



**flourish**

*Mental Health Action  
In Our Hands Inc.*

# VOICES

**Vol. 1, No. 6, December 2016**

## **From The Editor's Desk**

Welcome to the final edition of VOICES for 2016. Human Rights Week (Tas) is with us once more, so it is a timely occasion for all of us to reflect on how we treat people with disabilities, including those with mental illness. Therefore, this edition focuses on disability and mental health human rights issues, both past and present.

Meanwhile, what a year it has been for Flourish. So many changes. Julia Fassina became Flourish's new Chief Executive Officer. The Flourish Board had members leave and new ones step up, with Harry Wilsdon elected as the new Chairperson, replacing Danny Sutton. Office staff departed and new staff were recruited, plus volunteers joined the team, so Flourish needed bigger premises, hence the move to Pressland House. Meanwhile, there were a myriad of important events being either hosted or attended by Flourish members and staff, not least the official opening of the new offices by the Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson.

Finally, enjoy the last month of the year, and the first day of 2017, but please do so safely.

## **Flourish Annual General Meeting**



At the Flourish AGM at Ross on 17 November, 22 people attended, including invited guests from community sector organisations and the Mental Health Service.

A slightly different format this year meant there were four guest speakers; all

Flourish mental health consumers from across the state.



Straying from tradition was the Annual Report. This year the annual report focused on Flourish's members, because without them there would be no Flourish. Also at the AGM, Jaisen Mahne donated a special piece of artwork to Flourish. That piece, named Phoenix Rising, now hangs in the CEO's office, joining a growing collection.





## Healing Voices Film Premiere

On 18 November, 70 people from across the state, and from across the mental health spectrum, attended the Tasmanian film premiere of Healing Voices, held at the Old Woolstore in Hobart.

Following lunch, a one-hour Q&A discussion was held, facilitated by Connie Digolis from the Mental Health Council of Tasmania. The four panelists consisted of Amber Meredith (consumer), Elida Meadows (carer), Andrea Jarvis (social worker), and surprise guest, Professor Ken Kirkby (clinician). Ken is Acting Chief Psychiatrist and kindly filled a void after a late cancellation. The event was a successful collaboration between Richmond Fellowship Tasmania and Flourish.



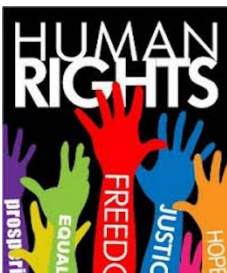
## Flourish Office Launch



On Monday 28 November, the Minister for Health, the Hon. Michael Ferguson MP, officially opened Flourish's new office in Pressland House, 33 Melville St, Hobart. It was a full house with 30 guests from across the mental health sector, both community and government, plus politicians, Flourish Board members, Flourish Regional Advisory Group members, the Flourish Consumer Representation Service, plus staff and volunteers.



The minister also donated a piece of consumer art to add to Flourish's growing collection.



## Human Rights Week (3rd – 10th December)

On 10 December, people around the world commemorate the United Nations' World Human Rights Day. It is a day to raise awareness of why human rights matter, especially for those people who have little freedom and few, if any rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in 1948.

There are 30 rights listed in the declaration, the most famous being Article 1:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Since 1991 Tasmania has paid tribute to individuals and organisations. In 2013 the Lucy Henry Award was introduced. The inaugural recipient was Flourish for their work in consulting with, and providing a voice for people with mental illness. In 2014, Dannii Lane was granted the award for promoting mental health reform. In 2015 the award went to Darren Jiggins for his work in fostering and promoting human rights. This year, the award went to Browns IGA Supermarket at Longford for their dedication to human rights and pushing for increased recognition of the abilities of people with mental illness in the workplace.



## The Times May Be Changing, But Not Attitudes

It has been 52 years since Bob Dylan first sang his song, *The Times They Are A Changing*. However, while a lot has changed since 1964, our attitude as a society has not. We are still seeing religious and racial intolerance. We are still seeing human rights abuses, and society is still discriminating against people with disabilities. A new generation of Australians are growing up believing that it is okay to discriminate against someone because they are different.

The massacre in Japan of 19 people with disabilities last July barely made news. The killer believed disabled people were worthless. That idea is not new. In the 19th century Thomas Galton, a supporter of the eugenics philosophy, argued that undesirable people should be eliminated to improve the human species. While Hitler and Nazi Germany took eugenics to its extreme, eugenics was practiced globally, including in Australia.

