requiring attention to detail and awareness of safety and hygiene. Adam likes the sense of responsibility it gives him.

Have you ever wondered where mail goes when it is 'Return to Sender?' Well, next to the clean rooms is the mail room where our employees process mail that has not found its destination.

Employees can also get experience with various machinery and computers and even forklift trucks! Dimi coordinates employee training, preparing people to use the equipment and even go on to gain trade certificates from TAFE.

Supported employment gives people with complex mental health issues an opportunity to work and advance in an understanding environment.

Recently an interesting fact came out of the evaluation of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI). Flourish Australia's Chief Operating Officer Susan McCarthy said that one of the key themes of the evaluation was that 'many people we support (over 60%) identified they would like support to gain employment.'

'One of the many great aspects of Flourish Australia is our supported employment and community business opportunities,' Susan said. 'The team do a terrific job at supporting people and are always looking for new opportunities to expand our offerings.'

Leading up to the ComBiz Open Day, Susan invited people who access our service who are keen to start work to come along and have a chat with someone who is working in one of our Community Businesses.

To learn more about Flourish Australia Community Businesses, scan this QR Code.



ABOVE: You beauty! Adam, (middle) who is a supported employee at Flourish Australia's Marrickville community business, is hard at work assembling cosmetic display cases for Big W. Support workers Javierra (left) and Nicole (right) are also getting into the spirit.
PHOTO WARREN HEGGARTY



'No matter how expert the experts may be they can't speak for us'
Simon Swinson
Research Advisory Committee

What is Research Really About?

We Ask the Research Advisory Committee

By Warren Heggarty

In recent months Panorama has been talking a lot about research. In May, Flourish Australia called for people who access our services who might want to join the Research Advisory Committee. We also saw how Flourish Australia's PhysiCards are the subject of research.

This time we speak to current members of the research advisory committee - Simon Swinson, Anne O'Grady, and Michael Wren - and ask them what research is and how it impacts our lives. We will also look at a brief history of lived experience research over the past ten years at the organisation and how it brought us to this point.

"Research is about acquiring information or data in issues of interest, concern or urgent need to people with lived experience," said Simon Swinson. 'In our case it is from the point of view of the lived experience researcher.'

'The data can be either quantitative i.e. facts, or numbers or percentages. Or it can be qualitative i.e. reports on experiences feelings thoughts etc,' says Simon.

Quantitative research asks this sort of question: 'How many people experienced severe anxiety last week?' The result will naturally be

a number. **Qualitative** research might ask 'What thoughts and feelings do you experience while you are anxious? The answer to this will likely be in words. 'Ratings,' however, are a way of taking qualities like feelings and expressing them in numbers. 'I rate my anxiety 8 out of 10. I'm really nervous, but I've been worse!'

'There are processes for including lived experiences. There are courses at universities that can be completed,' says Simon.

'Our involvement is important because lived experience is crucial to understanding how mental health issues manifest themselves and what recovery involves. No matter how expert the experts may be, they can't speak for us.'

Anne O'Grady agreed with Simon, then added, 'Research is conducted because researchers ask questions that other researchers haven't answered yet.'

'It is essential that mental health research is led by people with lived experience of mental health issues so that their questions get priority for research.'

ABOVE: You can describe a rose with quantities and physical measurements, but you miss a lot that way. This is where qualitative research comes in. 'So, tell us how roses make you feel?' **IMAGE BY PEGGY CHOUCAIR FROM PIXABAY**

Historical Background

It has been about ten years since Flourish Australia held a pilot course on research aimed at the people who access our services. We knew that ideally, research into mental health would be LED by people with lived experience. However, in 2014, we did not have the same sort of awareness among the people accessing our services.

Our then-Senior Research and Evaluation Officer Dr Ching-I Hsu used Health Department funds to develop a short course based around the question, "WHAT IS RESEARCH?" The course was adapted by Ching-I and myself from an even earlier course that had been developed in the UK.

We developed a set of half day sessions over a period of six weeks and discovered that there was actually quite a lot of interest. And not just interest but aptitude, because we had people accessing our services who had already carried out research in university courses. So we had people ranging from those with little but enthusiasm to those who had some previous expertise. Fast forward to 2018, another small grant by the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network stipulated that people with lived experience had to be involved in research.

