

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

panorama

Monthly Issue October 2024 #95A



**A New Album
at New Outlook:
Then Off to
the Big Sound
Conference!**

**Tumut Community
Fun Day 2024:
Bigger and Better
Than Ever Before!**

flourish[®]
AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives

NDIS PROVIDER
— SINCE 2013 —



Where mental wellbeing thrives

About us

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

Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or
flourishaustralia.org.au

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

About Panorama

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

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

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

Prefer snail mail?

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

Disclaimer

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

Contents

COVER: Flourish Australia's Tumut service held a Community Fun Day for mental health month, and it was bigger and better than ever before!
PHOTO BY ALEX CUTTS

- 4 Lived Experience Reaching High Places: Why Not a Board Member?
- 5 "Shouting Into the Void"
- 6 If They Say I Can't Do It, I'll Go and Do It Anyway. Roslyn Khoury
- 7 Enchante!
- 8 ATSO: Assisted Travel Support Officer - A Job In High Demand
- 9 ATSO: The job is Just so Rewarding. Jacinta Henshaw
- 10 A New Album at New Outlook: Then Off to the Big Sound Conference!
- 11 Tumut Community Fun Day 2024: Bigger and Better Than Ever!
- 12 Supported Employment: It's Better Than NETFLIX!
- 13 Budget News
- 14 Child Maltreatment
- 15 Arts and Crafts on a Feel Good Friday in Penrith

Contributors include...

Nadia Jones Poet and Disability Support Worker

Roslyn Khoury accesses services at Surry Hills, Buck House

Jacinta Henshaw

Jae Magsipoc accesses services at New Outlook, Wollongong

Alex Cutts Team Coordinator at Flourish Australia Tumut

Paula Hanlon Board member and lived experience leader

Dr Lucinda Grummit Matilda Centre for Research

Thanks to Dimitar Taseski, Emaid Mustapha, Kirk Mino, Julie Duong, Olivia Grey, and all the others who helped put this issue together.

Contributions are welcome!

Publications People

Grant J Everett writing

Kylie Bolton graphic designer

Warren Heggarty writing

Jasmin Moradides
Development Projects Manager

Peter Nielson
Chief Development Officer

WE PROVIDE PRACTICAL
Care for Carers

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

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

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

SCAN QR TO FIND OUT MORE



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 acknowledge 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 O 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

SCAN TO SUBMIT YOUR STORY





LIVED EXPERIENCE REACHING HIGH PLACES WHY NOT A BOARD MEMBER?

By Paula Hanlon

Flourish Australia promotes employing people with a lived experience at every level. Board member and lived experience leader Paula Hanlon and Legal Counsel and Company Secretary Fiona Justin presented at TheMHS Conference 2024 about the many benefits of including a lived experience voice on Boards.

Paula: I am a Director on the Flourish Australia Board in a lived experience position. When Fiona contacted me to do this presentation, I was excited. I have been attending TheMHS Conference since 1996 and do not recall this topic being presented. I thought this topic was much needed and of interest to the whole spectrum of our audience. Participation at all levels means that people with lived experience, public sector and Non-Government organisations all benefited from our learnings.

Fiona and I presented, and shared

videos of other people's thoughts on the subject. This included staff members with a lived experience, Board members, the Senior Leadership Team, and people who access services. As they say, "Nothing about us without us!"

Earlier this year, a colleague contacted me as he had been appointed to an NGO Board. It seems this is a growing role and will benefit organisations greatly.

Boarding

I had experience of Board participation, being on the NSW CAG Board (1990) and TheMHS Inc Board (2000-2023). I was on the Richmond Fellowship Board from 2008-2011. I left as I was appointed to the Northern Sydney Local Health District Board in 2011. In 2015, I was approached to return to the Board of the newly formed organisation (Richmond Fellowship and PRA) that was to become known as Flourish Australia.

As I approach the final year of my 10-years with the Flourish Australia

Board it has been nice to reflect on my experiences. I have always felt valued and respected and my expertise was always utilised. I have been open to sharing my lived experience and my skills as a peer worker.

A Director's role is not always easy. Reading all the papers can be time consuming. It is important to recognise weaknesses and where we need to develop knowledge and skills. For me this was the finance papers - numbers do my head in! If I need to clarify something, the Senior Leadership Team were always available. Flourish Australia has provided professional development opportunities and it is important to make the most of these. It is also important to connect with the Community Advisory Council and attend activities and special events with opportunities to meet staff and people with lived experience. I have been chairing a Board sub-committee for the past year, and have been able to channel my expertise in quality.

As a person with lived experience, I have had inpatient admissions. Flourish Australia sent flowers, something I had not experienced before. The acceptance from the other Directors and the Senior Leadership Team made me feel comfortable to return to my duties.

