

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

panorama

Monthly Issue **April 2025 #97A**

**The Next Step to
Independence**

**"It's OK to Trust
People"**

**Returning To My
Outlet: Writing**

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AUSTRALIA

Where mental wellbeing thrives

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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!

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

About Panorama

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

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

You can ALWAYS email us at...
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Prefer snail mail?

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Disclaimer

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

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Back On Track Health

World No Tobacco Day

31st of May 2025
By Grant J Everett



Flourish Australia's PhysiCards® are an interactive, person led approach to reviewing, identifying and responding to physical health and wellbeing concerns. If you access Flourish Australia services, you can use the PhysiCards as an easy tool to help identify any physical health issues. Just speak to your support worker to find out more.

While **World No Tobacco Day** is primarily about informing the public on the dangers of nicotine products, it also shines a light on the predatory and insidious business practices tobacco companies use to make their harmful products appealing.

Their core target groups are children, young people and the vulnerable, and Big Tobacco lures them in through attractive designs, appealing flavours, and glamourised marketing. As nicotine products cause the early deaths of 8 million people a year, tobacco companies need to constantly hook new, young smokers to take the place of the dead.

The campaign also exposes how the tobacco industry sabotages health policies, using their dirty money to buy influence and take advantage of loopholes to stay in business.

Thankfully, there is a growing global resistance against the smoking epidemic, demanding our right to a smoke-free environment and protecting future generations.

We Can Support Your Quit Journey

Flourish Australia promotes good health among all who access services, while also respecting

their right to choice and agency. As many of them smoke - and keeping in mind that people with a lived experience of mental health issues statistically have poorer health than the general population - we actively support people to kick the habit. For instance, people's Individual Plans often include smoking cessation options if the person would like support to reduce or quit their habit.

Successful Quit journeys often begin with calling the Quitline on 137 848 or visiting the Australian Government ICanQuit website. Flourish Australia can provide ongoing support to give you the best chance of success.

This World No Tobacco Day, stand up for a brighter future...one where tobacco companies are extinct.

Scan the QR Code to see the World No Tobacco Day website





THE NEXT STEP TO INDEPENDENCE

How Getting Your Ps Opens Your World

By Peter

Back in our Summer 2023 Quarterly issue, golf aficionado Peter shared his journey to starting his dream job at a local golf course. Not only is Peter still happily working there, but he's recently achieved a major goal..

Since the last time I appeared in Panorama, everything has been going really well. My job has been very good for my mental health.

I actually play a lot of golf, and as I work at Hilltop I pay a staff membership to access the facilities. I can golf whenever I like, and I get to use the exact same carts that I get paid to clean! The golf carts are included as a part of the staff membership, and they're a good option if I don't feel like walking across this very, very big course.

Hilltop is known as "The Ultimate Challenge," and has been voted the second-best course in Australia. It's PG rated, which means it's pretty hardcore. There's lots of sand traps and water, that sort of thing.

Ps

Thanks to support from Flourish Australia, I've been successful in earning my P plates. They played a big role when I was preparing for the practical test.

I wanted to get my license so I can have more independence, and it will also open up new opportunities. I drive to work now, and I can easily get around town or go for a swim at the beach when I feel like it. Not need to arrange a carer or a support worker to help me get around. This is a great feeling!

"I'm enjoying the life I've built for myself, and being employed at the Mollymook Golf Club's Championship Hilltop 18-hole course has been a major part of that."

Living A Full Life

I've been accessing services for about 7 years now, and I still enjoy Tuesdays when a group of us go fishing with the staff. One of the good friends I've made, Craig, lives just around the corner from me, and he's a regular at the fishing group, too.

I also have community support on Thursdays, where I'll go swimming either at the local pool or the beach. I have a blow-up paddle board that I ride at the beach, but it's been too windy for that lately. Between playing golf and swimming, I'm getting lots of exercise, and I really enjoy doing both of these.

