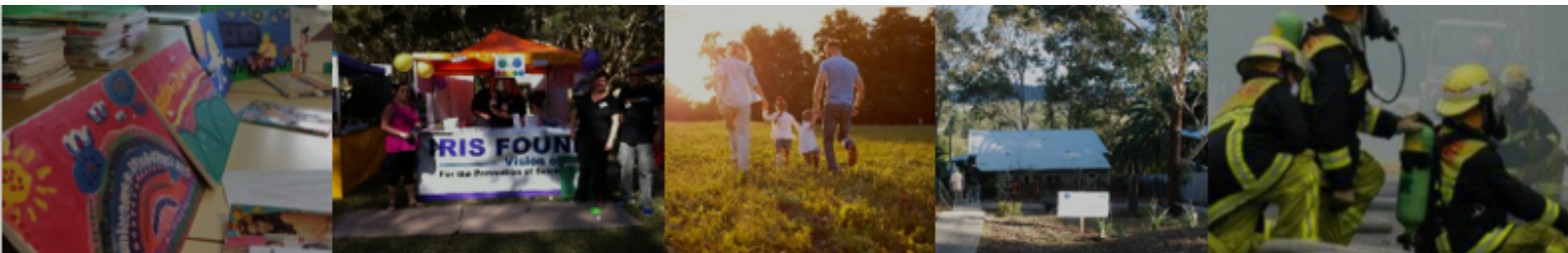




The logo for the IRIS Foundation features the word "iris" in a stylized, lowercase, blue font. Above the letters "i" and "s" are two blue circles. A yellow arc with two small yellow dots at its ends connects the top of the "i" to the top of the "s". Below the word "iris" is the word "FOUNDATION" in a blue, uppercase, sans-serif font.

IRIS
FOUNDATION

in 2017



Chairman's Report

Dear Friends,

It is with both great pleasure and pride that I introduce you to this inaugural Annual Review of Iris Foundation's activities.

2017 proved to be another challenging year for the Foundation. As we managed internal changes, we also moved positively forward in our key objective of increasing program delivery, particularly within the Central Coast's local primary school network. We remain committed to the principle that providing tools for resilience and social connectedness will help those most at risk to avoid the emotional pain and desperation that often leads them to suicide.

This review details these and other initiatives Iris Foundation has undertaken through the past 12 months – I am sure you will find it both informative and interesting.

I take this opportunity to thank all our supporters, both large and small. It is only through your contributions that we have progressed this far and can continue to expand our efforts. For those readers previously unaware of the Foundation's efforts in reducing suicide on the Central Coast, I hope you will find our work worthy of your future endorsement – clearly there is much more to be done.

As a small group, much of the Foundation's work depends on shared commitment. I thank the other Iris Foundation board members, staff and program facilitators for their input, dedication and irrepressible drive.

Sincerely,

Barry Abrahams B.Sc (Hons); M.B.A.

Chairman

Our Vision

The prevention of suicide.

Our Work

Iris Foundation works to foster resilience, hope and connections in our community as a means to reducing the risk of suicide.

Our Thanks

Grateful thanks to our many donors and supporters for all the opportunities, gifts and support throughout 2017.

Sponsors

Sharp DS Central Coast
Buckland IT Services
Fortunity
BBX

Supporting Businesses

2GO & SeaFM
BluJ's Café Toukley
La Carta
Peachies Hair Budgewoi
St George Bank Tuggerah
The Hopping Bean Machine
Wyong Community Bank Branch
of Bendigo Bank
Wyong Milk Factory
Wyong Rugby League Club



Thank You

Grants and Foundations

Bellbird Committee
CARE Inc
Elderslee Foundation
Sisters of Charity Foundation
Westpac Foundation
Wyong Roos Foundation
Wyong Rugby League Club Group

Donors – over \$500

Robert and Silvana Natoli
Northlakes Toukley Rotary
Ray Hinds
Yasmin Catley MP
Wyong Community Bank Branch
of Bendigo Bank

COOL CONNECTIONS IN SCHOOL

Cool Connections is an in-school program for students in the later years of primary school. It aims to increase self-esteem, build confidence and social support, and to help children identify positive qualities about themselves – unearthing their own 'superpowers'.

"A very supportive environment was created. It has been a positive experience at school for each of the children. Amazing facilitators!" - Leesa Field, Lake Munmorah Public School Principal

"We are very fortunate to have the program run twice with two different groups of children. The feedback from the students about the program has been overwhelmingly positive and we are seeing some changes in the children's behaviours and self-esteem....I look forward to working with you again!" - Tracey Ellen, Budgewoi Public School Deputy Principal

Between April 2016 and December 2017, 14 Cool Connections programs were delivered to 130 students in 8 Central Coast primary schools. Four of the schools requested and received a return of the program to accommodate more students. Average attendance at each program has been between 7 and 10 students, predominantly from years 5 and 6. Retention rate was high with 12 out of the 14 programs having all participants complete the program.

At the conclusion of 2017 the program was reviewed and extended to 8 weeks as a result of requests to allow more time to complete creative activities and incorporate an additional weekly journaling component.



LIFE CONNECTIONS

The Life Connections program aims to educate individuals to become more aware of their inner resources and to build resilience – the ability to withstand stress and catastrophe. Participants gather practical tools to help them bounce back quickly from setbacks and day-to-day challenges and to feel more connected with themselves, their families and the wider community.