My current term with the Flourish Australia Board ends at the end of 2025. I would highly recommend this opportunity to people with lived experience and who understand the values of peer work.

Fiona: Flourish Australia's Board is the first I've seen where lived experience is an expectation of Board members, though it makes complete sense. I mean, a mining company Board would require people with mining experience to sit on it, wouldn't they?

As told to Grant J Everett

What does a Board do?

A Board governs an organisation based on policies provided by the Chair. Their foremost responsibility is securing adequate resources for the organisation to fulfil its mission, and to protect and manage assets with an annual budget.



"Shouting Into The Void"

Catharsis Through Creativity

By Nadia Jones

These poems are very personal, dealing with mental health issues, abuse, love, and being a member of the queer community. They also detail how I've grappled with bipolar disorder and Complex PTSD, and the ways they've affected my life. I poured my heart out, even though it was really difficult to put myself out there like this. My book is dark at times, but there are a lot of encouraging poems, as I think it's relevant to show both sides of the spectrum of mental health.

I went with self-publishing for *Transmogrify*, and that's gone great, but it did require a lot of work. The publishers did all the formatting and helped me to choose a cover design, and asked for my approval about everything. If I wanted any changes, they were happy to oblige.

Launching

I had one book launch in Glebe and the other at Narrabeen on the Northern Beaches on the 10th of July and 20th of July, respectively. I did some public speaking, which I haven't done much of since high school, and while I've found publicly reciting my poems can be very confronting, it's also cathartic. Writing something and reading it out are two different things, as what may work on the page may sound jarring out loud.

The Glebe launch was at Sappho Books, Café and Bar at 6pm. There were drinks and food, and my partner played music. The Narrabeen launch was midday at the Mind Café, an interesting place where people with mental health issues can sit down with someone for a chat and a coffee. I think these were the right places to have my book launch!

It's been helpful having Cam tell everyone about my book, by the way. Everyone at Flourish Australia has been so supportive and interested.

If you've been putting a goal off, just put your head down and get it done. Anyone can write a book like I have, or achieve anything else you're passionate about. Don't be held back by your own expectations of yourself, because they're often much lower than you deserve.

Nadia spoke to Grant J Everett

I occasionally require hospital stays to maintain my mental health, and during an admission six months ago I got in touch with Flourish Australia's service at Marrickville. What they've provided so far has been life-changing.

Cameron, my Mental Health Worker at Flourish Australia, showed me all the groups on offer, both at the service and in the community. I joined the Women's Group because it's one of my goals to be more socially active. Cam has also been helpful with my Centrelink paperwork. Having someone who is familiar with the process sit down and take me through each step has been fantastic. With Centrelink, you have to know exactly what to ask for, or you could miss out on entitlements.

I just started a new job as a Disability Support Worker, a field I've worked in for the last seven years. This

involves supporting clients in accessing the community and events and completing in-home tasks. Many of my clients also have mental health issues, so I can lend a non-judgemental ear to support them in their struggles, as my personal mental health journey allows me to relate to what they are experiencing. My employers also have a strong work culture of supporting the mental health of their employees, so that's great.

Cam encouraged me through the job application process, like holding practise interviews. We both celebrated when I got the job!

Composing

I've been writing poetry for years, and one day I decided to collate all of it. It turned out to be a lot more than I expected at 147 pages, a whole book's worth. After a year and a half of work, I have now released *Transmogrify: A Young Woman's Shout Into the Void*.

IF THEY SAY I WON'T BE ABLE TO DO IT...

...I'll go and do it anyway

By Roslyn Khoury



You can do anything you put your mind to, just try your best and don't forget to ask for help. To tell you the truth, I don't ask for help as much as I could! But whenever people have said to me that they don't think I can do something, I say to myself "I am going to show them what I'm made of."

I was a 'Blue Baby,' meaning I was born with an oxygen deficiency, and was temporarily blue. As a result I have a learning disability. I have never really accepted it though. People have often said, 'you can't do this,' or 'you can't do that,' but I have often just gone and done

it anyway! Since my younger days I have experienced depression, anxiety and eating disorders along with being suicidal. This background eventually led to me being put in touch with Flourish Australia's Buckingham House in Surry Hills.

Because I had disadvantages when growing up, I think it would be good if I could become a social worker. That way I could help others overcome their disadvantages,

Becoming a social worker would mean University study. Because I have a mild intellectual disability, some people don't think I can do it. But I have experienced the sort of disadvantages that social workers help people to overcome, so I have 'lived experience.' I am also doing a University preparation course through TAFE.

Some of life's challenges I have experienced personally. Other challenges have been experienced by people in my family. And there are friends who have had to deal with challenges like childhood trauma, domestic violence, mental health issues that pass on through generations, and unemployment.