By now, the benefits of research that is co-designed by the consumers of mental health services had become 'strikingly apparent.' This time, Flourish Australia had the advantage of being able to draw from our newly established Community Advisory Council. This led at last to the establishment of the Research Advisory Committee to 'inform the future research directions of Flourish Australia.' The current Research Advisory Committee is supported by the Outcomes and Improvement Team. The committee shapes the agenda of research and evaluation at the organisation.

-WH

How the **Right Words** Make the Difference in **Job Interviews**

By Grant J Everett

If there's ever an appropriate time to brag about your professional accomplishments and what makes you an asset to any employer, it's during a job interview!

Strengths-based language that really sells your skills and value to a company will give you a much better chance of looking like the ideal hire. Share what makes you a credit, but be prepared to back up your claims.

Leading up to an interview, we should acquaint yourself with your work history, learn what the potential employer is known for, and examine what their work culture is like. This can help with predicting what they'll ask you. To prepare more thoroughly, you could rehearse a mock interview with a friend, or record yourself talking and play it back.

If you struggle with saying positive things about yourself, you're not alone. According to Leah Lambart, Career Coach at Relaunch Me, "Surprisingly, even chief financial officers and chief executive officers find this incredibly difficult. As a result, people can fall into the trap of using words that tend to downplay their achievements for fear of sounding boastful or arrogant in an interview situation."

Choosing words carefully

Some seemingly harmless words can actually damage your chances of being hired. Such as...

We: Think back to where you and your team fixed a problem. While it's only natural to give our colleagues credit, an interview panel wants to

hear about YOUR part of things, the positive impact you had at past workplaces. Don't undersell what you have to offer.

Just and Only: Using words like "just" or "only" downplays what you're talking about. Saying, "I only worked there for a year," or "I just did whatever the team needed," makes your accomplishments sound less important, and may indicate you lack confidence.

Obviously: It's best not to assume what things are common knowledge, especially in a job interview. Using "obviously" can annoy people, as it suggests they should know what you're talking about, and if they don't, they may get tetchy.

Um, like, literally, you know: When we're nervous, it's easy to fall back on filler words like "um" or "you know?" Everyone uses them, but too many may give the impression you're not prepared or aren't feeling confident.

Obsolete

Many "power words" that were once in vogue are now overused, predictable, and clichéd things that hiring managers have heard a thousand times. Such as...

Workaholic: You're better off saying you put in the time and effort to get things done right, and describing how your work ethic has achieved the best outcomes.

Perfectionist: This may indicate you spend too much time on tasks, which can come across as inefficient. You might want to say you set very high standards for yourself, and are driven to complete tasks correctly.

Detail-oriented: If this is how you describe yourself, make sure there aren't any spelling mistakes in your job application! Explain the benefits of your attention to detail.

Team Player: Everyone claims to be one, but it's important to back that up with examples. How do you share information with your team effectively? Do you act on their feedback? How do you support and motivate your colleagues?

Some good words or phrases to describe yourself include resilient, motivated by a challenge, goal-oriented, hardworking, willing to learn, and dedicated.

If this sounds like a tonne of work, perhaps Flourish Australia could help with your jobseeking?



Scan this QR Code to learn more.

Source: "Stop Saying These Nine Things In Your Interview," SEEK content team, 11 April 2024, SEEK website.

ABOVE: PHOTO BY GERALT PIXABAY



National CoS is coming...

Panorama will soon be hosting regular reports about National Coordination of Service, or CoS for short. We have spoken to Helen Connors who is Team Coordinator with the National Coordination of Support about what it all means!

She explained that this is a new way of doing NDIS coordination. The old system was that people scattered throughout Flourish Australia were responsible individually for this coordination, reporting to local site-managers. This of course, is potentially open to inconsistencies between services and, as they say in the classics 'the reinvention of the wheel many times over,' where just once would suffice!

The solution is to bring all of the Coordinators of Support together under one umbrella (i.e., Helen) so that we can have a central and consistent approach nationally.

The National CoS within Flourish Australia has approached Panorama Magazine to place a regular quarterly feature to highlight the important role the National CoS team plays in supporting persons with lived experience. It will also provide valuable information to those receiving support from Flourish Australia and other programs.