In Australia, Tasmania was the only state to pass and keep eugenics based legislation. The Mental Deficiencies Act (1920) allowed the forced institutionalisation of people with disabilities. However, while the focus was on people with disabilities, other 'undesirable' groups were also singled out. These people were forcibly detained in institutions, and what happened to them remains a national disgrace that many people would rather not discuss. Prof. Lombardo, a historian on eugenics, believes we risk forgetting this dark shadow of our history at our peril. "We want to wipe out disease, poverty, and crime, but we should remember that we tried it before, and with a very heavy hand we did something we are ashamed of now."

The idea that people with disabilities should be segregated, forbidden to reproduce, and even be killed, did not die with the demise of the Nazi regime. Sadly, it has continued.

In Britain, a child was starved to death in a legally sanctioned act. More recently, a British family living in Australia were told they were to be deported because their youngest child had a disability and failed the criteria for residency. In Queensland, a couple with Down syndrome said they wanted to have children. Their parents said they would not support their [children's] desire to have children. "It's not going to happen. It can't happen," one mother said.

Eugenics may have slipped off the radar, but its legacy survives. It is time disabled people were valued as they all have something wonderful to give society... if we would only let them.

### **Dannii Lane, Mental Health and Human Rights Advocate**

Sources: Lane, D 2016, 'Shadow Over A Troubled Asylum: Eugenics and the Royal Derwent Hospital', (unpublished); Miller, M 2015, 'Woman jailed for killing Down Syndrome son with hand sanitiser', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September; Mitchell, N 2016, 'Mind your genes! The dark legacy of eugenics lives on', Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 8 August; ABC 2011, 'Eugenics in Australia: The secret of Melbourne's elite', Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 21 September; Findlay, C 2016, [www.dailylife.com.au](http://www.dailylife.com.au); Wyndham, D 1996, 'Striving for National Fitness: Eugenics in Australia', University of Sydney; Murry, K 2016, 'Couple with Down syndrome fight for parenting dream', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 3 October; Crane, E 2016, 'Young Down syndrome couple are desperate to get married and have children', *Daily Mail Australia*, 3 October; Cleary, B 2016, 'British family could be deported from Australia because their six-year-old daughter has a disability', *Daily Mail Australia*, 26 July.



## A Champion Of Our Time ~ Stella Young

Stella Young was an Australian comedian, journalist and disability rights activist. She began her disability activism at the young age of 14. Stella served as the editor for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's online magazine, *Ramp Up*. Before joining the ABC, Stella worked as an educator in public programs at the Melbourne

Museum, and hosted eight seasons of *No Limits*, a disability culture program.

In 2014, Stella made her debut as a solo performer at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. However, Stella was much more than a journalist, activist, and comedian. She held a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Journalism and Public Relations, and a Graduate Diploma in Education, working for a time as a secondary school teacher. At different times Stella was a board member of the Ministerial Advisory Council for the Department of Victorian Communities, the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, the Youth Disability Advocacy Service, and Women with Disabilities Victoria. Stella died unexpectedly in December 2014. While her activities were disability focused, Stella was an ardent supporter of human rights. Stella Young truly was a champion of our time.

## Some Things Stella Young Wanted You To Know

Stella Young died at the age of 32. She was a passionate, provocative, and funny activist for disabled people. Here are some things she wanted people to know.

"I started calling myself a disabled woman, and a crip [cripple]. A good 13 years after 17-year-old me started saying 'crip', it still horrifies people. I do it because it's a word that makes me feel strong and powerful."

"Half of all people with disabilities [in Australia] live near or below the poverty line. Less than 40 per cent of us participate in the workforce. In fact, Australia ranks last among the OECD countries when measured on quality of life for people with disabilities."

"The National Disability Insurance Scheme is an investment in all Australians. It's not about people like me who currently live with disabilities; it's about all of those who might in the future."

"I want to live in a world where we don't have such low expectations of disabled people that we are congratulated for getting out of bed and remembering our own names in the morning. I want to live in a world where we value genuine achievement for disabled people."

"I've never thought I was going to die young. But I'm aware, sometimes painfully so, that there are people who do."

Source: Liddy, M 2014, '17 things Stella Young wanted you to know', *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 8 December. (<http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/>)

If any story in this newsletter causes distress and you need to talk to someone, please contact any of the following: Lifeline: 131114, BeyondBlue: 1300 22 4636, SANE Helpline: 180018 7263.