I have friends who have done social work and Jackson, one of the support workers here at Buck House, is a social worker.

I am eligible for a disability support pension, but I like to work. It is a pity if I work too much it will affect my pension. I have consulted Felino at Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service to look at future employment. It is so hard these days. I hear it from my friends,

they are having their shifts cut, they are being laid off.

I have worked as a kitchen hand in a big leagues club, as a dog walker and groomer, in animal shelters, and in an IGA supermarket. I did an Animal Tending course to qualify me to work with animals.

I do volunteer work through the church and other organisations. I regularly attend a Lebanese Maronite Church in the Western Suburbs of Sydney. One of the charities I work for is The Gift of Bread. You may have heard about it. A lot of shops throw bread out at the end of the day even though it is still OK to eat. At The Gift of Bread we collect donated bread from bakeries and pass it onto people who need it. It is very busy, packing the bread into bags and also using the bread slicing machine. I also volunteer in a soup kitchen at Redlink.

I have had some really good bosses and some not so good! But the experience I have had and the skills I have learned might be useful in Event Management in future. One big event I attended, through my membership of the Maronite

Church, was the Twentieth Catholic World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany in August 2005.

My experience with mental health services has been mixed. One other service I was with did not help me very much.

I have been with Flourish Australia for about six years. I have been in mental health units in hospitals a few times. I remember one clinic I was in, they locked me in. It was frightening, I was so scared!

I do a lot of physical activity. This morning I went for a swim at the Prince Alfred Park Pool round the corner from Buckingham House. It is good for my arthritis. I have been in swimming squads in the past. I like yoga, pilates, running and tennis.

When I was young I was a gymnast. I loved it. I made lots of good friends through it, and I've won a few medals in competition! I competed at a state and national level, but missed out on international

competition- including Olympics- because of a back injury.

One thing I did not like so much with gymnastics at the elite level was having pressure being put on me about my weight. This is a big thing in gymnastics. When you are a young girl, or a 15 or 16 year old, this can be very difficult. There can be a lot of pressure and a lot of politics.

This pressure means I have trouble at social functions, eating in front of others. But I keep getting out there anyway ! So I hope reading my story will help other people, because that is what I like doing and I hope I can get into University to do social work. In the meantime I have a lot of support here at Flourish Australia!

LEFT: Roslyn at Flourish Australia's Buckingham House in Surry Hills NSW. BELOW: Roslyn with one of her friends at Buck House, Monique, displaying one of Monique's drawings! PHOTO by WARREN HEGGARTY



Enchante! French at Buck House

One of the groups that Roslyn likes to attend at Buckingham House is FRENCH. That is her on the right paying close attention to 'Le Professeur.' James, one of the support workers there, just happens to be a French speaker, so he facilitates the group on Wednesdays. Also spotted in this image is the Flourish Australia CEO and Board Chair who attended the class that day!

Australians - at least those with English Speaking backgrounds - are a little notorious for not acquiring foreign languages. But the turnout at Buck House when Panorama visited was quite strong.

Learning another language is not only a great exercise for the mind, but a way of socialising and making connections with others. And sometimes even being able to speak but a few words of a language will endear you to natives.

Please consider!

**Flourish Australia
Buckingham House
Gadigal Country**

43-45 Buckingham Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: 1300 779 270
Weekdays 9AM - 5PM



ATSO; Assisted Travel Support Officer

A Job in High Demand in NSW

By Warren Heggarty

Panorama recently spoke to Emaid and Kirk from Flourish Australia's Disability Employment Service based at Penrith NSW about some recent recruitment successes for Assisted Transport School Officers and Drivers. One of them was Jacinta Henshaw, who is profiled on the following page.

'The role of ATSO involves supporting students with special needs on their daily trips to and from school,' says Employment Coordinator Emaid Mustapha. 'These students include not just those with physical disabilities, but those who are non-verbal, who live with autism, who have behavioural challenges, or whose parents are themselves unable to accompany them to school.'

'So far we have organised eight placements of people into this role, with another four or so on

the way!' says Kirk. 'There is a lot of demand for the role of ATSO as well as the role of Driver for special needs students. Drivers are independent contractors, but ASTOs are employed through the NSW Department of Education.'

Emaid says the role is highly suitable for many of the people who access our Disability Employment Service. A lot of students need someone to accompany them like this, people who are able to develop rapport with them.

'The hours, which start from 15 hours a week, are also suitable for a lot of people,' says Kirk. 'Because you are working with a driver who will pick you up and drop you off, that eliminates the need for using public transport.'

When Kirk and Emaid talk to the people who access our DES they check to see whether their skills align with this sort of employment. If so, there is some preparation required. Naturally a Working With

Children Check and a police record check need to be done. There is a one off training session in how to deal with anaphylaxis (an allergic crisis which requires specific first aid) and later the ATSOs need to complete a full First Aid course and refresh it regularly.

