

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

panorama

Monthly Issue **September 2024 #94C**



**Return of the Buck
House Art Exhibition**

**TAFE Supported
Marty, Now Marty
Supports Others**

**Encouraging Mature
Age Students**

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About us

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

Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or
flourishaustralia.org.au

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

About Panorama

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

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

You can ALWAYS email us at...
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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...

Dimitar Taseski is the Training and Assessment Coordinator at Prestige Packing Harris Park

Scott has just started his first ever business

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Rynnette Gentle is the Manager at Flourish Australia Broken Hill

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



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 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**



SUPPORTED TO ADVANCE IN COMMUNITY BUSINESSES

By Warren Heggarty

Van Truong is working towards being a leading hand at Flourish Australia's Marrickville Community Business. In fact, over the past few years he has been rebuilding a career that was interrupted by mental health issues. Panorama spoke to Van and Training and Assessment Coordinator Dimi Taseski to find out what this involves.

'I can do everything,' said Van in a matter-of-fact voice. 'I also help people to do things that they can't do.'

Currently in the warehousing/supply chain field within our Community Business, Van has previously been a

farmer, a factory worker, a licenced fork-lift operator, and a baker, baking bread and cakes. So he has a lot of experience!

Mental health issues brought big challenges. 'I forgot a lot of things,' he admits.

One of the things Van says has helped him is taking his medication. 'Take your time and take your medication,' he says. He now works four days per week and has completed a TAFE computing course, and is aiming to complete a Certificate III in Business and in Supply Chain Operations.

Many people do not realise that supported employment really does allow a person to develop, as well as

acting as a springboard to outside employment. It is not a one-size-fits-all operation at all!

'We are enthusiastic about supporting people to transition to open employment,' said Dimi, 'However, we are always person-led, meaning we listen to what the employee needs, not what we THINK they need. We do not push goals on people.'

Along with Site Manager Kate Paraha, Marrickville includes mental health, peer worker and supervisors, all of whom have a hands-on attitude and work alongside the employees they support.

Some employees, like Van, are rebuilding. Others feel that a supported work environment is best for them, allowing them to work to the best of their ability while also having the confidence in knowing that there is ready support on offer. Some people will be interested in advancing within the supported environment, developing new skills, and becoming leading hands, while others aim to go into open employment.

We often say recovery is a journey. Well, not all journeys go to the same place or via the same route. Every journey is different.

'We have regular one-on-one check-ins with the employees to find out from them what gives them satisfaction,' said Dimi, 'And what they want to do work-wise. Sometimes people want to lose weight. Sometimes people want to do a TAFE certificate. Everyone's goals are different, and some people feel that continuing in supported employment is better for them at the moment.'

'My job,' says Dimi, 'is mainly concerned with "soft skills." Things like policy, workplace safety, human resources and mandatory skills that every worker needs. When people are interested in developing "hard skills," the three supervisors at the Marrickville site have a roster where they train people one-on-one at that particular skill. For example, we might coach someone in the use of a pallet jack, and when they become proficient, move up to operating a walking fork lift. Once they master that, they may wish to go to external training to complete a Fork Lift



Driver's licence. Our job is to walk alongside people for as far as they need to go.'

Employees are not limited to skills found in the community business. Some people, like Van, have done external TAFE courses in Computers and Hospitality and so forth.

Employees have their own monthly meetings where staff are not in attendance where they can discuss issues and make their own resolutions.

In our next issue in October we will talk to some more supported employees about their experience.

Did you like "Supported to Advance"? Then check out "Adult Learning Week" on page 12, and "TAFE Supported Marty, Now He Supports Others" on page 8.

ABOVE: Dimi Taseski says, 'We are always person-led, meaning we listen to what the employees need, not what we THINK they need.' **OPPOSITE TOP:** Van is keen on redeveloping his skills, such as working with a fork lift truck. **BOTTOM:** Some of the wares housed at Flourish Australia's Marrickville Community Business. **PHOTOS BY WARREN HEGGARTY**

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Transferable Skills and Supported Employment

What does 'support' consist of? This is a big topic, but if we zoom in on supported EMPLOYMENT you might say that it's about fostering transferable skills. Dimi and the team will be led by individual requirements, but there are sixteen transferable skills that they will look out for based on what the employee would like to work on. This provides a foundation to equip each employee with, at the very least, three entry level skills for open employment.

1. READ: 'I can read and understand the written word.'

2. WRITE: 'I can write and explain myself through the written word, including legible handwriting and adequate spelling and punctuation.'

3. COUNT: 'I can add, subtract and divide, and also have basic financial skills like knowing what a 10% discount is.'

4. TECHNOLOGY: 'I can use a computer and/or smart phone and also applications such as internet, e-mail and ZOOM, etc.'

5. TIME AND PUNCTUALITY: 'I can be on time and have good attendance at work.'

6. INDEPENDENT WORK: 'I can work well on my own.'

7. FINE MOTOR SKILLS: 'I can handle and work with small items.'

8. PHYSICAL RESILIENCE: 'My body keeps moving during stress and physical challenge and can recover well.'

9. ATTENTION AND FOCUS: 'I can maintain concentration, attention and focus on work tasks.'

10. PROBLEM SOLVING: 'I can identify and solve problems through action or conversation.'

11. COOPERATION: 'I am good at teamwork.'

12. COMMUNICATION: 'I can listen, understand and tell people my needs (both verbal and non-verbal).'

13. FLEXIBILITY: 'I can adapt to changes and learn new tasks.'

14. PERSONAL PRESENTATION: 'I can take care of my personal presentation, showering/bathing, looking tidy, wearing clean clothes.'

15. SELF CARE: 'I have strategies in place that I use to look after my wellness.'

16. SERVICE PERFORMANCE: 'I can provide good service and meet quality standards.'



FROM A LIFELONG PASSION TO STARTING A BUSINESS

By Scott



Scott is a professional photographer specialising in equine photography.

Photography has been a lifelong passion of mine, and I'm now taking it to the next level by starting a business based on photography and social media.

There is a lot of work, both online and face-to-face, with starting a new business. It's not like I can just get out there and start asking people, "Hey, would you like to pay me to take some photographs?" There's a lot of paperwork first!

First I had to put together a business plan and a financial plan, and this takes a tonne of effort. Thankfully, I have a business coach who has supported me through the whole process, and I literally just finished jumping through the final hoop earlier this afternoon. Thankfully, now it's all sorted!

Now that I've started a business, I have been given 40 weeks to make everything work. During this time I will be receiving the same payment you would get with Jobseeker, as well as ongoing business coaching and other support.

Flourish Australia

I was in Wollongong Hospital just last year, and they used to take us on daily walks. One of these strolls took us down to the Flourish Australia service at Wollongong, New Outlook. As soon as I walked in, I was like, "Yep. I can tell this is a good place." Once I found out they had a Photography Group, I knew I was definitely coming back!

The Photography Group travels to interesting and beautiful places around the Illawarra, and this group was my first foray into equine (horse) photography, which is now my career focus. We always have a good laugh and a great time on these outings, and it's a nice little break from life.

New Outlook is a very good space. The people that work there and the people who visit there are all great, and you meet all sorts of interesting people. Nowadays I'll usually visit at least once a week to catch up with everyone and have a nice lunch.

Getting Serious

I've been on again, off again with photography over the last 12 years, but in the last eighteen months I've been getting much more serious about it. I'm pretty much self-taught, though I have done some online courses and watched a few tutorials where they give a demonstration, and encourage you to go out and try it for yourself.

At the moment, I'm focusing on equine photography. I have all kinds of techniques I can use to get the specific shots the client is after, as there are many different horse disciplines. For instance, when I'm taking photos of horse racing, that requires a lot of skill and the right kind of composition. But with my camera taking six or seven frames a second, I will eventually get the exact shot I'm after.

Exhibition

After two months of day trips with the New Outlook Photography Group, I had enough material to hold an exhibition.

My photos were on show at a little place called Society City on Crown Street in Wollongong, a combination second-hand bookshop/creative space just up the road from New Outlook. Their exhibitions involve 3 or 4 artists at a time, and they change every month.

The photos I displayed at Society City are now on show at New Outlook, and there are plans to dedicate an entire wall to the best shots from the Photography Group so everyone can see what we're capable of.

Getting Started

If somebody is interested in photography, my first piece of advice is to not be too critical about your work. I watched a documentary a few years back about a guy who was renowned as the greatest surf photographer on the planet, but when the interviewer went into his house, there weren't any photos on the walls. They were confused by this, so they asked him about it. His answer was, "Well, I haven't taken one good enough yet."

Noticing imperfections that other people won't is the photographer's curse!

Photography equipment can also be very, very expensive, but for somebody who is just starting off, a modern mobile phone can take great photos. In the beginning, you might get even better results with a phone than a proper camera like an SLR, as the phone will be easier to use.

I use an Adobe app called Lightroom, and I'm learning PhotoShop, but I don't tend to digitally alter my photos as I'm practicing my skills.

All Is Well

I love where I am at right now in life. In addition to regularly visiting Flourish Australia to stay in touch, I have great family support. I'm actually just walking back from the park next to a local beach with my brother and my niece on a beautiful, sunny day.

If you're interested in getting in touch with Flourish Australia to learn

more about their groups, to meet people and for practical support, my advice is to just visit them. There's no real pressure on deciding exactly what you want to get out of being there, and it's always a welcoming space.

Scott spoke with Grant J Everett

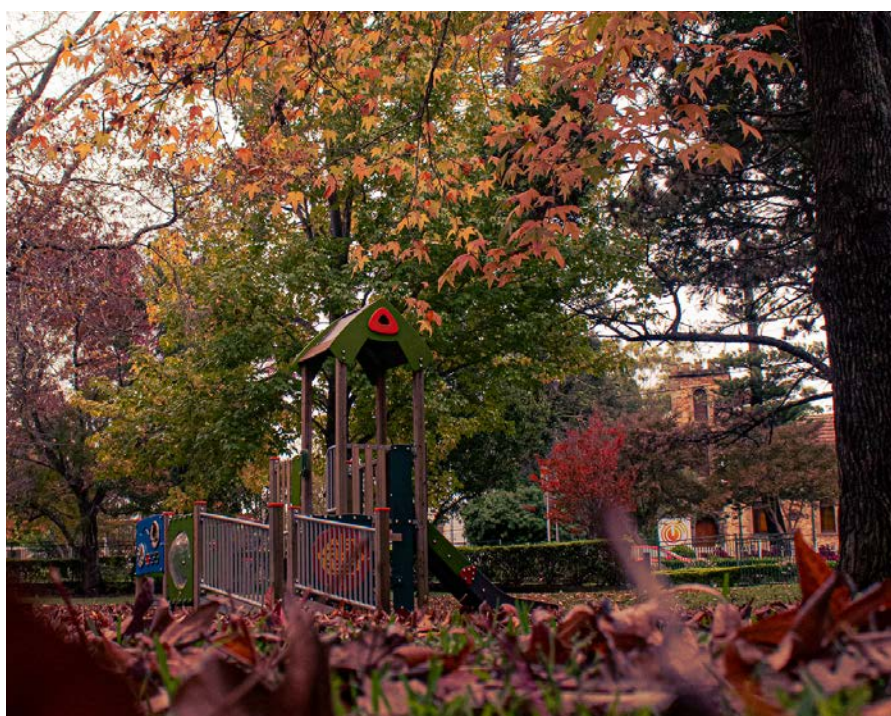
LEFT: Scott is a professional photographer specialising in equine photography. BELOW: A couple of Scott's beautiful shots PHOTOS BY SCOTT

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TAFE SUPPORTED MARTY

Now Marty Supports Others

By Daniel Johns



TAFE NSW has helped a former biker and self-confessed “problem child” transform his life and become a mentor to troubled local teens.

Proud Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi man Marty Morris, 50, last week capped off an extraordinary life turnaround by being named the Health, Wellbeing and Community Services Student of the Year at the 2024 TAFE NSW Gili Awards.

Mr Morris had a childhood marred by violence and dysfunction, forcing him to disengage from education at a young age.

Still in a motorcycle club and working as an interstate truck driver at 45, Mr Morris’s life changed in an instant when he was badly injured in a workplace accident.

“I spiralled into depression because my role as a father, as a provider, as a man, changed,” the father-of-six said.

The Scone resident turned to TAFE NSW to gain the practical skills and real-world experience to launch a new career, enrolling in a Certificate IV in Youth Work to help inspire and guide young people living through similar experiences to his own.

Shortly after graduating, he secured a job as a youth worker at Upper Hunter Community Services Inc, working with at-risk young people aged 16 to 24.

“They’ve disengaged from education and the workforce and most are on the police radar,” Mr Morris said. “It’s a big hill to climb for them: many are involved in drugs and crime and most have never had a positive role model in their lives. Some struggle to even read and write.

“But slowly you win their trust and they start to talk to you about what happened to them.

“It puts you in a position to help them and when you see them have a win – get a job interview, go to rehab – it’s incredibly satisfying.”

The Australian Government’s Job Outlook report lists future growth for youth worker positions as “very strong.”

Tailored TAFE support

Mr Morris said TAFE NSW’s tailored support and hands-on approach to learning had been “invaluable” and encouraged him to subsequently enrol in a Diploma of Counselling and Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs.

“I thought I’d bitten off more than I could chew, but with tutorial help from my TAFE NSW teacher, it just clicked,” he said. “The job has really given me back my self-worth and given me a career I can look forward to. If I can just help one person not go down the same path as me, it’s all worth it.”

TAFE NSW Youth Work Teacher Berenice Murphy said Mr Morris was a credit to his community and the profession.

“Marty is a great example of what you can achieve with the right support and engagement,” Ms Murphy said. “He now has the practical skills to change his own life and the lives of so many others in his community. He really is a great leader.”

ABOVE: TAFE NSW graduate and 2024 Gili Award winner Marty Morris has credited TAFE NSW with giving him the skills and experience to impact young lives. PHOTO COURTESY DANIEL JOHNS TAFE MEDIA

*Want to know more?
See “Strengths Make All the Difference” on page 14.*

Broken Hill Disability Forum

Side-by-side with Community Services

By Rynnette Gentle



Flourish Australia had a stall at the Disability Forum at the Broken Hill Civic Centre.

Like with other events that affect the community, Flourish Australia's stall shared the many ways the organisation can meet people's recovery needs. Another core objective was to encourage the other NDIS services there to work together to showcase the sheer range of shared support on offer.

Patricia Slater, our Coordination of Support worker, helped me run the stall.

The 250 attendees were welcomed by 40 various NDIS providers and planners from the greater Broken Hills area with literature and advice about support services for locals, such as occupational therapists, psychologists, Coordination of Support workers, and a range of other therapies, such as horse therapy. There was fun for the whole family with face painting and cake stalls.

As giveaways are always popular, our table offered pens, mindfulness colouring books with pencils, stress balls, pocket sockets, lanyards, and pamphlets with further information. We also ran a free raffle, which brought 100 people towards us, breaking the ice.

When services work together in a holistic way, it benefits the whole community.

LEFT: Patricia Slater at the Disability forum
PHOTO FROM RYNNETTE

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Weekdays: 9AM to 5PM

headspace Representing at Agfair, Broken Hill

Agfair is an event that happens at Broken Hill every 2 years, and it brings in people from all over. Those 2 days saw over 1000 attendees checking out the stalls and goods on display, as well as the many services on offer.

Flourish Australia's Broken Hill headspace service was one of many organisations, and their table greeted 250 or so people who were interesting in discussing the valuable support headspace provides to young people aged between 12 and 25 years.

Assisting on the day were Staff Community Development Officer Larni Brymer, Youth Access clinician Sophie Doust, and Youth Reference Group members Kaya, Kingsley and Ella.

Our booth was in close proximity to other mental health providers such as Lifeline, Salvation Army,

HEADSPACE

NSW Health and RAHMP (Rural Advisory Mental Health Program), who we work with in collaboration to ensure people from all walks of life are able to seek the help they need with an easy referral pathway.



RETURN OF THE LONG LOST BUCK HOUSE ART EXHIBITION

By Grant J Everett



For the first time since COVID hit, Flourish Australia is officially bringing back the art show we used to hold regularly at our Buckingham House service at Surry Hills.

The Buckingham House Art Exhibit was always a great opportunity for creative individuals with a lived experience of mental health issues to display their pieces to visitors from the community, and the idea of starting this up again has been met with universal enthusiasm and support.

This show always attracted many lovers of fine art who appreciated the opportunity to connect with authentic mental health journeys expressed through artistic mediums. So not only do these shows highlight the talents of the artists, they also provide a platform to help break down stigma, and create a more inclusive and supportive community for all.

The process of making art and showing it to others is also very rewarding for an artist's mental health, and the creatives are welcome to sell their artworks.

Testing The Creative Waters

'As the only eligibility criteria for an artist to present at the Buck House exhibition was that they had to be accessing Flourish Australia services in some way, we had an open invitation for everyone who enjoys Flourish Australia's art groups to be a part of this event,' said Mitchell Sykes, Administration Support Officer and Project Lead for the

Buck House art show. "This includes services at Marrickville, Flowerdale, and Buckingham House, to name just a few. We will be supplying all the artists with canvas, paints and other necessary materials, but people are welcome to submit an artwork they've previously completed.

'As this year's theme for Mental Health Month is "Let's Talk About It," the art show will be an opportunity for people who access services to express themselves and promote open discussion about mental wellness.'

A Long Legacy

'As I am very old, my first Buck House Art Exhibition was back in 2007,' said Panorama magazine's own Warren Heggarty. 'At that time, these shows were held every two years. Art Coordinator Reuben used to organise it, and our special guest speaker was the Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney, Philip Black, representing Clover Moore. It was a very well attended show with hundreds of visitors.

'I interviewed Tom Webb (the nom de plume of Tom Moulton) on behalf of Panorama magazine, about his Triptych, which was a three-panel painting based on Ancient Egyptian figures. He

carried on a tradition that started at the 2005 show by making an introductory speech on behalf of all the participating artists. That was way back in issue #25 of Panorama!

'I actually bought a work from the 2009 show a couple of years later that reminded me of the painting Suburb of Havana by Willem de Kooning, a famous abstract expressionist artist. The artist of my painting was A Cooper, a gentleman who accessed our Tamworth service. It may still be hanging in Buck House!'

So be sure to mark the 17th of October 2024 on your calendar, as the Buckingham House Art Exhibition is an event you won't want to miss!

ABOVE: Stephen Corry, winner of the Another Door Opens art exhibition at Buck House, 2019.

IMAGE BY GRANT J EVERETT

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ADDRESSING THE PITFALLS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

By Grant J Everett

While social media allows us to connect with other people regardless of location, there's significant evidence detailing how this dominant form of communication is having negative impacts on young people. The NSW Government is hosting a Social Media Summit in October 2024 to respond to growing community concerns.

This Summit will bring together senior officials, policy makers, academics, and representatives of leading social media platforms and digital technologies to examine what can be done to support the safety and wellbeing of users. Young people will be playing a key role, and the community is invited to add their voice through the "Have Your Say" platform.

A study found that adolescents who spent more than three hours a day on social media faced double

the risks of poor mental health outcomes, including depression and anxiety, with triggers including negative interactions with strangers, privacy and security issues, cyberbullying, and image-based abuse, such as unsolicited graphic images.

Another negative to social media is many people portray they're leading perfect lives. Believing the falsehood that everyone else's world is flawless except for yours can be particularly damaging to our self-esteem, especially for young girls, who already feel pressured to conform to an impossible standard. With social media, this message is now being pushed on them non-stop, and it can be terrible for your sense of self-image.

Scratching the surface

This Summit is just one measure the NSW Government is putting in place to minimise the negative impacts of social media and device overuse

on young people. They're allocating \$2.5 million of research funds to investigate the impact of excessive screen time on young people and their learning and development, and recruiting 250 additional counselors for NSW schools.

NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning Prue Car said: "Young people are accessing social media earlier and earlier, and...many families are concerned about the impact social media has on their children – whether that be on their schooling, or their mental health... it's important we also look at the broader impact of social media."

Not Better Than the Real Thing

While social media has become a great way to keep in touch in a casual sense, it will never replace the quality of person-to-person interactions.

Whether it be hugs, handshakes or all the way up to sexual activity, the need for human touch is one of our most basic, primal needs. Being deprived of human contact is linked to many poor health outcomes like anxiety, depression, and stress. Touch calms our nerves, slows our heartbeat, lowers our blood pressure, and boosts our immune system. It also triggers oxytocin, a hormone that promotes emotional bonding with others. You can get similar benefits from massage therapy, as well as manicures, pedicures and other types of spa treatment that involve touch. It's worth noting that patting a cat, dog or other pet mimics some of the benefits of human contact. But nothing beats a big hug from your bestie!

We can express so much more with our presence than a block of text ever could, and being in physical proximity with someone else is an intimacy that can never be imitated. Being the social animals we are, we all need actual human contact.

SOURCE:

"NSW Government leads the way on social media summit," 20th of May 2024

ABOVE: Social media can be a real minefield. PHOTO BY CDD20 PIXABAY



Adult Learning Week

Encouraging Mature Age Students

By Grant J Everett

Flourish Australia offers holistic, psychosocial support based on the goals of the individual. This often includes supporting adults to pursue further education, and developing their practical skills in all areas of life.

As early intervention is crucial with the onset of a mental health issue, our Young People's Outreach Program (YPOP) places a real emphasis on encouraging the young people who access services to complete their studies in order to give themselves the best chance at a bright future. But what if you're in your 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s? Is it too late to engage with formal education? Not at all! Age itself is no factor if you have the right encouragement, resources and support.

If a degree isn't what you're after, "further education" covers a whole gamut of different learning

pathways besides University. It could mean learning more about an interest at a Community College, doing a Certificate or Diploma at TAFE, studying through OTEN from home, or starting an apprenticeship.

Education can be done specifically to develop your personal skillset, or so you can work in a field that interests you. On the subject of employment, in addition to educational support, Flourish Australia also offers various job roles at our community businesses, and we can also help you to find open employment through our specialised Disability Employment Services (DES).

Practical Skills

Alisha and Sandra work at Flourish Australia's Prestige Packing community business, and they've shared some snippets about how they're being supported to develop their practical skills.

Alisha

"I wanted to learn how to do sums like multiplication and subtraction, so I made improving my numeracy a goal in my individual employment plan at Prestige Packing. I rang the Reading and Writing Hotline on 1300 655 506 with the support of my workplace trainer, and the person on the phone was really friendly and helpful. They sent me some resources like videos and workbooks that I'm working through, and I'm doing well. I think I've got this!"

Sandra

"I've been using the computer at work with our trainer to learn how to use Zoom with a website called 'Be Connected.' I want to learn how to use Zoom because I want to enrol in a course that starts in September, and it's only available online through Zoom. I've now got two certificates from Be Connected in using the computer and using Zoom, and I'm ready to use my laptop for my studies now. I'm excited about the whole situation, and it's all been such a great experience for me."

Advice

Antoinette Mascaro, Mental Health Worker at Flourish Australia's Marrickville community business, says, "Every day is a chance to LEARN. Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching. The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you."

Joel Robinson, Administration Support Officer at Flourish Australia Wollongong, says, "I've been encouraged to continue with my studies. I'm just about to complete my Cert III in Hospitality. Next year I'm going back to Uni to try and do a Master's degree, my second. At 51, I reckon that makes me perfect!"

Thanks to Kirsten Cameron, Training and Assessment Coordinator, Flourish Australia Harris Park Prestige Packing.

Want to know more about mature age studies? See "TAFE Supported Marty" on page 8.

ABOVE: Sandra and Alisha outside their Flourish Australia Community Business. PHOTO BY KRISTEN CAMERON

World Youth Day

Jenga at the Penrith Mondo



'Jenga' is taken from the Swahili world 'kujenga' which means 'build' or 'construct.' It looks like it might be a good game for budding builders or engineers!

On the left we see Nathan Kelly, who accesses Flourish Australia's Penrith service, competing with staff member Rhys Garland on a large Jenga set in The Mondo. The Mondo is a Community Space in the heart of Penrith, and a lot of youth gravitated there for World Youth Day.

A bit like 'Kerplunk' in principle, only made with 54 wooden blocks rather than plastic straws, Jenga is a challenge where players remove one block at a time with the aim of not letting it fall over.

Flourish Australia also took advantage of Youth Week in The Mondo to run a stall to raise our profile in the local area.

Report & pic from Lisa Natrass

DES at TAFE Expo

Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Services (DES) from Liverpool and Flowerdale are seen at right spreading the word at Bankstown TAFE Campus.

The Bankstown Expo on the 25th May 2024 was for the purpose of supporting diversity, inclusion and bringing people together. It was also a good opportunity to let locals know that Flourish Australia can support their employment and training goals.

*Report by Julie Duong,
Photo by Clara from TAFE*



CHILD MALTREATMENT

And its Consequences

By Warren Heggarty



A study led by the University of Sydney which was published in the Journal of American Medical Association (Psychiatry) found that child maltreatment caused:

- 41% of suicide attempts
- 35% of self harm
- 21% of depression

'Childhood maltreatment includes physical, sexual or emotional abuse, and emotional or physical neglect experienced before the age of 18. (May, 2024)'

These are astonishing numbers, but they suggest that we could do a lot to reduce the incidence of mental health issues (and drug and alcohol abuse) if we could prevent or reduce child maltreatment. .

The lead author Dr Lucinda Grummit of the Matilda Centre for research acknowledged that it is not possible in this type of research to apply the scientific "gold standard for establishing cause and effect (a randomised control trial)." Such a trial would be unethical, and so the researchers used other methods as detailed in Natasha May's article in The Guardian.

Problems caused by maltreatment include 'difficulty trusting people, ... [and] difficulty in forming and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships.' Many people may not be aware that what they experienced as a child could be construed as mal-treatment and so when they encounter problems down the track they might not see the link themselves.

Maltreated children may not develop a sense of self-compassion. This in turn leads to an avoidant coping style. For example, studies show that maltreated children often come to believe that they are at fault or they "deserve" the bad treatment. Perpetrators often actually tell them this. Self-compassion means being kind and reasonable towards yourself and recognising that no one is perfect.

It is hard or even impossible for an abused child to stick up for themselves. They may go out of their way to avoid "setting the abuser off" and often to no avail and this in turn reinforces the idea that they need to work harder at "avoiding" setting the abuser off. In later life, alcohol abuse may be a continuation of this avoidant coping style. Avoidance might bring short term relief, but it is not a long term solution. Being drunk may make you feel less anxious, but it will not solve the problems that make you feel that way. (Grummitt, et al., 2023)

WORKS CITED

Grummitt, L., Kelly, E. V., Newton, N. C., Stapinski, L., Lawler, S., Prior, K., & Barrett, E. L. (2023, November 2). Self-compassion and avoidant coping as mediators of the relationship between childhood maltreatment and mental health and alcohol use in young adulthood. *Child Abuse and Neglect*(<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106534>).

May, N. (2024, May 14). 'Huge' proportion of mental health conditions in Australia found to be caused by childhood maltreatment. *The Guardian*.

Some Specialist Organisations

The Blue Knot Foundation

is a centre of excellence in providing support and information for complex trauma. 'Complex trauma is repeated, ongoing, and often extreme interpersonal trauma (between people) – violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation experienced as a child, young person and adult.'

blueknot.org.au

The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse

says that silence and stigma and shame play a part in the statistics quoted earlier. "To have the best opportunity to heal, victims and survivors must feel safe to disclose and receive the necessary support..."

nationalcentre.org.au

Bravehearts is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of childhood sexual abuse. They run child protection online courses and lobby for legislative change.

bravehearts.org.au/about-us

ABOVE: Repairing the considerable damage of child maltreatment is difficult for all.



HEART DISEASE AND MENTAL HEALTH: LINKED TIGHT

WORLD HEART DAY 2024

By Grant J Everett

Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death in Australia. According to the Better Health Victoria website, poor cardiac health is often exacerbated by mental health issues like anxiety and depression, as well as feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

The good news is that there are many ways we can look after both our heart health and mental wellbeing, and today is the best possible day to start making positive lifestyle changes. Staying active,

finding the healthy diet that's right for you, drinking less alcohol and quitting smoking are all very, very important, as is getting enough sleep and addressing whatever is stressing you out in life.

If you are isolated, a good way to meet people is to come visit your nearest Flourish Australia service, where all are welcome. While you're there, you can be even *kinder* to your heart by eating a healthy lunch and taking part in an exercise group. Services at Surry Hills, Wollongong, Penrith and Newcastle even provide access to a full gym, and it costs nothing to work out.

PhysiCards Online

Flourish Australia's Back On Track Health program developed the PhysiCards Online toolkit to make it easy to address the most common (and important) aspects of our health. Many Flourish Australia services have been using the cards for a couple of years.

PhysiCards Online is a useful tool to start a health conversation, and it is also an information hub that connects people to the right services, resources, and supports. The card "Heart Health and Chest Pain" is definitely one of the most vital things we need to work on, and most other PhysiCards, such as quitting smoking and managing our weight, will tie into our cardiac health somehow.

We have run a number of articles relating to the PhysiCards lately, including a story about the research Flourish Australia has been conducting into their impact over the last two years in "PhysiCards And People-Driven Research" (July 2024) and how the Research Advisory Committee are now assessing the PhysiCards in quantitative and qualitative ways in "What Is Research Really About?" (August 2024).



Scan this QR Code to learn more about how PhysiCards Online can help you address all your health needs.

SOURCE: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/heart-disease-and-mental-health#bhc-content "Heart disease and mental health," Better Health Channel Victoria

ABOVE: The gym at Flourish Australia's Buckingham House. Deliver a knock-out whack to heart disease by working out regularly! PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

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

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Find out if you can access the NDIS



Think about your current needs, goals, and supports



Meet with your NDIS planner and get a plan



Decide which service providers you want support from



Put your plan into action



SCAN QR TO
FIND OUT MORE



Where mental wellbeing thrives

NDIS