

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

panorama

Monthly Issue December 2024 #95C



Keeping Families
Together

Supporting Others
Like I was Once
Supported

Choosing to Turn
My Life Around

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AUSTRALIA

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About us

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

Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 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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PHOTO WARREN HEGGARTY

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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



Thank you to our Readers!

All 35,000* of you!

It's December, so it's time for the Panorama team to stop the presses, put down our planning sheets and interview notes, close our laptops, and take a moment to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to our readers across Australia, New Zealand and Canada. All 35,000* of you!

THANK YOU to the countless family members, carers, and Flourish Australia staff who walk alongside us every day, and a special thanks to everyone who had the courage to share their lived experience with Panorama magazine in 2024. We appreciate that this is sometimes not easy to do, but rest assured your contributions are vital in making Panorama an effective recovery tool for people to use on their recovery journeys. As our readership is growing rapidly over time, this means your journeys are reaching more people than ever before. You may not know the positive impact that sharing your story can have on

someone else, but we DO know, as people tell us all the time!

Almost half of our stories for 2024 charted people's recovery journeys, mapping their

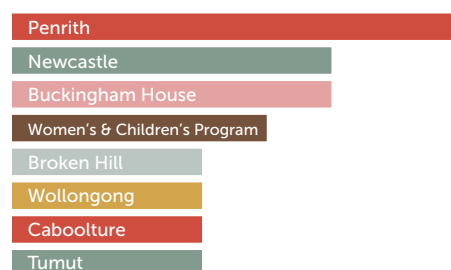


Top 6 Topics in 2024

- 45 ● Recovery Stories
- 25 ● Daily Living
- 12 ● Events
- 12 ● News
- 09 ● Research
- 07 ● Physical Health



Top 8 Sources of Stories in 2024



progress through study, employment, and independence. For instance, it's been amazing to share the wonderful work being done at the Women's and Children's Program, and we also ran many articles about the artistic expression of people who access services, as creative outlets can work wonders for your mental health. On the subject of creativity, Flourish Australia's Buckingham House and Newcastle services welcomed back art exhibitions after a long hiatus caused by COVID.

In exciting news, Panorama Magazine was nominated for the WayAhead Award for mental health Media and the Arts for the first time ever, and we won Highly Commended on the day. We are thrilled at this result and this is all thanks to you, our readers and



Reach out at Christmas

Some of us feel a bit wonky over Christmas. It may bring sad memories of better times. Maybe there never were better times. Maybe the cheer seems a little fake. But that is no reason to deprive yourself of connection. Be brave. Don't wait for others! Reach out first. The Season is a good excuse, a good 'cover' for bold behaviour. If there is an old lady next door. Why don't you take her a box of chocolates. Before you do that, pop in and ask her what type of chocolates she likes. Ask her how she is spending New Year's Eve. Keep going...

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Text: 0477 13 11 14

YOUR amazing contributions. See the photo to the left!

So as we pack up our desks for the end of year break, we want to wish each and every one of you a very happy festive season, however you celebrate it, and we can't wait to share with you all that is to come in the New Year.

Thank you, we are so grateful for your ongoing support!
Warren & Grant



KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Governor-General drops in to the Women's and Children's Program

Photos by Neil Fenelon, Text by Warren Heggarty

A warm welcome was extended to the Governor-General of Australia Her Excellency Ms Sam Mostyn AC when she visited Flourish Australia's Women's and Children's Program (WCP) in November. We were touched by her obvious personal interest in this important program for the welfare of women and children living with mental health issues and sometimes domestic violence and homelessness.

Her Excellency was welcomed to the WCP in Blacktown NSW by Professor Elizabeth More AM, Chair of Flourish Australia. Nicole Charles, the Women's and Children's Program Manager, gave the Governor-General a brief introduction to the service and its objectives and key areas of support. This was followed by a tour of the facilities including Charmian Cliff Cottage, the activity room and the recently opened garden.

Her Excellency, who admitted she was prone to "cluckiness," then

met women and children who have benefited from the program, and this was clearly the most enjoyable part of the day for everyone.

The aim of the Women's and Children's Program is to keep mothers and babies together. The Governor-General acknowledged the importance of kinship, particularly in First Nations people where there is an ongoing fear that children might be removed from their mothers. The problem with domestic violence in such circumstances is that it is "difficult to report because of this fear of the removal of children."