There is also a training course, which has two components, on-line and face-to-face. The face-to-face stage provides a forum where ATSOs can meet with drivers.

Drivers might be driving a 12 seater minibus, but the support worker will only be matched with one student. Not all the students need a support worker.

There are 2,400 ATSOs now supporting 12,800 students across New South Wales in their journey to and from school as part of the department's Assisted School Travel Program.

NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning Prue Car said, "The travel program ensures that students with disability have equitable access to their education at their school. The drive to and from school is often a terrific social experience for the students..."

Program director Rick Seretis said there has been increased demand for the program over the past 12 months and there was a need for travel support officers in most parts of NSW.

"The Department of Education provides all the necessary training and support to help people succeed as an ATSO,"

"For some workers it can...be an income to supplement their pensions without impacting on their eligibility."

ABOVE: Don't miss the minibus. There is currently a high demand for Assisted Travel Support Officers according to NSW Department of Education's Rick Saretis. It's a position that might suit some of our readers. PHOTO: Transport at our Penrith service BY WARREN HEGGARTY

The NSW Department of Education is actively recruiting for ATSOs to accompany students with special needs on their transport to and from school to meet a statewide shortage.

Scan this QR Code to visit the Department of Education website to find out how to become an ATSO.





'A LIFE CHANGING OPPORTUNITY' CURIOUS RECRUIT FINDS IMPORTANT ROLE

By Warren Heggarty

Jacinta Henshaw became an ATSO (see previous page) after it was suggested to her by Emaid and Kirk at Flourish Australia's Penrith NSW Disability Employment Service. Right away, she noticed a difference in our approach compared to other services. Previously, she says, 'Other places, people focused on my struggles rather my getting a job...it was about jumping through hoops.' But when she was put in contact with Flourish Australia, she says, 'I felt seen and heard, I felt recognised...it wasn't just about getting a job, it was about being matched to a career!'

Jacinta says, 'Comparing Flourish Australia to some other places is like comparing waking up to coffee with waking up to dirty dishes.' Jacinta had experienced trauma in her life and has a diagnosis of Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

'I was always in survival mode, a dysregulated, nervous person. I was like a washing machine when it is vibrating wildly, ready to unload.'

When she came to Flourish Australia, to her relief she was able

to unload her life story, thoughts and feelings and finally be heard and validated. Jacinta has also been dealing with five or more different physical diagnoses: Endometriosis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Intussusception, Interstitial Cystitis, Gastro-Oesophageal Reflux Disorder and on top of that she has had two cases of Melanoma. So there are plenty of struggles there.

Emaid and Kirk were open to Jacinta's whole person, and that included her strengths and skills. 'I am a very curious person, like a kid in a book store,' she laughs. 'I am very much an ambivert (with qualities both of introvert and extrovert). I am very spiritual too, and I am inclined to volunteer and help out on my own initiative.'

'Flourish Australia has a way of looking at people that I call "infinite potential in motion." We always have potential, and we are always changing. Comparing myself today to how I was two years ago, it is a very dramatic change.'

'When I first came to Flourish Australia's DES in Penrith, what impressed me was that it was in an ordinary house. Also, I saw that the employment service was part of a larger organization that dealt with

people with mental health issues in ways OTHER than job seeking. This impression gave me the confidence that my mental health would be taken into consideration.'

Knowing Jacinta's background and strengths, and seeing they aligned with the requirements for an ATSO, Emaid and Kirk suggested she might be interested in trying that out, and she agreed. With their support, she went through the processes with the Working With Children Check, the police check, the letter of offer, the initial training online, and the two day face-to-face training. Jacinta met drivers, contractors and other ATSOs. Reflecting on her anaphylaxis training, she said, 'The trainers were really informative and made the training easy to digest so when needed we would be confident to apply the knowledge in any situation.'

Key to being a great ATSO is creating a good rapport with students.

'I ensure I develop a rapport with each student based on THEIR interests, e.g., favourite music, TV show, games and so on.' On one run, Jacinta and a female student talked about 'Pokemon, metal music and art.' Connecting with her interests saw the student doing most of the talking. 'It's such a rewarding role that it feels more like a career than a job.'

In the future, Jacinta likes the idea of doing peer work. 'It is a matter of learning how to listen actively and be attentive,' she says. She also thinks that because a lack of driving skills is very common among people with mental health issues, filling this skill gap could benefit a lot of people.

ABOVE: Flourish Australia at Penrith is just a suburban house - where you are recognised! Photo of Jacinta by Jacinta.