"For those of us attending it has been inspiring, encouraging and life changing." - Hopetown Parents Group

"The program helped to engage the disadvantaged and vulnerable and help them to feel valued in their community. Consequently, clients are wanting to become more engaged in the community, continue to gain new skills and do things to improve their quality of life."
- Nicole Schwebel, Community Development Worker, Long Jetty Meeting Place

In 2017, six Life Connections programs, with a total of 52 participants, were hosted by various organisations in the Wyong area. Mental wellbeing was measured at the beginning and the conclusion of each course. Wellbeing was boosted by an average of 17% amongst those who completed the course. (Improvement greater than 10% is considered significant by the World Health Organisation.)



In 2018, an enhanced Life Connections program will be piloted with two community groups in the Hunter region whose members have experienced domestic violence, relationship breakdown and other trauma. The program will expand to 10 weekly sessions to include an artistic component which will help participants create a new hopeful and inspiring chapter in their life stories.

Lived Experience Speakers Bureau

Iris Foundation partnered with Suicide Prevention Australia to train seven speakers to share messages of hope and impart practical ways to prevent suicide in the community.

Participants, each with a lived experience of suicide, took part in an intensive two-day training workshop in late May 2017. They learned about suicide prevention and examined their reasons for wanting to share their stories with others. Completing this training grants participants accreditation with Suicide Prevention Australia's Lived Experience Speakers Bureau. Trained speakers can share their experiences regarding suicide with interested community groups in ways that are safe, helpful and life-affirming.



Suicide Prevention Australia defines 'lived experience' as having experienced suicidal thoughts, survived a suicide attempt, cared for someone who has attempted suicide, been bereaved by suicide, or been touched by suicide in another way.

"Life is precious but sometimes the pain of being alive is overwhelming and takes away our ability to see the future. Suicidal thought controlled my life for several years. I shared my story and learned I am not alone. There are so many people like myself who are forever grateful to still be here when there was a time I woke up every day wishing I wasn't. I learned to share my story safely and to keep myself and others safe, and how to reach out and support others. This weekend course was invaluable to me and the rest of my group. I have been given a gift and I am dedicated to pass it on." - Beverley Rigg, Participant

"We all felt that we were able to tell our stories in a safe and caring environment and I look forward to telling my story to help others." - Helen Crowley, Participant

"I have learnt so much and love my story. I will use it well." - Jo Evans, Participant

Behind The Seen

Iris Foundation is proud to support a preventative mental health program for Triple 0 emergency services responders including firefighters, police, paramedics and rescue personnel.

Behind The Seen (emergency services SEE what others don't) is an innovative program aimed at heightening awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health issues specifically among first responders and their families.

The project runs group sessions with the aim of recognising symptoms of stress and building and utilizing support networks.

Behind the Seen is also actively advocating in the suicide prevention and mental health sectors, encouraging more community understanding and support of the unique stresses faced by our first responders.

"If it was not for the intervention of Behind the Seen, I would not have sought help and most likely would have given in to darkness and would not be here today."
- Volunteer firefighter

Website: www.behindtheseen.com.au

Facebook: [behindtheseenaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/behindtheseenaustralia)



Tree of Dreams™

The project created a positive ripple of hope, connectedness and community support and helped to raise funds for the Iris Foundation to continue its work in the prevention of suicide.

A reception and tree-lighting ceremony for supporters of the project was held on September 7. A plaque was unveiled as a permanent reminder of the Tree's significance. The Tree of Dreams™ shone spectacularly against the night sky as local musician Wendy Gill sang her song, 'Hymn for Life', that she had penned specifically for the event.



It is our intent that the Tree of Dreams™ will become a yearly memorable tradition on the Central Coast.



The Tree of Dreams™, which aims to generate conversation around mental well-being and suicide on the Central Coast, expanded significantly in 2017, with local people and businesses warmly embracing the project.

Situated at the Wyong Milk Factory site, the Tree of Dreams™ represented an opportunity to contribute a note of love, a message of strength, a dream and hope of a brighter day. For some, hand-written tags adorning the tree were a memorable way to acknowledge and pay tribute to those they have lost.

Hundreds of tags adorned the tree as a visual display of support. *Whenever there is an outpouring of emotion, there follows comfort, hope, support, and healing.*



Major support came from Wyong Milk Factory, Wyong Rugby League Club Group, Radio 2GO & SeaFM and from Wyong Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank. Tags were sold via outlets and online from August 18, culminating on September 10 – World Suicide Prevention Day.

Local businesses and the community including Wyong Community Bank Branch of Bendigo Bank, Trendpac, Helloworld Travel Erina Group, Emma McBride MP and Breakthru also jumped on board to sponsor baskets of tags, allowing hundreds of young people to share messages of hope and solace.





Bendigo Bank Wyong



Mark -
The Hopping Bean Machine



St George Tuggerah BBQ



Springtime Festival



Tree of Dreams



Behind The Seen



Tree of Dreams



Northlakes Toukley Rotary



Italian Night Fundraiser



Cool Connections



Wyong Milk Factory



Wyong Milk Factory



Yarramalong Festival



BluJ's Cafe



Tree of Dreams
Budgewoi



Tree of Dreams
Launch