Nicole Charles spoke of the joy of working here: "There is nothing static about what happens here!" Every day and every woman and child brings new experiences and challenges. Ninety percent of women completing the program are safe and still with their babies.

Behind the joy though, Nicole admits, there is one heartbreaking fact: for every mother who is accepted into the program, five others have to be turned away due to limited space. This has an effect

not just on those mothers and babies we cannot yet support, but on future generations as well.

If we could expand this service and make it available to more mothers in more locations, just think of the great positive effect we could have in stopping intergenerational trauma. This is in fact Flourish Australia's plan, and one of the chief aims of the Flourish Foundation Australia is raising funds towards this goal.

The Governor-General's visit reflects her genuine interest in this field of work. A mother herself (she has a grown up daughter), the Governor-General has a background of leadership in mental health. In particular, she headed an organisation called ANROWS, which stands for Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.

Her Excellency acknowledged the work of one of her predecessors, Dame Quentin Bryce, and also spoke about one of Flourish Foundation Australia's Ambassadors, Sam Lane, who recently had a baby, describing the experience of motherhood as the "best time in her life." Nicole Charles said that the WCP tries to make this the case for all the mothers who join the program.

About the GG

In 2012 Sam Mostyn AC was an inaugural commissioner of the National Mental Health Commission. The NMHC "provides evidence and advice on ways to continuously improve Australia's mental health and suicide prevention system" (NMHC, 2024).

The Governor-General was appointed a director of ANROWS in 2018, becoming chair in 2022. ANROWS works to build the evidence base that supports ending violence against women and children in Australia. (ANROWS, 2024) ANROWS is set up under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032. More recently, she served as Chair for mental health organisation Beyond Blue from 1st of January 2024 until she was appointed Governor-General, commencing on 1st of July 2024.

LEFT PAGE: Front Row: Babies Mia and Nova with mum Hannah-Rose. Seated from left: Flourish Australia Chair Professor Elizabeth More AM, H.E. the Governor-General Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Kaila (see Spring 2023 Panorama), Courtney Smith Mental Health Worker Women & Children's Program, Pamela Crawford Team Coordinator Women & Children's Program, Sifa Pavihi Peer Worker Women & Children's Program, Jannali (on lap of) mum Larissa. Back Row: Mothers Taylor and Sheriden, Flight Lieutenant Jamie Thanjan Aide-de-Camp to H.E. the GG, Suzanne Hudson Admin Support Officer Women & Children's Program, Susan McCarthy Flourish Australia COO, Belinda Jenkins Regional Mgr, mum Schye, Nicole Charles, Manager Women & Children's Program. PHOTOS BY NEIL FENELON.

THIS PAGE: TOP: The GG adorned with official gifts presented to her by Sophie with Prof Elizabeth More AM Chair of Flourish Australia. MIDDLE LEFT TO RIGHT: Hannah and her mum, Schye. The GG says "Hi" to little Sophie and mum Sheriden, Pamela Crawford looks on. BOTTOM: Choppy and mum Taylor, with Sophie and H.E. the GG. PHOTOS NEIL FENELON



Read More

Yarning at the Women's and Children's Weaving Group in Panorama's November 2024 online issue, pages 8-9.

Little Man: My Reason for Getting up in the Morning in Panorama's November 2024 online issue, pages 12-13.

Choosing to Turn My Life Around in Panorama's December 2024 issue on page 9.

If you are reading this in our Summer 2025 print edition, all three of these stories can be found elsewhere in this magazine!

