



# NEWSLETTER March 2016

The Iris Foundation celebrates its 10th birthday this month! February 2006 saw the Iris Foundation concept come to fruition at the East Gosford Gallery. So much has been achieved in those 10 years, and so many individuals and organisations have assisted with the development of The Iris Foundation to its significant presence in our Central Coast community today. There is no doubt that the Foundation has saved lives through the many programs it has supported over the years. We look forward to many more years of life-saving work in the field of suicide prevention and early intervention.

*Below are some of the memories from the launch in 2006. A special celebration to mark the 10th anniversary is planned for June, more details in the next newsletter.*



## WHAT IS THE IRIS FOUNDATION?

The Iris Foundation is a Central Coast philanthropic foundation that supports and promotes the prevention of suicide through early intervention.

The Foundation does this by:

### Support

- Raising funds for program support and sustainability of the Foundation;
- Identifying gaps in service provision;
- Allocating funds to services and programs for at risk individuals and their families when no alternatives are available.

### Networking and Collaboration

- Maintaining up to date knowledge and access to local and national suicide prevention resources in order to share this information with target groups;
- Evaluating outcomes of programs funding;
- Encouraging collaboration between groups and agencies

### Promotion

- Promoting the outcomes of the programs that are funded by the Iris Foundation;
- Promoting current suicide prevention resources and/or public interest discussions

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Proposed Suicide Prevention Framework for NSW
- Mens Lived Connections Group: Sharing Their Stories
- Young Persons Inspire Connect
- AND MORE!

## BOWLING FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

Rain could not dampen the enthusiasm of supporters at the Barefoot Bowls event at Halekulani Bowling Club last November.

The event was a huge success, raising \$9600 for the Iris Foundation. The event would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the Coordinator of the event Lyn Thompson!

Very special thanks to all the sponsors, particularly LBH Promotions, Northlakes Rotary Club, Halekulani Bowling Club plus of course all those who braved the weather to join us!

The December January issue of B2B With A Twist has a full report of the event including photos: <http://www.b2bwithatwist.com.au/publication.php>



**LIFE CONNECTIONS PROGRAM AT THE EIC COTTAGE WYONG**



The Life Connections program has been running regularly and has received excellent feedback from participants!

Life Connections is a program to develop the skills to recognise, manage and bounce back from life’s challenges effectively.

Experiencing change or loss is an unavoidable part of life. At some time, everyone encounters various stumbling blocks. Some of these trials might be comparatively small, while others are on a much larger scale. How we deal with life’s challenges can play a major role in not only the outcome, but also have long-term psychological consequences.

The Life Connections Program aims to assist individuals to become more aware of their inner resources to withstand adversity, and the external resources they have available through family, friends and community. Participants learn to survive, adapt, and grow in the face

of stress and shock with the philosophy that resilient people are able to apply their skills and strengths to cope and recover from problems and challenges such as job loss, illness, financial problems, medical emergencies, divorce or the death of a loved one.

For more information about the next Life Connections program, email [bookings@irisfoundation.org.au](mailto:bookings@irisfoundation.org.au) .

**LIFE CONNECTIONS FEEDBACK**

*“Fantastic course! The part I enjoyed the most was learning more about myself and receiving tools to [build] the strength to carry on.”*

*“I would definitely recommend this course to others. The best part is meeting new people and being able to learn from them.”*

*“The best part for me was learning about resilience and coping skills and finding my inner strength.”*

*“Ideas were presented in a variety of modes; video, verbal, written etc. Information was well delivered and exercises allowed participants to work in smaller groups as well as the large group.”*

*“Great program! I learned a lot about the motivations behind people’s behaviour and about goal setting.”*

*“Very helpful course whose presenters were very knowledgeable about the topics covered.”*

*“Lots of opportunities for group discussion and the theory and exercises were linked together well.”*

Below : Some of the participants of the Life Connectons program receiving their certificate of completion.



Young people are our future so it's important to support them through challenges. The Iris Foundation is committed to supporting programs which address the needs of young people and families. The infographics below give an effective overview of some of the issues faced by young children and school aged children.