Lately, on Fridays I've been learning to cook with Harbourside Therapy, which I joined after discovering I had some spare NDIS funding. I think learning to cook is essential in becoming more independent. I enjoy cooking for my Mum and Dad, and I made a huge pot of spag bol when my sister came over for Christmas. My cooking teacher used to run a burger place up north, so he's really good at what he does. I made a pasta salad just last week, and Dad scored it an 8/10!

On the subject of support, I'm still being supported by my whole family, and they've been with me the whole way through everything.

My advice

Just have a go, you won't know unless you try. Don't be afraid to try new things. Take that chance!

ABOVE: Picture of Peter Jarman with his sweet ride. Photo by Eddie

“It’s OK to Trust People”

Moving From Individual Support to Group Activities

By Tammy

When the staff at Flourish Australia’s Seven Hills service suggested that I attend some of their group activities, I felt apprehensive. Up until that time I had only had one-to-one sessions with a support person. The thought of going to a group and socialising with people I didn’t know made me feel anxious, on guard and super careful. I was “gently nudged” to give it a try, and I’m so glad I did!

With encouragement from my support team, I started attending an Art Group and a Mindfulness & Meditation Group. Once in a while I’ll attend a movie group, too. These groups include up to ten people, and afterwards I always feel glad that I made the effort to take part. It’s much better than hanging around at home on my own!

There is a diverse mix of people in the Art Group. Different ages, different backgrounds, men and women. The older people are cool because they’ve had more life experience and can offer some great advice. Everyone there is really nice, and sometimes we are so engrossed in our conversations, we don’t stop talking until the group ends.

This has all been very beneficial for my mental health and wellbeing. I genuinely enjoy these groups and look forward to every session!

Processing

The reason I have experienced so much anxiety and depression has to do with childhood trauma. I was taken away from home and sent to live with a foster family when I was very young, and I didn’t have the best experience. By the time I was 15, I was already living in refuges.

One thing I always found hard while growing up was the way people would come and go. It was especially tough when the ones I relied on disappeared whenever things got difficult. I really needed people who would stick by me through the good times and bad, but when people always let you down, how can you be expected to trust anyone?

Now, through these groups and services, I’ve met people I can rely on, and I am learning to trust again. I have begun to think, “it’s OK to trust people, it’s OK to let people in!”

Overcoming

I still struggle. We ALL do. But I have been doing therapy so I can deal with my anger and poor self-esteem and other issues. Over the past two years or so, I have been

“When I feel overwhelmed now, I know there are things I can do to help: I can disengage from a situation, practice mindfulness, go for a walk, listen to music, or just have some alone time.”

able to express feelings I could not otherwise process.

I get out of the house more, so there are many more options for distraction. And as I’m getting better at relating to people, I feel like I’ve become a part of civilisation! Another thing that’s making a difference is the medication I am now on. It seems to be having a positive impact.

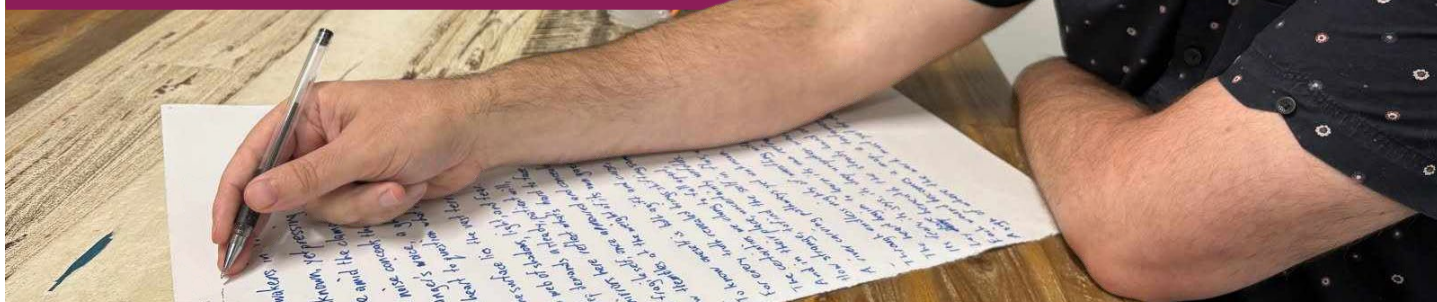
Now that I am learning what it’s like to be a responsible adult, I would like to make a difference by helping people who are going down a similar path. My hope is to study to become a youth worker, offering support and guidance to young people who need it, providing the kind of reassurance I once lacked.