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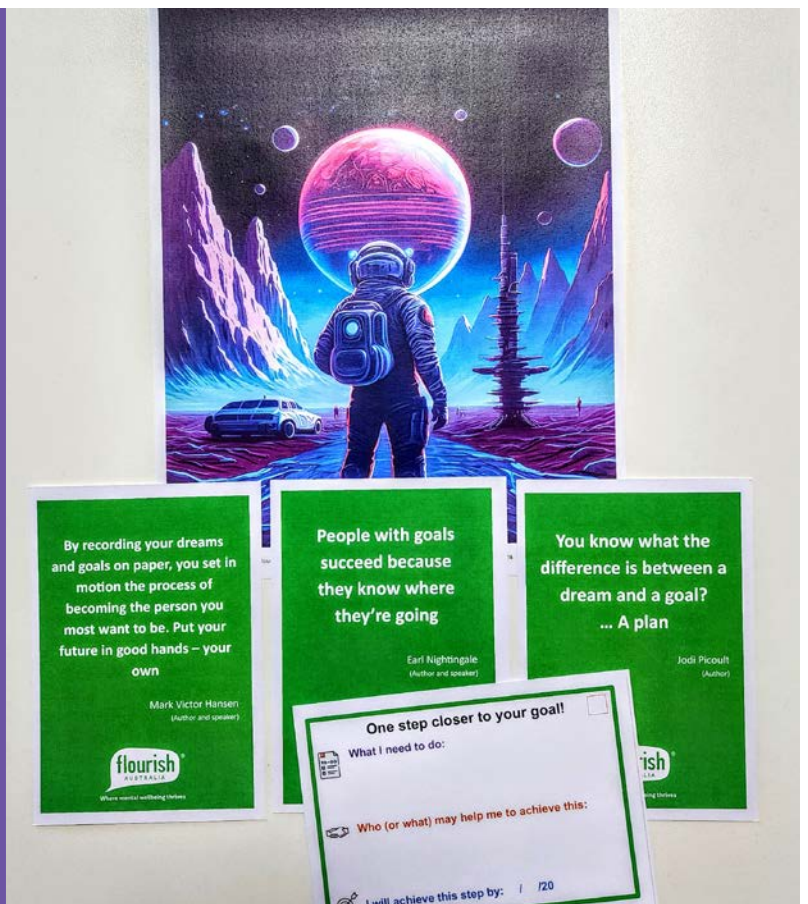


If we could make this service available to more mothers in more locations, just think of the great positive effect we would have!

ACHIEVING BIG THINGS

Our first group in South Australia

By Jayme Moreland



The team at the Flourish Australia service in Salisbury, South Australia, held their inaugural group activity “goal setting” in August 2024. This activity was the start of a steady introduction of group activities for the people being supported in South Australia. The SA team was established in March 2023, and is rapidly growing in staff and in the services being offered.

A small group of people actively participated in the goal setting activity. They worked together to achieve a BIG and complex goal: landing a person on the moon! The goal on its own seemed impossible to achieve at first as individuals, but the team worked together to deconstruct it into more manageable objectives. These objectives were then aligned to form a plan to achieve the overall goal of (theoretically and by hiring a lot of experts!) landing a person on the moon.

The process to accomplish the goal was a warm-up for each person to apply the process to achieve their own goals.

Achieving goals and milestones can provide feelings of accomplishment and progress in our lives. One of French writer, poet, journalist and aviator, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s quote is “a goal without a plan is just a wish.” Antoine’s quote perfectly summarises the importance of having a plan to achieve any goal you set.

The plan to achieve a goal requires five components:

1. **What** is the clearly defined goal?
2. **Why** do you want to achieve this goal?
3. **How** will you achieve this goal?
4. **When** will you achieve this goal?
5. **Who** (or **What**) can keep you motivated, accountable or help you to achieve this goal?

The “**Why**”, the motivation, can be the most important component of a goal setting plan. If you need motivation to achieve your goals, think about why you started them in the first place. One small step towards a goal achieves more than taking no action at all.

The activity participants completed the group activity with a set of tools to help them set and achieve future goals.

Group activities with Flourish Australia are a fantastic way for people to start socialising and interacting with others in a safe and supportive environment. Such services can help people to build confidence to join other social, sporting and recreational groups in their local community, and group activities can also help people to develop new or build upon existing skills and knowledge to help them live independently or achieve other goals. The South Australian team has a full schedule of group activities planned, including:

- Active outdoors (walking and wheeling group)
- Using public transport
- Developing life and employment skills
- Cooking groups
- Person-led peer discussions
- Day trips
- Art and craft groups
- Social games

We look forward to sharing the implementation of the South Australia group activities program with you through future articles.

ABOVE: All astronauts started with a dream and then pursued goals one by one. PHOTO: JAYME MORELAND, MEME: WARREN HEGGARTY



Playing the Long Game & Getting Big Things Done

By Warren Heggarty

He set the minimum for each activity as follows:

1. Four different exercises with 36 (later 60) repetitions each
2. 15 minutes minimum writing on a publishable project
3. 15 minutes practice on a piano piece at his current or higher grade

One thing he noticed was this: although he HATED having to do these things first thing every day, if he left them till later, he hated them even more! It was better to get the important work out of the way first and feel a sense of achievement all day rather than keep putting it off until later and feeling it as a burden.

Miles also found that while he HATED having to start these tasks, he often found himself going into the FLOW ZONE, losing track of time and spending more than 15 minutes on them.