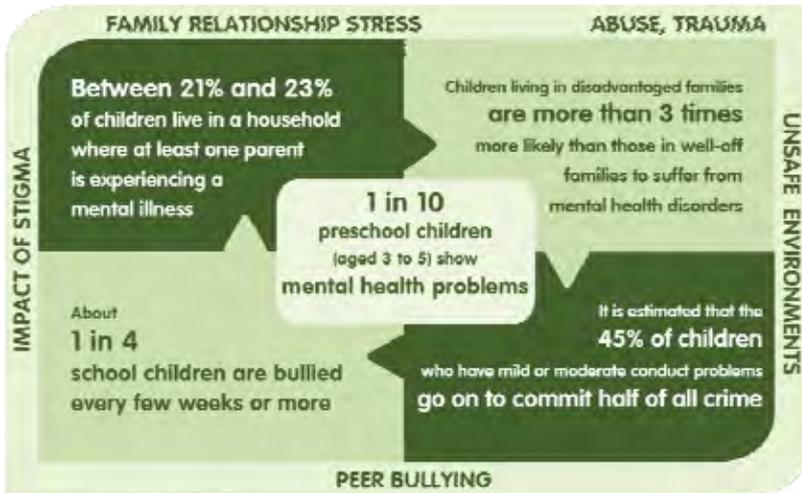
**INSPIRE CONNECT**



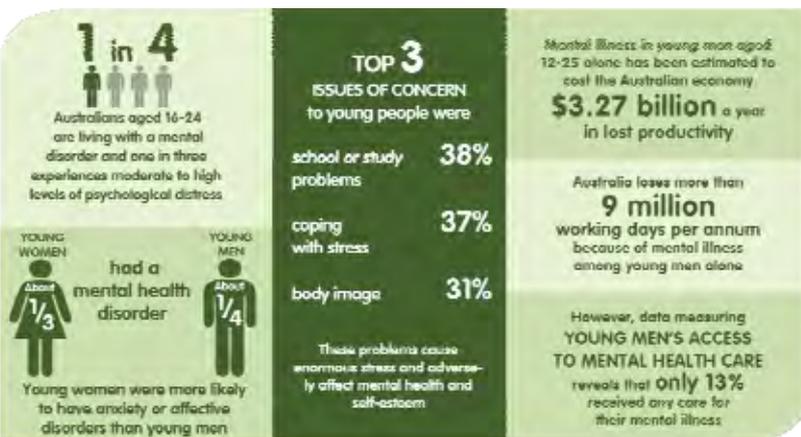
The Young Persons Inspire Connect group celebrated last year's achievements with a Christmas gathering. A 12-week program called 'Rock and Water' had just been completed. The aim of the program was to help young people manage their emotions by being solid (like a rock) and flowing (like water). The group have also completed a session covering cyber bullying and online safety.

Another activity centred on the theme of building self-esteem and letting go of the past utilising rocks and balloons. This activity was particularly popular. A new 8-week mentoring program has now started with topics covered to date including drug safety and information, and identifying risks and harmful behaviour.

The Inspire Connect group is a peer based support program which offers a non-judgmental, understanding and supportive environment amongst like-minded peers to help them cope with stressful life events and improve resilience. The program runs every Tuesday morning at the EIC Cottage from 9.30am to 11am. For enquiries please phone 43510918 or email [bookings@irisfoundation.org.au](mailto:bookings@irisfoundation.org.au)



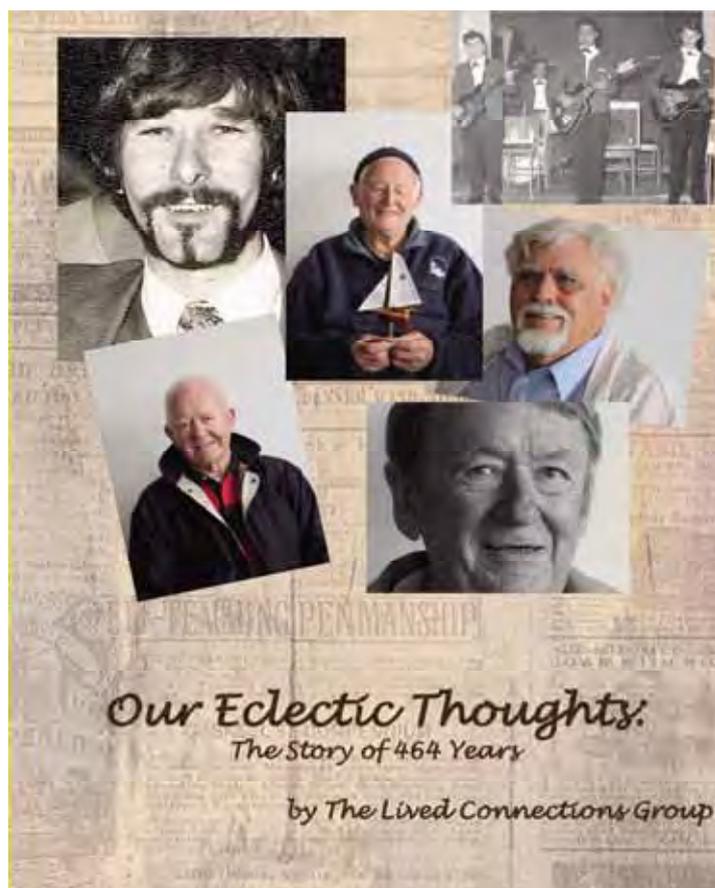
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NSW Mental Health Commission (2014). *Living Well: Putting people at the centre of mental health reform in NSW*. Sydney, NSW Mental Health Commission.





### THE LIVED CONNECTIONS MENS GROUP

The Men's Group who meet at the Cottage every week have completed a project which shares their life experiences in an inspirational photographic book format. The book project grew from the men's desire to reflect and tell stories from their lives.

As well as interviews with one of the group's co-facilitators, the men shared photographs, poems and local history. Several of the group members have commented that they were glad of the opportunity to have their stories heard and preserved for their families and friends.

"Our Eclectic Thoughts– The Story of 464 Years" conveys the value of combining life experiences into a record for future generations, not just from a historical perspective but also to inspire meaningful conversations around perspectives on life between older and younger generations. For more information please phone 4351 0918.

Shown left is the cover of the coffee table book. Below some of the group participants at meetings and at the Christmas party.



### LOOKING FOR THE LATEST ARTICLES ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION OR MENTAL HEALTH?

The Conversation is an online independent source of news and views, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public. The team of professional editors work with university, CSIRO and research institute experts to unlock their knowledge for use by the wider public..

The range of topics is wide, including many pieces on aspects of suicide prevention and mental health. One such article worth checking out is **The Deadly Truth About Loneliness** by Michelle H Lim Lecturer and Clinical Psychologist, Swinburne University of Technology who states that: *"The growing scientific evidence highlighting the negative consequences of loneliness for physical and mental health can no longer be ignored."*

Another article by Brian Draper, Conjoint Professor of Psychiatry, UNSW Australia is titled **'Elderly Men Have The Highest Suicide rate - and Ageism Stops Us From Doing Something About It'** He states: *"Ageist attitudes also hinder efforts to prevent suicide in older people. Too many mistakenly believe it's normal for an older person to get depressed when the evidence is to the contrary."*

For the full articles visit: <https://theconversation.com/>

## RECOGNISE AND SHINE

Recognise and Shine is a new program that has been created in response to young people presenting at the cottage with a history of self-harm, suicide attempts and/or suicidal ideation.

Resilience  
 Educate  
 Connect  
 Optimism  
 Goals  
 Needs  
 Inspire  
 Self  
 Esteem



The word 'recognise' encapsulates the key concepts that underpin the Life Connections program and the EIC Cottage itself.

The new program helps young people to recognise their own strengths, needs, goals and support networks. Young people are engaged with the program via mentoring, advocacy and referrals to other agencies.

At this early stage there are several regular members of the Recognise and Shine Crew receiving support. For more information please email [bookings@irisfoundation.org.au](mailto:bookings@irisfoundation.org.au)

## GOING OFF AT THE SWAMP

The Iris Foundation is one of the sponsors of the annual Going Off At The Swamp Festival which is organised every year by The Epicentre (previously known as San Remo Neighbourhood Centre) The festival highlights the skills, talents and commitment of young people who are involved in all aspects of the festival from the planning phase to implementation and evaluation. Young people are on the organising committee, they perform, they stage manage, introduce the acts, act as roaming entertainers, assist with set up and clean up and much much more. It is a wonderful day out for the whole family with 3 stages of music, lots of stalls and plenty of entertainment. Sunday 10th April at Koala Park San Remo. For more information phone 43907888 or go to [facebook/goatsfestival](https://www.facebook.com/goatsfestival).

## IMPROVING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

The Iris Foundation keeps up to date on the latest national developments in suicide prevention.

Suicide prevention encompasses mental, emotional and physical health.

The National Mental Health Commission released a statement on 18th December 2015 in relation to working to prevent and manage physical health conditions for those with a mental health condition: The full statement can be read here:

<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/media-centre/news/working-together-to-improve-physical-and-mental-health.aspx>

Further consultations on the Consensus Statement addressing the physical health of people with a mental illness are planned in early 2016.

The National Mental Health Commission will seek the views of:

- people with a lived experience of mental health issues and their families and support people
- the clinicians and professionals who provide care for people with mental health conditions, and the colleges that train them
- service providers who work with people with mental health conditions, Primary Health Networks and non-government organisations
- universities and research institutes
- the Commonwealth and state and territory governments
- other national organisations and peak bodies.

Based on their input, a statement will then be produced by mid-2016, to be endorsed by these important groups as a demonstration of their commitment to take collective action.





**BEHIND THE SEEN—EMERGENCY SERVICES SEE WHAT OTHERS DON'T—UPDATE**

Central Coast based project Behind The Seen is continuing to make an impact at both State and National level. The Iris Foundation has supported Central Coast presentations of this project and is thrilled to see the work of Ross and Veronique gaining national attention and recognition. If they thought last year was busy, 2016 is set to challenge them even more. Highlights are:

1) Black Dog Institute is partnering with Behind The Seen and the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services in an innovative research project which will look at the effectiveness of improving health and wellbeing of first responders through a grass roots initiative: pilot evaluation of the Behind The Seen program



*Pictured from left to right: (left to right) Veronique Moseley and Ross Beckley from Behind The Seen and the Black Dog Institute team who will be working with them: Dr Simon Rosenbaum, Professor Katherine Boydell, Associate Professor Philip Ward, Professor Zachary Steel, and Dr David Berle.*

*"To the best of our knowledge, this will be the first pragmatic evaluation of such a program and if effective, is likely to have considerable benefits for first responders Australia wide. If effective, then other first responders with lived experience could be trained to facilitate the BTS program ensuring a scalable and translational outcome of this project."*

Dr Simon Rosenbaum

The partnerships follows on from the recently launched PTSD Expert Guidelines which provide clear and evidence-based protocols for identifying and managing PTSD in emergency services personnel, as well as addressing common co-morbidities such as depression, anxiety and substance use. One of the recommendations (page 52) was: *There is the possibility that many cases of PTSD amongst emergency workers may be preventable, via initiatives such as resilience training and pre-incident preparedness training. While such interventions are popular, the evidence base for their use amongst emergency workers is limited. There is an urgent need for good quality trials of these interventions within emergency services.*

Behind The Seen's response is of course excited: *"We started this project based on requests from those on the frontline in emergency services. It's a down to earth approach that's having a positive impact - and finally we have the means by which to gain an independent review of that impact. This partnership is a hugely significant one for Australian emergency services and their families who often feel that no one is listening and that no-one understands their wellbeing needs. The team at The Black Dog Institute involved in this research not only has an incredible wealth of experience in research and in the mental health of emergency services, they are passionate about exploring positive changes to assist the wellbeing of those who keep our communities safe."*



2) Behind The Seen was awarded a 2015 Fire Awareness Award consisting of a special incentive grant of \$2000 to introduce Behind The Seen to Victoria's firefighters including the CFA, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and MFB.

3) A conference presentation at the National Mens Health Gathering at Terrigal in October was insightful not just from the perspective of sharing information about emergency services but also a great networking opportunity.



For more information about Behind The Seen visit [facebook.com/behindtheseenaustralia](https://facebook.com/behindtheseenaustralia)

## PROPOSED NSW SUICIDE PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

A new, evidence-based approach to suicide prevention developed with funding from the Mental Health Commission of NSW is set to be rolled out to communities most in need in NSW. The Framework will be trialled in four communities over six years, commencing in 2016. Communities will be selected on a needs-first basis. NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley said the Framework's Implementation would impact stubbornly high suicide rates. The Proposed Suicide Prevention Framework for NSW was developed by the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention with funding from the Mental Health Commission of NSW. It is based on a "systems approach" to suicide prevention and requires all medical, government, health and community agencies within in a local community to work together to achieve nine evidence-based strategies:

1. Reducing access to lethal means
2. Responsible reporting of suicide by the media
3. Promotion of national suicide awareness programs
4. School-based peer support and mental health literacy
5. Gatekeeper training for those like to be in contact with high risk individuals, including teachers, clergy, and community social workers
6. Regular suicide prevention training for emergency services
7. Training GPs to assess risk and start conversations
8. Adequate access to tailored evidence-based therapies such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) to high risk groups
9. Targeted support for people who have made a previous attempt or are in current crisis through phone and online counselling, training for emergency department staff and out-patient support.



*Excerpt from <http://nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/>*

## RELEASE OF WORLD FIRST EMERGENCY SERVICES PTSD GUIDELINES

The world's first clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in emergency service workers were launched at the end of last year. Developed by leading Australian clinicians and researchers, these national guidelines provide clear and evidenced-based protocols for identifying and managing PTSD in this unique and high risk group, as well as addressing common co-morbidities such as depression, anxiety and substance use.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) describes a severe and persistent mental health impairment following exposure to a single or multiple traumatic events. Symptoms typically involve mentally re-experiencing trauma; avoidance of triggering situations; low mood; and arousal symptoms including insomnia and irritability.

According to Dr Sam Harvey, who is a psychiatrist and lead author of the guidelines, PTSD can occur in anyone exposed to trauma but managing it in emergency service workers is especially challenging. "Emergency workers fill a hugely important role in our society, but unfortunately the nature of their job means they are regularly exposed to different types of trauma – from witnessing distressing events to having their own lives in significant danger. The cumulative nature of their trauma exposure, and the different coping mechanisms emergency workers use, mean PTSD often presents in atypical ways and can be difficult to identify and differentiate from other mental illnesses, especially for clinicians who are not specialists in the field."

The guidelines can be downloaded here: <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/education/workplace/research.cfm>

**DO YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE FOR THIS NEWSLETTER?**



If you would like to contribute an article to this newsletter, please email:

admin@irisfoundation.org.au

*The deadline for the next newsletter is May 2016.*

**SUCCESSFUL CLUB GRANTS**

A very special thank you to the Doyalson Wyee RSL Club, Wyong League Club Group, Halekulani Bowling Club and Ettalong Diggers for their generous assistance through the Clubs Grants. This support allows The Iris Foundation to continue prevention and early intervention programs throughout Wyong and Gosford.



**THANK YOU TO ALL PAST AND CURRENT SPONSORS**



The Iris Foundation could not do its work without the generosity of sponsors and is extremely grateful for their support. Is your business interested in supporting suicide prevention strategies on the Central Coast?

If so, please contact us for a sponsorship pack or for more information: admin@irisfoundation.org.au or phone: 0429 921 149

**CAN YOU HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

*All donations of \$2 and more are tax deductible.*

The Iris Foundation relies on the generous donations of businesses and individuals. Please help us to help others.

Cheques: payable to 'Iris Foundation'

Direct deposit: Iris Foundation; Bendigo Bank Wyong

BSB: 633 000 Acct: 145738068

**USEFUL CONTACTS**

If you or anyone else is at immediate risk of self harm or harm to others, please call '000' or your nearest hospital.

*Suicide Call Back Service*

1300 659 467 or visit [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

*Lifeline* on 13 11 14 or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

*Mens Line Australia*

1300 78 99 78 or visit [www.menslineaus.org.au](http://www.menslineaus.org.au)

*Kids Helpline* 1800 55 1800

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/>

*SANE Australia* 1800 18 SANE (7263)

Telephone mental illness advice and referrals, weekdays 9am–5pm or visit <http://www.sane.org/>

*Beyondblue* 1300 22 4636 - Info line for depression, anxiety and related disorders, as well as online resources and information.

<http://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

*Dads in Distress Support Services (DIDSS)*

1300 853 437 or

<http://www.dadsindistress.asn.au/>

*NSW Mental Health Line* 1800 011 511

*Headspace @ Y Central*

(Mental Health – 12yrs to 24yrs) – 4304 7870 or visit <http://www.headspace.org.au/centralcoast/>

*Domestic Violence* 24/7 confidential telephone counselling and online chat service about domestic violence 1800 RESPECT (737 7328)

<http://www.1800respect.org.au/>

*VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families*

Counselling Service 1800 01 10 46 or

<http://www.dva.gov.au/>