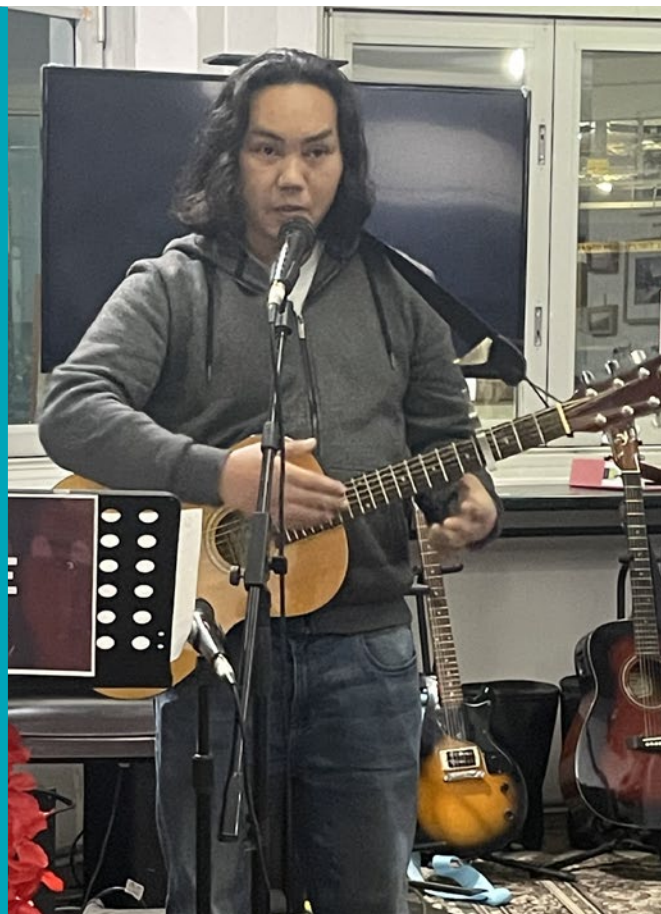
**Flourish Australia
Disability
Employment Service
Darug Country**

232 Derby Street,
Penrith 2750

Phone: 1300 779 270

A NEW ALBUM AT NEW OUTLOOK THEN OFF TO THE BIG SOUND CONFERENCE!

By Jae Magsipoc



Twelve months after the launch of Jae Magsipoc's four song EP *There's A Place We Can See*, Flourish Australia's service at Wollongong was proud to host the launch of Jae's twelve-track album *Talk To The Stars*. Now, Jae is reaching out to find contacts and opportunities in the global music industry.

Big Sound

As I'm very serious about my music, in September I flew to Brisbane for an event called Big Sound, the largest music conference in Australia, where people from the global industry gather to network. I went there hoping to meet some record people from America, in particular from New York or Los Angeles, and I gave out business cards to the people I met. It was amazing rubbing shoulders with so many big names!

I arranged my own flights through Qantas, booked my accommodation at the Hyatt Regency, and paid for my delegate pass.

Songwriting

I wrote all the lyrics and music for my album. I write pop music like Brian Adams and Maroon 5, and I sing and play guitar. I play a bit of piano, too. In addition to spending time in the recording studio, I also have experience playing live, including busking and performing at many events from Thirroul to The City. My songs are about hope, romance and connection, universal themes.

My songs are on YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok, and my album is available on the Apple Music Store and Spotify. My Spotify now has over 1000 streams.

I'm already working hard composing my second album, and I hope some of the people I met at Big Sound might help me on the way to releasing it in New York.

The Practical Side

Things are going great with my producer, Jonathan Fernandez, a brilliant audio engineer and a good friend who professionally recorded and mixed my album. Jonathan had a lot of input with my recording sessions, adding violin, drums, and piano.

Another friend, Sam, prints up my CDs, and I sell them for \$20.

I have sold them in various places, including New Outlook and the pedestrian tunnel under Central Station, where a lot of people busk.

Support to thrive

My album launched on the 14th June 2024 at New Outlook, and the event went really well. I don't usually do public speaking, but I made history by reading out a speech. Like with my EP launch, Paul was the MC for the night. Paul has supported me through this journey from the start.

There were around 50 people at the launch, and I played three original songs. The crowd included regulars from New Outlook, friends from church, local companies and organisations, and some staff. Some people brought their friends.

I want to thank Flourish Australia for their support. Music has always played a major role in my recovery, and New Outlook is my second home. I still love jamming with the member band every Monday, like I have for years now.

I hope that putting together this album and showing what I'm capable of might encourage other people to follow their own goals.

Jae spoke with Grant J Everett



TUMUT COMMUNITY FUN DAY 2024

BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE!

By Alex Cutts

What we learned from last year...