In three months, Miles completed a draft of a novel, learned to play a difficult classical piano piece and developed modest biceps! He was also able to increase the number of repetitions from 144 to 192 and currently 240.

The lessons he learned were:

You need to be doing things now and every day

You can increase or change these things later, but don't stop.

You can improve measurably long term even with a small daily investment of time.

You find the time to do the three important things by stopping other things that waste time.

* Names changed for privacy.

ABOVE: When choosing a goal if you think of something big, it will suggest smaller, easier goals that you can do right now! PHOTO JAYME MORLAND MEME WARREN HEGGARTY

Getting big things done takes discipline. In Panorama June 2023 on page 15 we met Miles* and Annabella* the Accountability Partners. They ensured they both got the things done that they SAID they would do. Now, let's take it a step further and learn how Miles began to look at bigger achievements that were further in the future.

Introducing an Accountability Partner helped Miles to focus on realistic goals that he was able to communicate to another person (Annabella) who would encourage him – and vice versa. Over the next year Annabella noted that Miles prioritised things that OTHER PEOPLE wanted him to do, and she insisted that Miles include more things for himself!

Miles decided to introduce a set of three recurring items that were to be pursued every day, first thing in the morning before any other things were done. These were based

on three things he found most important, though none of them were urgent.

Miles had been inspired by an essay by Charles Hummell called The Tyranny of the Urgent. This is a version of President Eisenhower's priority boxes. Hummell's manager had once said to him, 'Your greatest danger is allowing the urgent to crowd out the important. Important things - vital to your personal flourishing - are almost never "urgent." You have to program time for them.'

So Miles used his daily list of things to do to program time for work towards his most important goals:

1. Maintaining good health required that he do a certain amount of exercise every day
2. Wanting to publish his writing required that he do a certain amount of work in his writing every day.
3. Wanting to play piano required that he practice for a certain time every day.

Scan the QR Code to see Charles Hummell's The Tyranny of the Urgent.





SUPPORTING OTHERS LIKE I WAS ONCE SUPPORTED

By Mark West (as told to Grant J Everett)

When I was unwell and being supported by the Flourish Australia staff in Newcastle, I knew I wanted to give back to the community in some way, to help others as I had been helped. Thanks to Flourish Australia's support, I now do this for a living.

I was interested in a career where I could help people, particularly young people, so I completed a Diploma in Youth Work and a Certificate IV in Mental Health at TAFE. I am now employed full time as a support worker for people with mental health issues, offering practical help through home visits. As I've had a lot of life experience

being around people with mental health issues and physical health issues, that has helped me to identify with the people I work with.

Giving Back

Years ago when I was a young TAFE student, I started regularly visiting Flourish Australia's centre on Hunter Street, Newcastle, to take part in the youth group they had at the time. I also enjoyed their Street Soccer Program every Thursday.

I used to really like the activities at Flourish Australia, and I connected with lots of interesting people my own age. Four of us attended the Youth Camp together, which had a giant swing and all other kinds of

things to do. As the program is for young people, though, I eventually aged out of it.

Before connecting with Flourish Australia, I didn't leave the house much, so my Flourish Australia workers would come around and encourage me to get out and about. This might mean kicking a soccer ball around, or driving somewhere interesting. I would look up places on the Internet, and they'd happily take me there.

I still get home visits from Alana (Support Coordinator) from Flourish Australia, but I haven't needed to visit the centre on Hunter Street for over a year.

Rewarding things

As I was born and raised in Australia and only speak English, I've decided to learn Filipino through an online course so I can talk with my parents and extended family in their native language. It'd be nice to finally know what they're saying!

I'm also getting into guitar, and I rap a bit.

I shoot hoops regularly, running up and down and doing three pointer's with a basketball. This is really good for my physical health, and it distracts me, giving me peace of mind. Exercise has become much easier since I went cold turkey from vaping. It had reached the point where I couldn't breathe, I felt sick.

Socially, I have people at work I talk to often, and I also see my family on weekends.

I also have a group of friends I've known for many years, but I'm so busy with work throughout the week that I rarely have time to hang out with them.

Been there

My advice to anyone going through hard times is to not give up. You have time to fix things. It's not over. Your life hasn't ended.

There's a good quote I like: "Always remember how they doubted you."