At the end of May 2024, Regional Manager Mat Kerr and Team Coordinators Helen Connors, Totsi Todorovic and Nicola met in Wollongong to launch this foray into Panorama. You will see the results in coming issues. Helen said 'We are excited about the potential to reach more individuals through Panorama magazine and are grateful for this opportunity to showcase the important work of the National COS team.' WH

PHOTO GRANT J EVERETT



Memorial Service For Annie Sykes

Flourish Australia's Buckingham House in Surry Hills NSW is one of the oldest places where mental health recovery practices are followed. Annie Sykes, who passed away from illness on 6 March 2024, had done her advocacy work within PRA and Flourish Australia for just on twenty years, so it was a fitting venue for her memorial service.

Members of Annie's family who had come out from New Zealand were joined by many of her friends and former colleagues, her 'chosen family,' if you will. It is unlikely that anyone there did not learn something new about her remarkable life - such as her equestrian skills!

Present and former leaders of our organisation who attended included Mohammed Alkhub (hosting for Mark Orr AM who had a longstanding family commitment on that day and was unable to attend), Pamela Rutledge AM, Phil Nadin, Peter Neilson, Peter Farrugia, Janet Meagher AM, and Board member Paula Hanlon. Also present were Julie Millard, Gwen Challenger-Scotman, Michael Appleton, and Michael Wren of the Community Advisory Council. Prof Hans Pols, Lily Wu, Peter Schaecken, Douglas Holmes, Linda Hennesey, Alise Blayney were there too, as were so many others.

There were seven eulogies, including from her friend Susan Russell, and two brothers Darren and Mark. Darren and Mark performed two songs in Māori. Annie was not one to boast, and so they confessed they had not realised the full extent of her achievements during her 36 years in Australia, while some of her Australian friends had been equally astonished by her 36 years in New Zealand. One eulogist summed Annie up like this: She was a strong, compassionate and ethical person who pushed through with challenges and did what was required. WH. PHOTO WH

See our 'Life Story' of Annie Sykes 1952-2024 In June Panorama.

ABOVE: '...this will be a challenge given society has devolved to the state where we are busier and relating more with automated services rather than other people.' PHOTO BY PEXELS from PIXABAY



A CULTURE OF CARE IN COMMUNITIES

By Anthony Dillon

Many would agree the past month has seen a higher than normal number of stories relating to violence. Most prominent, of course, was the tragedy at Bondi Junction in April. But now we read news of a 16-year-old boy who stabbed someone and charged police officers in Perth before being shot dead. He was reportedly 'radicalised online.'

While these incidents are relatively few, given the size of Australia's population, they do suggest society is changing in ways we should be concerned about. Accordingly, mental health has received much attention, generating claims that the mental health system needs radical fixing.

Mental health expert Patrick McGorry, who was recently quoted

in *The Australian*, said: 'The only way to reduce the risk to the public is to fund the mental health system in a substantially increased way, with the right service design and culture of care.' Enhancing our mental health system can undoubtedly usher in improvements in mental wellbeing, yet it is not an all-encompassing solution. A more proactive and better long-term strategy is to prevent more people from needing the mental health system in the first place. In simple terms, this means greater emphasis on early intervention, or what you might call an 'upstream approach.'

If this idea seems heretical, would it be foolish to suggest that the best way to prevent death from heart disease is to focus on the health system and have more and better heart surgeons? We need heart surgeons, but empowering individuals with the knowledge to

adopt healthy lifestyles will prevent more deaths from heart disease.

Early intervention is not meant to replace the mental health system: it remains necessary for those who struggle with daily functioning. Without its services these individuals can spiral downwards to the point where they are at increased harm to themselves and others.

The WHO's definition

Adopting an upstream approach to lessen the burden on the mental health system seems apparent when we use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health: 'A state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'

I infer from this definition that a person with sound mental health is one who feels he or she belongs to their community. With a sense of belonging, individuals are more likely to feel they matter and can consequently cope with life's challenges.

To help people develop a sense of belonging, it cannot and should not be the responsibility of the mental health system alone. A cultural shift in society is needed.