## The Department of Psychiatry's New Facility Operational

On 29 November, after many delays, the Department of Psychiatry's new modular facility finally became operational. The facility, located above the Liverpool Street forecourt of the Royal Hobart Hospital, has three areas.

On level two is the Open Ward, while the Secure and High Dependency Wards are on level three.



There are 32 beds in total, including two 2 bed rooms, a swing unit with lounge and en-suite, and a seclusion room with en-suite. All bedrooms have swipe card access for patient privacy and security. There are also televisions in each bedroom. One innovation is the sensory



modulation room with controlled, changeable lighting to assist in the de-escalation of agitated patients.

Images: Patient bedroom with television and ensuite door with anti-ligature features: The sensory modulation room. Images provided courtesy of the RHH Redevelopment.



## Partners in Recovery (PIR)

The Partners in Recovery team (PIR) has come a long way since it opened its doors in January 2014. PIR presently has 380 participants located all over the state, receiving support at home or delivered from one of 30 venues. PIR provides service coordination to those who experience severe and/or persistent mental ill health with complex needs. For people who are eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), PIR supports them to register and attain access, as the path is challenging and people need informed assistance. If you work with or know someone who may benefit by accessing PIR, please visit our website or speak to us.

Ph: 1300 827 747; Email: [contact@pirtasmania.com.au](mailto:contact@pirtasmania.com.au); Mail: PIR, PO Box 1620, Hobart 7001

## Food As Medicine And Mental Health

It is becoming increasingly known that the human digestive tract bacteria have surprising influence on our mental health as well as our physical health. How to maintain a diverse population of gut bacteria and a healthy proportion of 'good' versus 'not so good' may be less well known. High fibre foods, eating less processed foods, getting some omega 3 oils, avoiding refined white flour foods (yes that's the pasta, cakes, biscuits, and bread we love), avoiding cane sugar, animal fats, and salt are the hallmarks of maintaining a healthy diet and optimising one's mental health too. Some yoghurt bacteria are also especially useful. Our brains can't make neurotransmitters properly if there aren't enough goodies to make them from. If you are interested in learning how to better promote your mental health with diet and other strategies, contact Ann Bevan on 0400 688 607.

**Ann Bevan**

## Magnesium and Mental Health: A Response

On many occasions during my time as consumer representative I have listened to individuals tell me that many types of medication were terrible for that person. Likewise, I have heard many other consumers say that the same medications have saved their lives from horrific psychotic experiences. I have come to realise that medications can be great for some people and not good for others.

In VOICES Vol. 1 No. 5, Henry Mackin states that “pharmaceuticals are not the way to go”. This claim, I believe, is not true for many consumers. Henry promotes the use of alternative medicines, specifically magnesium, to be used instead of pharmaceuticals. This promotion of the use of non-orthodox medicines to be used as alternative to medications prescribed by GP’s or Psychiatrist, is of concern to me. Henry provides a fact sheet in his article on the use of Magnesium that makes no claim that magnesium has any effect on mental illness or any of its diagnostic categories like anxiety, depression, etc. Whatever claim individuals may make about new treatments for my mental illness I always keep one thing in mind, my GP’s advice. My GP and I work as a team deciding on what medications I will take in a working decision making partnership.

In the ‘Health Professional Fact-sheet’ Henry provided one statement was key to me, this was the final comment;

*Disclaimer: This fact sheet by the Office of Dietary Supplements provides information that should not take the place of medical advice. We encourage you to talk to your healthcare providers (doctor, registered dietitian, pharmacist, etc.) about your interest in, questions about, or use of dietary supplements and what may be best for your overall health.*

I believe that consumers need to work with medical professionals to help make an informed choice on the use of medications, including non-orthodox medications. I am very lucky that I work on an equal basis with my GP. Consumers are at high risk of trying any pharmaceutical or alternative medicine to ‘cure’ mental illness, people are desperate and will try anything. This puts us at risk of being sold medicines that may do nothing or cause harm. Alternative medicines can also be very expensive. The recovery journey is different for us all. I would encourage everyone to find their own pathway. And when we decide to take pharmaceuticals, complementary medicines, or if people choose to only use alternative medicines, we need make these decisions with expert advice. I believe that in Australia we are fortunate to be able to seek advice from our local GPs. For many people taking pharmaceuticals it is complex decision made for many reasons. To give a blanket statement that “pharmaceuticals are not the way to go” does not assist many of us who need to take them to be able to live a contributing life.