ABOVE: Mark West and his furry best friend, Ella. PHOTO FROM MARK WEST

CHOOSING TO TURN MY LIFE AROUND

By Sheriden
(as told to Grant J Everett)



I was homeless and living in a refuge with my daughter, Sophie, when DOCS got involved. They were encouraging me to go to rehab, but this would have meant having my daughter taken away, and that was NOT an option. Thankfully, connecting with Flourish Australia's Women & Children's Program was another option, and they took me straight on.

I completed a four-month parenting program while living at the service, and now I've moved out to a transition house in the community. I've been attending the WCP for about 9 months, and have another 10 months at the transition house to go.

The Flourish Australia staff have always been there whenever I needed to talk. Their inspiring words have kept me motivated and positive, and they've always given me plenty of choice. It's also great being around the other mums and hearing their stories, and I've built some close friendships. Even though everyone has a unique situation, we understand each other. It's good seeing the kids grow up together, transforming. It's amazing. I also love holding all the babies. We play "Pass The Baby" a lot!

Sophie has been doing great. She loves all the attention she gets, and

likes to run about, play with the toys, dig holes, and using the learning games on the iPad. She's giving up her dummy at the moment, and is about to start potty training.

Driving

I'm currently two and a half hours from my mum and my family and my whole support network, and that's hard. My goal is to get transferred closer to home so I can be near my other kids. Their dad and his wife have been looking after them, and they've been doing a great job.

I'm in the process of getting my license back so I can work towards getting 50/50 custody, and so in July I did a driver knowledge test on the computer at the RMS. To get my green Ps back, I just need to do an eye test and sign some papers. My best mate got me a car, which will make life so much easier.

Once I'm driving, I'm putting Sophie in daycare so I can do a TAFE course in a field like drug and alcohol counselling or support work. I'd love to work for Flourish Australia when I head back home.

Overcoming

I've been diagnosed with depression, OCD, borderline personality disorder, and CPTSD. I also experienced a drug-induced psychosis, and that was really bad. But I'm still here!

Just being able to talk helps with my mental health, as does cleaning, drawing and playing games on my phone. The weaving group has been good, too. I can really get into it and just focus entirely on what I'm doing.

Thankfully, I'm now at the point where the drugs are in my past. I don't even think of them anymore. I'm looking forward, keeping on track, staying clean, because I know where drugs lead. I've cut ties with the people who brought me down, as they don't care about me, they just wanted my money.

To any mums out there who are struggling: don't be afraid to reach out. Nobody is entirely safe from hardships in life. Be honest, as there are people who can help you no matter the situation. It might feel like you can't keep going, but push on and you'll get there.

It's still hard at times, but I keep looking forward to all the special times I'll have with my kids as they grow up. That's what keeps me going: I want to be a better person for my children, and for myself. This gets me out of bed in the morning, and keeps me going.

ABOVE: Sheriden with her daughter, Sophie. Sheriden and Sophie have had a wonderful experience with the Women and Children's Program. PHOTOS BY GRANT J EVERETT



'The SiMPLiCiTY Project'

HOW TO BECOME A HEALTH 'TOOLMAKER'

By Warren Heggarty

SiMPLiCiTY is the name of a great tool that hasn't quite been invented yet: a tool to improve the physical health of people living with complex mental health issues. YOU could help design this tool! First, we will look at the problem that needs to be fixed. Then we will look at how Peer Workers have already participated in workshops to develop the tool. Finally, we see how YOU can participate!

Dr Alyssa Milton from Sydney University, Faculty of Medicine, says that nowadays clinicians are "crying out for lived experience expertise." A decade ago, things like Flourish Australia's Recovery Action Framework were a little radical, but by now the underlying ideas have been adopted even in clinical settings. In other words, the people who work in the mental health field rely more and more on YOUR experience and ideas! And there is a lot to be done.

Look at the graph above published by the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, entitled "Long-term health conditions reported by persons with and without mental illness." It shows you how much poorer physical health is for people with mental health issues. No wonder then, that our life expectancy is much lower than the general population. (AIHW, 2022)

It can be fixed, though, because "...for the majority of people (with psychoses, etc.), the excess mortality rates are attributable to avoidable and treatable conditions that have modifiable lifestyle risk factors, such as sedentariness (no exercise) and tobacco..." (Onwumere, Shiers, & Gaughran, 2018). What we need to do is learn how to engage with one another to identify people's specific health and lifestyle challenges.

The same paper quoted above also suggests that the physical health situation is very much improved if you have family and carers to help

you. So they need to be involved too, especially as family and carers need support of their own.