McGorry mentions a 'culture of care.' While such a culture is important for the mental health system, it is equally important beyond it. This culture should extend to the fabric of our daily

From what we know of the man responsible for the deaths at Bondi Junction, his final few years were the picture of disconnection, estranged from family, increasingly online, and at times homeless. There are many more like him today. Is it any wonder that increasingly more people are in need of serious mental health intervention? Certainly, dedicated therapy services are needed, but there are benefits to embracing the informal therapeutic practices of earlier generations.

US psychologist Rick Hanson stated: 'In our hunter-gatherer history most therapy was accomplished by people sitting around a fire talking with each other. Today, if people

"...most therapy was accomplished by people sitting around a fire talking with each other."

- Dr Rick Hanson

lives: our families, neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces.

In communities with a culture of care, members feel valued and safe, have purpose, and have ample opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of others. While their mental health is not invincible, it is generally robust.

While many such communities already exist, we need more of them. However, this will be a challenge given society has devolved to the state where we are busier and relating more with automated services rather than other people.

Distracted by social media

Further, we are distracted from participating in real life because we are so preoccupied watching other people's lives on social media; lives that are often fake. While social media has its benefits, it does create in many of us a drive to strive for near-impossible levels of success, which results in feelings of failure and disconnection when these levels are not attained.

spent more time sitting around a campfire talking with people they cared about, there'd be a lot less need for therapists.'

Essentially, Dr Hanson is saying: 'Let's reconnect with one another.' Like physical health, mental health goes through the stages of formation, maintenance and repair when it is damaged or compromised. More attention in the initial states will see less need for intervention at the repair stage. We need to start reconnecting with each other and see that our most valuable yet overlooked asset is our relationships with each other.

It is through these bonds that we can create a resilient fabric of community support, fortifying our collective mental health.

Dr Anthony Dillon is an Honorary Fellow at the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at the Australian Catholic University in Sydney. This article originally appeared in the Australian Newspaper 6 May 2024. Article reprinted with permission from Anthony Dillon.

One Percent Program

Often we hear people say we need to take 'small steps' or even 'baby steps' towards big goals. This is a way of making big things seem less overwhelming. Two young Tiwi Islands NT men are using this principle to help other Indigenous men turn their lives around.

ABC NEWS reported that Jahdai Vigona and Dante Rodrigues had found themselves 'heading down the wrong path' in life when they decided to make a change.

They had been disadvantaged by an environment containing things like domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime. However, they began to look to their strengths.

'We are lucky we had a lot of positive role models to help us,' the young men told the ABC,

But what about others who do not have such mentors? This is where Jahdai and Dante stepped up with the 'One Percent Program.' You improve yourself one percent at a time, one day at a time. Each week, the two run sessions in Darwin which include physical workouts like kickboxing and pad work, and team building to 'strengthen communication and bonds within the group.' They also provide food!

Practical life skills are also included, like writing job applications, and doing taxes. 'All these foundational skills you think you'd learn in 12 years of schooling,' Jahdai wryly observed!

To learn more, check out this great story by Lara Smit for Heywire on ABC NEWS website 21 April 2024.

Government and Commercial Services

Our Services



Commercial and Home Cleaning



Packaging Solutions



Mail Delivery Solutions



Grounds and Garden Maintenance



Digital Scanning and Secure Document Management



Fleet Vehicle Cleaning

"We've found every one of their people to be diligent and a true professional in everything they do."
Building Services Team, NSW Rural Fire Service

Our principles

Flourish Australia Community Businesses are Australian Disability Enterprises providing a range of commercial services to some of Australia's largest corporations and government departments.

Through this program, we provide supported employment, training, and development to over 280 people with a lived experience of a mental health issue.

Who uses our services



Contact us to find out more

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

🌐 www.flourishaustralia.org.au

📱 Follow us @FlourishAus

Our locations

With services across NSW, ACT, VIC, and QLD, we provide services in:

- Brisbane
- Central Coast
- Central Western NSW
- Hunter / New England
- Murrumbidgee
- Melbourne
- Regional Victoria
- Southern Highlands
- Southern Tablelands
- Sunshine Coast
- Sydney



Where mental wellbeing thrives

Community Businesses



SCAN QR TO FIND OUT MORE