### Darren Jiggins

In the VOICES 1. 5 issue a second article about magnesium was included to help readers understand what the first article was about. Unfortunately, this second article was presumed by some to be by the same contributor, i.e., Henry Mackin, which it was not. The editor apologies for any confusion this may have caused. Ed.

## Comments And Submissions

Feedback is always welcome. This can be done via SharePoint, e-mail, phone, or mail. Newsletter content does not necessarily reflect the views of the Flourish Board or staff. Flourish is not responsible for, and refutes all liability for, damages of any kind arising out of use, reference to, or reliance on any information contained within the newsletter. There is no guarantee the information provided in the newsletter is correct, complete, or up-to-date. Although links may be provided to Internet resources, including websites, Flourish is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information contained in these sites.

**N.B. Due to the holiday period, there will be no January edition of VOICES. The first edition for 2017 will be Vol. 2, No. 1 February 2017. Deadlines for contributions is 23 January 2017.**

## Newsletter guidelines

Submissions should be neatly written or typed articles. A maximum of 500 words per story applies. More than one article per person is welcome, but dependent on space and other restrictions, publication is at the editor's discretion. The editor reserves the right to edit spelling, punctuation, and if needed, grammar. Contributors may be anonymous, use only their first name, or use their entire name. If reporting on Flourish project/policy committee involvement, it is the responsibility of the author to check with the relevant organisation and/or the Flourish CEO, to ensure confidentiality is not being breached.

## **Flourish Membership**

Membership of Flourish is free and open to all Tasmanian's who have a lived experience of mental illness and/or have experience in and an understanding of mental health issues. Being a member of Flourish can provide you with information about mental health through our newsletter, website, and forums where people with an interest in mental health can meet and share their experiences and ideas. Flourish has four Regional Advisory Groups in the North West, the West Coast, the North, and the South, which provide a forum for consumers to have input into the way mental health services are delivered. To apply for membership, complete the attached form, and agree to the Flourish Code of Conduct. If you would like to discuss Flourish membership in more detail, please phone our office on 03 6223 1952 or email [admin@flourishtas.org.au](mailto:admin@flourishtas.org.au)

## **Flourish Code of Conduct**

The Code of Conduct guides Flourish members. The term 'member' refers to employees, Board members, volunteers, Regional Advisory Group members, and work-experience students of Flourish. Flourish seeks best practice in management and governance. Flourish expects a high standard of behaviour from members and there is an expectation that members will conduct themselves in a professional manner. This code underpins other policies, e.g., Anti-Discrimination Act. The following principles form the Code of Conduct:

Members work in a professional manner, adhering to relevant professional and organization codes' of ethics and working with respect, fairness and integrity at all times.

Workplace Health and Safety and the Anti- Discrimination Act are adhered to.

Flourish policy and procedures are adhered to, such as Anti-Discrimination and Harassment, Complaints, Privacy and Confidentiality.

Members are respectful of colleagues and work to resolve conflict in an appropriate manner.

Members conduct themselves professionally at all times and do not act in a manner that might jeopardise the safety of others or themselves or bring the name of Flourish into disrepute.

Members show due care when using all assets and property belonging to Flourish.

Members are aware of diversity in the workplace and are respectful of others.

Members are aware of harassment and bullying issues, discrimination and sexual harassment.

The Code of Conduct mandates the need for appropriate working relationships and the resolution of conflict in a safe and respectful manner. Where conflict is not resolvable members should refer to the Grievance Policy or the Bullying and Harassment policy.

I understand and agree to abide by the Flourish Code of Conduct.

Member's name:

Signature:

Date:

## **Flourish Membership Application Form**



First Name:

Last Name:

Gender (circle): Male / Female / Other

Age (circle): 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66+

Address:

Phone:

Mobile:

Email:

Preferred method of contact:

Do you have any special needs, e.g. mobility?

I agree to Flourish disclosing my contact details to other members for the purposes of contacting me about relevant matters. YES / NO

By signing this application for membership, you have read and agree to abide by the Flourish Code of Conduct

Signature of applicant:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Application processed (date)

Information on register (date)

Letter sent to applicant (date)