Dr Alyssa Milton and her team want to work with you, dear readers, to co-design the tool that will supercharge our approach to improving our physical health, especially when its problems are avoidable or treatable. This is what the SiMPLiCiTY project hopes to do!

Peer Workshop

The project will use co-design to do this. Co-design involves people with different kinds of knowledge and experiences working together to make something. Many of our readers would have heard about co-design and the involvement of Flourish Australia's Community Advisory Council.

Peer Workers from Flourish Australia have already been among those helping Dr Alyssa Milton and her team from Sydney University on a project to develop such a tool. Sydney Local Health District is also involved.

The project includes people with “psychosis or schizophrenia-related” conditions, Peer Workers, along with family and carers. Through workshops, interviews and surveys, people have been sharing their experience of what helps or hinders their health.

One workshop participant Marc, Peer Worker from Flourish Australia’s Penrith service said, “I found the experience...very fulfilling and rewarding. I enjoy having an opportunity to use my perspective and experience to help others in improving their health. This includes understanding the dynamic between physical and mental health wellness, and how to (support) individuals with their own unique needs.”

Alyssa says that the Flourish Australia Peer Workers who participated were “nuanced, knowledgeable, strengths-based and complementary!”

Next up, though, Alyssa and her team are expanding the net beyond Peer Workers to capture ideas from a wider range of people. They are looking for people with complex mental health issues who access our services and want to help out.

There are two ways YOU can help with preventing avoidable and treatable physical health problems...

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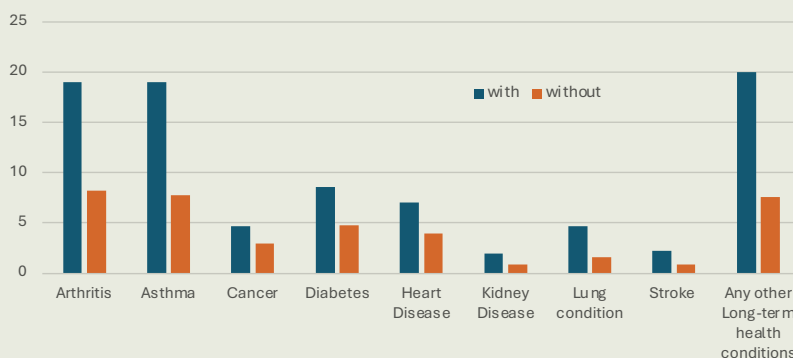
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ABOVE: This graph compares people with complex mental health issues in blue and people WITHOUT mental health issues in Orange. You can see clearly that there is significantly more physical disease for people with mental health issues. Most of this ‘extra disease’ is avoidable and or treatable. SOURCE: ABS 2022. OPPOSITE: Dr Alyssa Milton, flanked by members of her team at the University of Sydney, is leading the project. PHOTO PROVIDED BY ALYSSA MILTON

Long-Term health conditions, % reported by persons WITH mental health issues compared to % persons WITHOUT mental health issues



1. SiMPLiCiTy Co-Design Workshop

Scan the QR code above and it will take you to a web page where you can download a participant information sheet and read more about the project and what taking part involves. If you register your interest, Alyssa or Priya Vaughan will be in touch to share more info and answer your questions. Otherwise, you can call Dr Alyssa Milton on (02) 9515 1461 or email alyssa.milton@sydney.edu.au

Four types of people are invited:

- People who have had an experience of psychosis, schizophrenia or a related condition, over 16 years and feeling well enough to consent and take part.
- Peer Workers
- Care Coordinators, clinicians, service managers
- Family and friends



2. SiMPLiCiTy Online Concept Mapping

If Workshops aren’t your thing, there is also an online concept mapping activity you can do by scanning the QR Code above. This will help the team understand the kinds of things that support your physical health. For more information, email Dr Ellie Brown at Melbourne Uni ellie.brown@unimelb.edu.au or call her on 0428 288 070.

To complete this online activity you will need to create a user name and password which will be anonymous. Naturally, before you participate, you will need to give your official consent.

Researchers from a number of organisations are involved in this research: University of Sydney, Orygen, Griffith University, The University of QLD, Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Mindgardens Neuroscience Network and various health services in Victoria, NSW and QLD.



SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Encouraging Physical Activity

By Warren Heggarty

Kerrie Gentle, a Peer Worker at Flourish Australia's Tumut service, came seventh in her age group at the World Triathlon Multisport World Championships in Townsville, Queensland, in August. Congratulations Kerrie!