In order to organise a Community Fun Day out at Tumut for Mental Health Month in 2023, I represented Flourish Australia’s local service on a planning committee made up of many people from across the Snowy Valleys area. This included staff from the Local Health District, not-for-profit organisations, schools, and the community.

We were given a generous community grant from Snowy Hydro, a leading integrated energy provider that’s a big deal out here, to fund our event. We booked Tumut Showground to hold it, and got the word out to the surrounding areas and spoke at local schools. Promoting good mental health is a big thing for our community around Tumut, as in small regional towns, mental health can often be a pretty taboo topic.

Our Community Fun Day had food trucks, information stalls and activities, with a focus on promoting good mental health and showing the community what services are available through Flourish Australia. We’d anticipated 150, maybe 200 people might come down, and the event was supposed to go for four or five hours. However, we had such a massive influx of people that we ran out of everything in the first two hours. It was incredible!

... made this year’s celebrations even bigger!

As we really underestimated how popular this event was going to be in 2023, Flourish Australia’s Tumut service started to plan earlier to cater for a much bigger crowd.

Our planning involved our staff and the people who access services, and together we brainstormed different activities for the day and what role

each person would play. Some people who access services even shared their recovery story with the people who showed up on the day, promoting what they love about Flourish Australia.

Thankfully, the Tumut Community Mental Health Team (which I am on the planning committee for) put in a tender with Snowy Hydro, and for the second year in a row we secured a donation. This year, it was \$10,000. That was a huge boost to get us going!

A large part of those funds was used to hire fairground rides, like bumper cars and jumping castles, which everyone could use for free. This was a huge drawcard, as we expected. We also encouraged every visitor to see all there was to see by giving them a “passport” when they arrived; once they’d gotten their passport ticked off from every stall and event, they won a free showbag.

The food trucks, rides, and information booths from local services ran at Tumut Showgrounds from 10am to 2pm, and there were live performances from the local school choir, as well as other musical talent from the surrounding areas. We really focused on the young families for the morning and afternoon, then in the evening there was a twilight cinema for the teens and young adults. We wanted to be sure that we were engaging the whole community.

The crowd was enormous, but this year we were prepared! I have no doubt we’ll be doing this again in 2025.

ABOVE: Snowy Valleys Community Fun Day 2023. L-R: Alex Cutts (Team Coordinator), Kerrie Gentle (Peer Worker), Briony Madigan (Mental Health Worker), Amie Seymour (SW), Peta McCorry (Mental Health Worker). PHOTO FROM ALEX CUTTS

Flourish Australia Tumut
Wiradjuri Country
123-129 Wynyard Street
Tumut NSW 2720
02 9393 9527



Supported Employment 'It's Better than NETFLIX!'

By Warren Heggarty

In September Panorama we spoke to Dimi about the scope of Supported employment and we heard how Van was rebuilding his skills following a period of mental health challenges. This time, Panorama looks at supported employment as an alternative to existing workplace structures in which people with psychosocial disability sometimes face significant barriers to flourishing.

'This job saved my life'

Let's look at Darren Hobourn's experience. He worked in a hospital laundry for twelve years until he was sacked. Darren felt his sacking was unfair but did not feel confident enough to defend himself. The reason was that at the time it people did not discuss mental health issues at work. To have done so would have been

embarrassing and may have been met with ignorance from the employer.

Darren lived with 'voices in the head' which he had to deal with on top of 'a lot of stress, a lot of pressure, a lot of 'overtime.'

Losing that job led him into 'rally dark times.' For years he had no friends and 'drank a lot.' That was until he came to supported employment with Flourish Australia.

'This job saved my life.' Darren says. He says he has better mental AND physical health and drinks no more alcohol. He has friends and is able to speak about his mental health issues. He had the confidence to get a drivers licence, and even got a girlfriend.

One of the chief concerns people have about supported employment is that the pay is lower than the equivalent in open employment. Put simply, this is because the employer is required to employ support staff-

an additional cost that does not exist in open employment.

Darren says 'I wasn't even thinking about money. I was just happy to work.'

Darren's experience is echoed by other workers at Flourish Australia's Marrickville Community Business.

Complex Issues

Jennifer says 'I've been through a lot of change. I was homeless and Missionbeat took me to hospital. I was there for years. Unity Care took me to Flourish Australia to train me to catch public transport.'

Jennifer's experience illustrates that people with complex mental health issues can, at least initially, find it takes great effort to do things that most people find quite humdrum. Like getting on a bus.

We asked Jennifer what she liked about the workplace at Marrickville. 'We're friendly and we work as a team.'

Kevin laughed: 'It gets us off the couch!'

Jennifer's move into supported employment was a step up to a better life. 'It doesn't even matter if you can't read,' Jennifer said (The rate of people with complex mental health issues who cannot yet read and write is much higher than the general population.). 'You can do as many days as you can. And we have Surinee and Zac (Mental Health Workers at Marrickville) to support us.'