I am grateful to my support network who have helped me along the way. They have inspired me to want to give back, and so I hope to return the favour to others. No matter where you’re at, there are better paths to follow, and support is available!

ABOVE: Tammy, enjoying her art. Photo by Neil Fenelon.

RETURNING TO MY OUTLET: *WRITING*

By Kieron



At the age of 18, I was self-medicating and living in boarding houses. With the support of staff from Flourish Australia's Buckingham House service, I've since found stable accommodation, achieved many work and study goals, and been getting the most out of life.

I lost a number of people close to me to suicide, overdoses, and alcohol poisoning, and after one of my best friends took his own life on New Years in 2000, that made me really look at myself and ask, "What can I do better?" The first step was to quit risky behaviours and to get serious about life.

A community organisation referred me to the Buck House day-to-day living centre at Surry Hills, and I have been working on myself ever since. I have pursued many goals there over the years, such as receiving an NDIS package and making some close friends.

It's been a very hard road so far, but I know it will get easier.

Tailored Support

Thanks to support from the staff, I'm extremely grateful to live in a nice house in Glebe. I can get to The City

quickly, and I'm only minutes from the water and the fish markets. While my support workers played a role in gaining my home, I haven't required any further practical support with my accommodation. My housemate is pretty cruisey, too, and it makes life so much easier if you have someone to share the rent.

I was recently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Once I let the staff at Buck House know, they were able to tailor my support accordingly in the ways I wanted.

I've also been supported with my career over the years. I like the part-time work I currently have, but I'm planning to get back to full-time employment. The benefits to having a job go far beyond just getting paid, as it feels amazing to contribute to society. It really makes you feel like you belong, that you're a part of the community. That feels amazing.

Creating

Writing is an amazing outlet. I used to write fiction, particularly when I was a kid, but nowadays I enjoy something much more poetic and philosophical. I am a perfectionist with my writing, so everything has its exact place. I've won two awards for poetry, and displayed many pieces at the service at Surry Hills.

After the death of a close friend, I didn't write anything for many years. It's only recently I've started again, and that's because I was invited to submit a piece of writing to the Another Door Opens art exhibition at Buckingham House. I created a short work comparing the way much of the community sees those of us with mental health issues or who are homeless like we are pigeons: we're around, but they prefer to pretend we don't exist, and they'd probably like it if we all just went away. I received amazing feedback on the night.

"Getting a diagnosis doesn't define who you are, but it was really nice to put a name to what I had been going through."

What's Next?

I've had a lot of involvement with the Salvation Army over the years, and I plan to return to them soon. The Salvos have a very strong focus on charity, which I think is vital for a church.

Also, I think this is the year that I finally start my novel. This will be a huge project, so wish me luck!

ABOVE: Kieron, transferring some of his ideas from brain to paper. Photo by Kieron

WELCOME TO BALI



BALI: Beautiful People, Beautiful Place

By Edwina

Bali is where many young adults from Australia go to celebrate Schoolies Week, and a popular destination for tourists from around the globe. Bali's architecture and gardens and beaches are beautiful, just like the people, and with flights there often costing less than \$500 from Australia, it's an affordable destination. Online booking is recommended to get the best deals.

Kuta is famous for shopping and cheap eats, with full course meals with bottomless juice for just \$12.50. Kuta was the site of the Bali bombings back in 2002, and is still a place of sadness and mourning for the locals. Children were selling bracelets there for \$2.

Cangu is similar to Kuta with lots of shopping. Haggling for a bargain is expected! I got a whole head of braids for \$60, and my nails done for \$12.50.