Kerrie competed in the Cross Triathlon Event (one of eight world championship events) against athletes from Canada, France, Great Britain, New Zealand and the USA.

Kerrie is able to use her knowledge of sport as part of her practice as a Peer Worker. It is a very important thing because as is well documented, people with complex mental health issues benefit greatly from exercise.

"When our Team Coordinator converses with new people accessing our service, she will encourage them to join me if they might stand to benefit."

"It is different for everybody and not everyone will benefit from the same exercise in the same way. Many of the people in our area are of older

age groups, and so they might be a bit more limited in what they want to achieve through exercise."

In other words, Kerrie won't turn you into a World Championship level triathlete UNLESS YOU REALLY WANT TO BE ONE!

"One of the really great things about exercise is that it makes you sleep. I'm not naturally a good sleeper and sometimes stress and worry have kept me up. But in general a good workout will counteract that.

"One lady I worked with here who had had some issues with drugs used to find herself pacing up and down in her unit. She had quit drugs but still had that restlessness they can give you. I suggested that she take up exercise because it will tire you out properly and make you sleep!

"I am doing a Certificate IV in Healthy Eating, and we all know that eating well is beneficial to us all. At Tumut I have facilitated groups in Nutrition and Meal Planning and Cooking."

Being outdoors is another great help.

"100 percent it's a good thing.

We sometimes go out to Talbingo for a barbecue!"

There is a social aspect to sport that Kerrie knows is an important benefit.

"I'm part of a running group in Tumut myself. We do two or three sessions a week. I also take part in mountain bike riding - my son is a mountain biker. It is great to get out for a laugh for ninety minutes or so!

"Bringing people together socially in groups is very beneficial. Looking at what other people are doing shows at the very least that other people have things worse than you! It keeps things into perspective. It is also great to get out of your comfort zone a bit!"

The Triathlon at Townsville consisted of a one km ocean swim, a 20km mountain bike ride, and a 6km cross country run. 'That 6km run included two 800m stretches of rock stairs as well,' says Kerrie.

'I've been doing this sort of thing for 30 years. I wanted to improve my fitness, too, after having children. I moved to Tumut 22 years ago, and then really got stuck in. I have been in two full Ironmans and 20 half Ironmans."

A full Ironman competition, based on the one Kerrie did, has 3.5 Km of ocean swimming, 180Km bike ride, and a 42Km run (which is a full marathon!)

Kerrie finds that this sort of activity is her way of practicing meditation or mindfulness. Many of us imagine sitting down motionless as a necessary part of mindfulness, but the repetitive effort of an endurance run provides an environment that is much more suitable to some people.

Indeed, Kerrie found that when she was prescribed a particular medication meant to settle her down, it went too far. "I went into this lull state and did all this soul searching and it did me no good. For me, running puts me in a better frame."

NB Readers: Please always discuss your medication with your doctor. Don't reduce your dose or stop taking it without prior consultation.

As a Peer Worker, Kerrie uses her experience of mental health issues as part of her practice. She describes how certain tumultuous life events

- such as losing her first husband to cancer - led to her losing hope. Part of Flourish Australia's role is lending a sense of hope to the people who access our services when they need to 'borrow' some.

Kerrie is working with a person who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia who is now entering events. Another person who is 57 has started joining in her walking groups two days per week. Five people regularly go swimming to Wagga Wagga. Well, not all the way from Tumut to Wagga Wagga (maybe down the track one day) but they swim AT Wagga Wagga.

So sport isn't all about elite competition. In fact the really important thing is the moderate day to day movement that we all need to do to keep our bodies working well.

LEFT: We used to have finish lines, but now we have what look like finish jumping castles. The principle is still the same; you have to give it a go like Kerrie. BELOW: Champions! PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KERRIE GENTLE

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Supported Holidays

By Kirsten Cameron



If you are a supported employee, then you may be eligible for a supported holiday (see Panorama's May 2024 issue).

Supported employees at Flourish Australia's Harris Park service (Prestige Packing Company) have been thinking about great things to do with our paid annual

leave. Everyone needs to rest and recharge.

We invited Sahra (Front R) and Mark (Front L) from the NDIS specialist travel agency 'Inclusive Getaways' to join us for morning tea and explain NDIS respite and supported holiday packages. Employees asked lots of questions and got some really good insight into the holiday options and costs.

The options were endless and included everything from short cruises to the Gold Coast or trips to Bathurst to watch motor sports through to overseas adventures. There were options for groups including work friends as well as for individuals. We now have lots of information to plan our Summer holidays!

SPREAD

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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



FLOURISH AUSTRALIA AT THEMHS OUR CONTRIBUTIONS

By Peter Farrugia (in Canberra) and Warren Heggarty (in Sydney)

This year Canberra ACT was the host of The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS). And the Theme of TheMHS was "Finding Common Ground; Celebrating Difference and Looking Beyond to Find the Common Ground." The themes propounded by the Keynote Speakers, however, were about CHANGE. RAPID change.

One of the main barriers to social citizenship for people living with complex mental health issues is a lack of mastery of digital technology. Yet digital technology is at the heart of many programs for dealing with the recent explosion in the number of people needing support for mental health issues.

In any case, our world has become a Digital world and it has become all but inescapable. Flourish Australia CEO Mark Orr AM chaired a key

note session at TheMHS by UNSW Scientia Professor Toby Walsh.

Professor Walsh is a strong advocate for limits to ensure AI is used to improve human lives, rather than unleashing "killer robots," or just making life more difficult. He is identified in Who's Who as one of the worlds leading academic influencers, with an audience of UN, government and business organisations. Pray he is successful.

The conference keynotes all seemed a little remote from mental health, and this was deliberate. The stated reason is to find a collective common ground beyond sometimes strongly polarised positions: the organiser's promised that, "The 2024 TheMHS Conference will look beyond the mental health system to learn how differing views can be brought together for wider impact...we will explore critical areas where change is advancing rapidly, including the use of Artificial

Intelligence, Lived & Learned Expertise Workforce, Climate Change, Service Delivery Models and the wider context in which we live our lives will be a conference that, like no other, welcomes debate, deep dialogue and collective wisdom to ensure we all benefit from better mental health."

In 2024, Flourish Australia was the Platinum Sponsor of TheMHS. Our team of talented and passionate Board Members, staff and people we support represented Flourish Australia as a National leader of Mental Health in Australia. For those who attended from Flourish Australia, it was a week of learning, storytelling, connections and friendships!

Thank you for your contribution, friendship and stamina Prof Elizabeth More AM (Chair), Paula Hanlon, Megan Still, Tom Brideson (Board), Mark Orr AM, Peter Neilson, Andrew O'Brien, Fiona Justin, Rachel Tee, Doris Chen, Grant Everett, Dr Emily Hielscher (Sydney Olympic Prk), Mark Cliff (Newcastle, NSW), Andrew Povolny (Marrickville, NSW) and our VIPs Karen Jurs (Chair, Community Advisory Council), Mozzy Wilkinson (Co-Chair, Community Advisory Council), Anne O'Grady (Research Committee) and Michael Wren (Research Committee). A special mention of the 2024 TheMHS Ambassador and "Friend of Flourish Australia," Julie Millard, who was a regular visitor to our information booth.

A big congratulations to Dr Emily Hielscher as recipient of the TheMHS Early Career Research Award! A great achievement!

Flourish Australia staff members! You too can attend TheMHS conferences and If you access our services and want to present, talk to your support worker about how to get support. Abstract submissions are open now! We'd love to see you in Brisbane in 2025!

ABOVE: Some of our team at TheMHS, BACK: Peter Neilson, Julie Millard AM, Andrew Povolny and Rob Ramjam, formerly of One Door. FRONT ROW, Peter Farrugia, the Award Winning Dr Emily Hielscher, and Mark Orr AM. PHOTO PETER FARRUGIA

Employment Support

Opportunities to work, learn, and pursue your employment goals.

Available roles

We will work with you to find a job that fits your needs. Examples of supported employment roles that we have helped people find include the following:



Commercial and Home Cleaning



Packaging Solutions



Mail Delivery Solutions



Ground and Garden Maintenance



Digital Scanning and Secure Document Management



Fleet Vehicle Cleaning

"Having work to go to gets me out of the house every day and motivates me to take better care of myself."
Julie-Ann, Tamworth

We are here to support you

Flourish Australia walks alongside people with complex mental health issues to get back on track and reconnect with the community to live contributing, flourishing lives.

If finding work is one of your recovery goals, we will support you in finding a job that is fair and rewarding. As an Australian Disability Enterprise, we:

- Help people find work
- Meet strict service standards
- Encourage people to achieve their employment goals
- Provide on-the-job training and support

Come talk to us:

We will help you achieve your employment goals.

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