'It's good to earn a little bit of money,' says Mark, the cleaner. 'It's just like a normal job.' The jobs that are done in a supported environment is the SAME ones as would be done in any factory. They range from quite simple tasks to extremely complex ones, from tasks that require little preparation to ones that need you to gown up and filter the dust out of the air.

'My favourite job out of all the ones we do is the Black Boxes,' says Kevin. 'We have a special conveyor skate for that.'

'Yes,' agrees Jennifer, 'It's great. The other day,' she adds proudly, 'by using the conveyor skate, we got a job done in one week that normally takes three weeks.'

This is a 'hands-on' environment even for the bosses. Management

and staff come out onto the floor and help out with the work. This includes people like Manager Kate Paraha and sales people Justyn Warren and (recently retired) Lisa Sorenson.

'Andy is a wonderful supervisor' says Jennifer. 'Thiago has only been here a week, but he likes it here, so he will be wonderful too!'

And the good company is another thing that our Community Businesses provide. Kevin says 'Jennifer is one of the friendliest people here. I need people around me who are like that.'

We ALL do, but people with complex mental health issues become isolated and this can be detrimental to their health and slow their recovery.

Dimi (Training and Assessment Coordinator) says that supported employment, as Kevin hints, is not just about learning job skills, but interpersonal and social skills as well...not to mention health and hygiene.'

'Speaking of Health and hygiene!' says Jennifer. 'You should have seen what we found in the fridge,' said Jennifer, 'I had to get Mark onto it.'

Mark says, 'It's my job once a week to go through and clean out the fridge and throw out all the unused stuff, otherwise it really does become a health hazard!'

As another example of team work, Jennifer tells about how she and Shane have "buddied up" to do the 'shredding and hooking.'

'Exactly.' said Dimi. 'Often the employees show leadership and train other employees. It really creates a community!'

Why not open?

But what about open employment? Why is it that not everyone opts for open employment?

Jennifer explained: 'When you are a bit older like most of us, it becomes much harder to get a job. THIS is the only place that would take us on!'

Middle aged and older people experienced a time when the level of public understanding with regard to mental health issues was very meagre.

Panorama asked the workers what would people do if they did not have supported employment?

Jennifer laughs, 'Netflix!'

Kevin, taking note of the very chilly and rainy weather, said, 'I'd be rolled up in the blankets'

Mark said, 'I'd try to get a job in open employment. If I had to, I could try.'

Dimi explored this a little. 'Why not go for open employment now? What would hold you back?'

Mark explains that as long as supported employment is an option, he would prefer it. As an older worker he has become used to it and can work with a degree of confidence because of it. He needs to work, but this arrangement simply suits him better.

It seems like for many people, a lack of confidence has a strong hand in shaping their decisions. Kevin agrees that confidence is something he sometimes feels he lacks.

'The good thing about work is making friends. Sometimes we have to have a bit of a push to make friends. But we've got to talk to each other. That's why I like it here.'

The team calls Kevin 'The Fountain.' It is very hard for him to get going, but once he gets started then you can't switch him off!

This might be a metaphor for employment in general. For some people it seems a breeze, getting a job. But for most of us, a new job is one of the most stressful things we are called upon to do.

Thanks to Dimi Taseski for his help in organising this discussion.

ABOVE: Flourish Australia Marrickville's community business.

PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

**Flourish Australia
Community Business
Gadigal Country**
87-89 Chapel Street,
Marrickville 2204
Phone: 1300 779 270

Mental Health 2024-2025 Federal Budget News

The 2024-25 Commonwealth budget will include \$361 million spent over four years to expand the range of free mental health services, said Health Minister Mark Butler.

'Whether in person, over the phone or on a device, at a free walk-in centre or from the comfort of your bedroom, we are expanding the ways Australians can get mental health care. This will help people get the care they need at every stage of distress, while relieving the pressure on the current Better Access Scheme to be all things to all people, which in turn will make it easier for Australians who need a psychologist to get in to see one.'

- A new national early intervention service will aim to ensure people can access support before their distress escalates to needing higher intensity services, like a mental health treatment plan, acute in-patient service, or crisis line.
- Building on the Head to Health network, a network of 61 walk-in Medicare Mental Health Centres will have their clinical capability upgraded to ensure psychiatrists, psychologists and GPs are on call.
- Funding will allow mental health nurses etc to provide free care coordination and support to patients with complex needs, in between GP and specialist appointments WH

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 Grummitt 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 maltreatment, 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)

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

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*

The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse

says that silence and stigma 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...



The Blue Knot Organisation

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.