In the jungle north of Cangu, you can see the luwak, a wild feline that eats and excretes coffee beans as a part of its diet. Funnily enough, coffee beans that have been fermented in a luwak's stomach are some of the most expensive on the planet! Cangu also had big jungle swings and playgrounds.

Seminyak is the place to let your hair down. The nightclub scene is great, the people are friendly and kind, and LGBTQIA+ people are very welcome. They were also happy to meet a Kiwi!

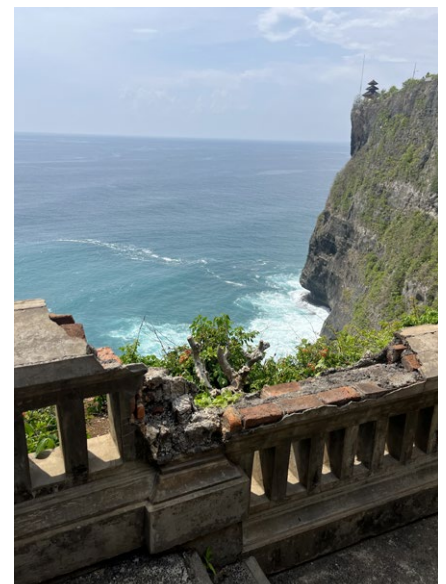
Uluwatu is well known for its surf and classy restaurant culture, similar

to Noosa and the Sunshine Coast. It can be very expensive to eat there, costing around \$49 a head, but the dining experience is complimented by its breathtaking views.

Note that the Balinese people are very spiritual, and Uluwatu is a sacred site, so it's important to be respectful of their customs, beliefs and traditions. Sadly, tourists have disturbed sacred sites in the past, so littering, standing on or leaning on any structures is forbidden.

ABOVE: Edwina, living it up in beautiful Bali. Photos by Francesca

"Finances permitting, Europe is on the cards next, and I will be travelling 20,000km to Paris. Then who knows what's next?"



Gardening: A Lifetime Passion

James and His Award-Winning Green Thumbs

By James



Gardening is a fulfilling hobby. It gets you outside, it's good exercise, and having something to nurture and care for is great for your wellbeing. Having a garden brightens up your yard, providing a good environment to spend time in, and if your greenery is edible, you'll get an excellent payoff come harvesttime!

James Jordan says...

"I recently ranked in the 2024 Link Housing Gardening Competition. I've entered this comp for the last five years, and this time around I won a \$50 gift voucher for Bunnings. To nobody's surprise, I used it to buy more plants!"

"My entry was my garden at home, and involved submitting two photos to be in the running. My carer supported me in taking some good-looking photos."

"It's good to get people into gardening when they're young. My old man used to be an avid gardener, and he got me involved when I was 15 years old. I remember growing rhubarb with him back then. Now I'm over 70, and gardening has been a lifetime passion."

ABOVE: James shows off the certificate for his award-winning garden. Photo by Kirsten.
RIGHT: The Botanical Gardens. Photo by Young.

"As gardening is good for your mental health, I wanted to share my love of growing plants with Panorama. I find if I feel down, doing some gardening can bring my mood back up again. Being in my garden helps me to relax, and digging makes me happy. I like getting my hands dirty!"

What's in my garden?

"Geraniums are my favourite plants, and I grow them from cuttings. I also love Australian natives like bottlebrush, and I grow my favourite vegetables: peas, carrots and spinach. Of course, I still grow what my dad first taught me all those years ago: rhubarb!"

National Gardening Day on the 14th of April celebrates the many rewards of growing plants. You can celebrate gardeners in your life, or learn more about gardening online or in your local library. There's also a social aspect if you join a Gardening Club or claim a plot in your local community garden. You can source a lot of knowledge and tips when you mix with other people who have green thumbs.

Did You Know? According to their preventative health check-ins, people who access Flourish Australia services report gardening to be one of **the top three pastimes** that contribute to their physical health.



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