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





ART CRAFT & SEWING

On a feel good Friday in Penrith

By Warren Heggarty

It used to be the case,' said Kerry*, 'that art calmed me down, but craft made me angry.' Yet there she was, engaged in BOTH: the craft of coaster-making and the art of drawing. She was copying her drawing of a Maltese Terrier from her own visual art diary onto a blank coaster to decorate it. Kerry is one of the people accessing Flourish Australia's Penrith NSW service who attend regular group activities.

The main reason for running groups is gathering people together. Many of us would normally miss that opportunity without support. Panorama came to three groups at Penrith, facilitated by Trish Standing (Arts and Crafts; Feel Good Friday) and Lisa Crawford, (Sewing). These two groups share some members, and even activities. Two of the people were accompanied by personal support workers and one other

attendee just came to say hello!

In Arts and Crafts, some made magnets for Mothers' Day, some made flowers for Mothers' Day, and others made coasters for Mothers' Day. They like to keep the activities topical in line with the season!

Not everyone uses a visual diary like Kerry because the group is about people having a go at things that interest them, not necessarily to hang their work in a gallery. Although Jamal* was pretty proud of his Big Cat Colourings, and he suggested he might have a go selling them to a gallery! Meanwhile, Ronald* was making a cut-out image of a cat. If cats sound like a recurring theme, they are! Trish wore a cat tee-shirt and a cat wrap to go around it.

Recycling, reusing and repurposing, are also prevalent themes. Like redoing those useless fridge magnets to make Mothers' Day gifts. Charlotte* previously made an Autumnal picture of a tree using paint and a set of repurposed jigsaw

puzzle pieces. The effect was stunning! Similarly effective was Margarita's* painting of a tree where the leaves were represented by bright colours leaping out at you. In the afternoon, Margarita returned to the theme of bright colours to work on the curtain she is doing. She is joining different coloured cloth squares with frilly appliqué.

Also in the sewing group is Anthony whose mission is to make a new Y2K Bug. This is a soft toy that was sold around the year 2000 to celebrate the infamous computer glitch that was supposed to shut down the world...and didn't. Anthony has his tongue in cheek when he says that Russell the Y2K Bug is his personal 'support bug.' Russell is also supported by a support dog called Doggie. One wonders whether the new Russell Mark II will be eligible for support under the NDIS when Anthony finishes the project.

As well as soft toys and curtains, other people in the sewing group are making things like tote bags and pillow cases. The group even has a Singer sewing machine in the classic design - only it is electric rather than pedal operated, Lisa assures us.

Trish loves to scout facebook, the Internet and the shops for arts and crafts ideas. If you are thinking of doing some yourself, she recommended TEMU as a good site on which to look for supplies. Plus according to Trish and best things you can have in a craft kit are 'pipe cleaners, pompoms and googly eyes!'

Thanks to Sarah Mitchell, Trish, Lisa and everyone at Penrith for their help with this story.

ABOVE: Yes, we make and iron our own curtains! Trish sews like the wind! A puzzling tree! Anthony makes a soft toy clone of Russell the support bug! PHOTOS BY WARREN HEGGARTY *Editor has changed some names to protect privacy.

Flourish Australia
Darug Country

232 Derby Street,
Penrith 2750

Phone: 1300 779 270

Flourish Australia

Leaders in Complex Mental Health Support.

Here are some of the ways we can help:



Find a safe, secure, & affordable home



Find a job



Explore and enrol in further education



Build a career



Brush up on life skills



Learn things



Maintain good health



Volunteer at a local organisation



Access the community



Revisit activities you enjoy



Connect with culture & spirituality

We see you for who you are,
and we believe in your
potential

We have decades of experience in supporting people who have a lived experience of a complex mental health issue to live contributing lives in the community.

Flourish Australia partners with you. We recognise the importance of being in control of your own life and setting your own direction. Our role is to support you and resource you with reliable information. How we support you is agreed on WITH you. We also offer you a non-judgemental, realistic perspective as you steer towards your hopes and dreams.

Flourish Australia's support for your life choices really work

Many Flourish Australia staff have a lived experience of a mental health issue in addition to formal qualifications.

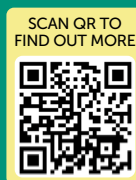
They are excellent role models, and they are willing to share what works and doesn't work for them with you. Many people have found that sharing their problems and concerns with people who have real life experience of how hard it can be, inspires them.

Flourish Australia has been here since 1955, and we have 71 sites across NSW, VIC, QLD, ACT and SA. We support over 10,000 Australians a year on their mental health recovery journeys. We help people find homes, get jobs, and live satisfying, contributing lives.

We are here to help

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

👉 www.flourishaustralia.org.au 📱 📺 📺 📺 📺 Follow us @FlourishAus



flourish
AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives