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TREATMENT - IT'S VALUABLE AND IT WORKS

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Dr. John Herron, ANCD Chairman. Published in the Week-end Australian.

“This month sees the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) launch a new television commercial to promote the value and importance of treatment in addressing drug and alcohol misuse. With the support of many people in the business community, including Michael Cohen, Nigel Dick and Harold Mitchell, the ANCD has been able to widely advise people experiencing drug and alcohol problems on where and how to get help.

Australia has done very well in recent years in reducing the number of fatalities from heroin use, as well as having one of the lowest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world among injecting drug users. Unfortunately there is not enough recognition on the value of providing treatment. Whilst media and public attention often focuses on the problems caused by drug and alcohol misuse or the good work done by law enforcement agencies in intercepting large illicit drug shipments, there is a tremendous amount of work being done every day in thousands of locations around the country to help people overcome the harm they are causing themselves and others with their drug and alcohol misuse...

Some of the progress we have seen over the years with how treatment is developed and delivered is truly inspiring. Australia has a right to be proud of how far its therapeutic community sector has met the challenges of providing attractive and effective treatment—gone are the days of punitive and austere programs, replaced with programs that address underlying problems, personal development and preparation for re-engagement with family, friends and the wider community. Indeed these are programs that are being sought for advice across South East Asia today...

However, whilst there has been great developments and investment over the past 15 years in drug and alcohol treatment in Australia, we still lag significantly in having enough treatment places for all the people that need them. We have come from a very low base but the ANCD would like to see places for at least 80% of all dependent drug and alcohol users in Australia. In particular, we need to invest far more in Indigenous drug and alcohol treatment services and prison based drug and alcohol treatment services...

The most striking feature when we examine where the money goes is how little is spent on treatment. Less than one fifth of our total expenditure is on treatment despite it being the best option we have to move people from destructive drug dependence to productive members of our community.

...So how do we address these imbalances and policy failures? Well, first we need to look at the overall investment rather than just the distribution of current investments. Otherwise there is a potential in undercutting the success of supply reduction strategies rather than building on them to deter drug use and get people into treatment. Building upon the partnerships between health and law enforcement sectors by investing more in drug treatment, like we have done with the COAG Illicit Drug Diversion Initiative is a better model to replicate. For instance, recent evaluations are clearly showing that the drug diversion initiative works as it requires an earlier entry into treatment than may have occurred otherwise. However, in the community we hear frequent complaint, especially from families, about the unavailability of treatment facilities. It's high time that we acted on the evidence of this deficiency in our overall management and response to drug and alcohol problems. To put it even more simply—as we state in our new community service announcement—treatment works.

Editor's note: Dr. John Herron has visited several Therapeutic Communities during his time as Chairman of the ANCD. It was our pleasure to have him as Key Note Speaker at the ATCA 2007 Conference last November.



ATCA NEWS



BOARD REPORT

**by Lynne Magor-Blatch
ATCA Chairperson**

The highly successful 2007 conference in Melbourne provided the ATCA with an opportunity to celebrate the many achievements of the past 21 years and to reflect on our directions for the future. The provision of funding in 2006 by the Australian Government, together with funds generously provided by many of our member organisations, enabled us to expand the Association's base of operations and to engage Janice Jones as our Executive Officer. We can point to a number of important achievements that have resulted from our ability to establish the ATCA Secretariat and to appoint an Executive Officer.

In the past two years membership of the ATCA has grown from 26 to 30 organisations operating 41 TCs. Importantly, we are now assessing eligibility for membership from organisations that have either established themselves as Therapeutic Communities, or are working towards TC status in a variety of settings - alcohol and other drug, mental health and corrections. We have also established strong links with our European and UK counterparts, including invited membership of the Addiction TC Advisory Group of the Community of Communities, which is the centre for quality improvement for Therapeutic Communities governed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK. The Board is currently working towards the development of Australian standards, utilising information from a number of established national and international tools.

The Executive Officer and Board members have met with Members of Parliament and Government Departments - both Federal and State, as well as National and State peak bodies to promote TCs, and we are now represented on a number of national bodies. Members have been directly supported by the Executive Officer and through the redesigned website, which now includes a member's chat room to facilitate a means of communication and support. We are now also producing regular quarterly newsletters and the Board is currently developing a Strategic Plan which will define the future business plan of the Secretariat.

Other activities for the coming year include the development of a research project that will investigate the efficacy of the Therapeutic Community model as a treatment for co-occurring disorders, and participation in the ANCD's Asia-Pacific Drug Issues Committee's Twinning Project aimed at promoting supportive partnerships between locally based alcohol and other drug agencies in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and South East Asia.

At the 2007 AGM, Lynne Magor-Blatch (ADFACT/Karralika, ACT), Garth Popple (WHOS, NSW/Qld), Eric Allan (Odyssey, Vic) and Gerard Byrne (Salvation Army, Recovery Services Command) were returned unopposed. Following the AGM, we farewelled Pam McKenna after her long association with the Board, and since that time have joined with her WA colleagues in wishing her well in her retirement from the sector. Pam has provided a huge contribution to the Association and the sector, and will be greatly missed. Antigone Quince from Windana in Victoria has been seconded onto the Board to fill Pam's vacancy for a 12 month period. I was honoured to be elected Chairperson, Barry Evans (Buttery, NSW) was elected Deputy Chair, Gerard Byrne is again Treasurer and Eric Allan is once more our Public Officer. Other Directors are Carol Daws (Cyrenian, WA), Mary Alcorn (Mirikai, Qld) and Stuart Anderson (Higher Ground, NZ). As a Board, we look forward with enthusiasm to working with our members in 2008.



The ATCA Board (clockwise from top) Gerard, Lynne, Antigone, Garth, Eric, Barry, Stuart, Mary, Carol.



TC NEWS

THE LAST VICE

by **Kate Hewett, Director, Kamira Farm**

Have you ever heard of ‘the last vice’?
That legal substance that cuts life short through torturous deaths.

Or perhaps you have heard your colleagues discussing how ‘you can’t take that away from them, it’s the only thing they have left!’.

This substance that perpetuates the cycle of poverty, whilst making obscene profits for its manufacturers and Governments worldwide.

I have heard all the rationales for why we should leave our clients with their last vice and I have quietly continued my focus upon the drugs we have been funded to treat. Yet I live in hope that some day we/I would be brave enough to challenge the last vice.

We all know the harms of tobacco use. I could rattle off the statistics, effectively fluffing up the word count for this article, but we know the harm, we see the harm.

I have had young mums explain to me that they are out of money this week and need to pay less rent so they can buy formula and nappies for their babies, while a cigarette smoulders in their finger tips. How it feeds this cycle of poverty.

I see the bronchial illness the mothers and children suffer from. Witnessed asthma medication in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

I transport infants and toddlers to Drs appointments with chronic ear, nose and throat infections.

These infections common to infants and toddlers living in smoking environments, often end in surgery for adenoid removal and grommets being positioned.

I, like many of us, have watched loved ones die horrific deaths from lung cancer and other tobacco related illnesses, and still I am not brave enough.

Kamira Farm has followed recommendations designed to minimise tobacco use. There exists one small portion of land behind the back shed, under a tree where smoking is permitted. No furniture lives there, no creature comforts, not even a ‘cuppa’ is permitted to coincide. The pathway is a goat track and it is not lit. There is no such thing as a smoke break but rather stretch breaks and they do not interrupt the program for the day. Strict guidelines exist for smoking whilst on an outing and the same rules apply whilst on camping trips. It is true that these actions have probably led to a reduction in tobacco use and also drawn to the clients’ consciousness the deliberate decision they are making each time they chose to ‘have a smoke’. Yet they still smoke.

Kamira’s program extends into fitness, well being and healthy diets. We employ consultants for their expert services in yoga, meditation, nutrition etc. Evaluations of these additionally services support beyond doubt the conviction the clients have to improving their lives. But yet I still support them to smoke.

The tide is turning.

ATCA WELCOMES FOUR NEW MEMBERS

The Following organisations were welcomed as Provisional Members of the Association in February;

Ngara Nura Therapeutic Program, Long Bay Correctional Centre NSW

Serenity Lodge - Rockingham WA

The Salvation Army Basin Centre - The Basin Vic

Care NZ - Wellington New Zealand



TC NEWS

FIRE AT CULLACABARDEE - HOW THE TC SURVIVED

Residents and staff from Cyrenian House tell their story

The day the fire came, we were going about business as usual... No-one suspected we would have to grab what we could and evacuate until the fire had run its dangerous course... *'The alarm sounded and staff responded quickly...we gathered together ... We could see the helicopters water bombing trying to contain the blaze... At that point it looked a long way off but we could see it was big'* Sarah 20yrs.

Staff turned on reticulation, gathered keys, and organized the evacuation.

Resies gathered onto the buses, all chalets and rooms were checked, the children in the crèche and crèche staff were informed, people off the property were located and informed and the whole community left the property together.

Off the property fire brigade were directing traffic away from the blaze, people where driving frantically trying to save their property or let animals out...

The smoke filled the sky like a haze. Whiteman Park was evacuated and all surrounding roads where blocked off.

There was already in place a well practiced evacuation plan... Mums, children, residents and staff all met together at the emergency rally point in Ellenbrooke.

Vans, work vehicles, staff cars and the Ute pulled in from various directions... Inside everyone sat together, staff were on the phone making plans, ringing emergency services, management and family and friends and ensuring everyone was safe and accounted for.

At this point emergency services made it clear we would not be going back onto the property that night. The whole community needed to be co-coordinated into safe accommodation for the night.



Lunch in the park - a little cool relief

Everyone was helpful, night staff came in and took over some of the day staff, food was organized for children and plans were made. Some organized lifts and went to safe accommodation with family or friends while the others went together to stay the night at Palmerston Farm.

'Thank goodness for Palmerston and Serenity... Thank goodness for good pizza shops ... Palmerston were amazing... everyone came together to help out... we were offered dinner... donations of towels and soap... and beds to sleep, we all slept together on

mattresses in the group room...the guys in one room the women and children in another,' Kelly 22yrs

'We had a home group that night in the group room. We checked in our feelings...we shared with the guys at Palmerston what had gone on... offered each other support ... it was really a unifying experience...' Mark 20yrs

'The next day we found out the fire had moved in the night and was now

completely surrounding the property... the firefighters were working on containing it... the roads in and out of the property were closed off... we weren't going back that night that was certain' Kate 35yrs

'On the second day we arranged a meeting from out-patients for the whole community...People who had been out for the night... mums and kids, staff, welfare and management all met down the park at lunch time.. Medications were organized and re-issued and any medicines were properly dispensed...' Eleanor 34yrs

'Welfare organized lunch and clothes for us to wear... We called our families and friends to let them know we were all right... We all went to a meeting together... We stuck together...Staff were amazing...' Beth 28

The community spent the second night out in the arranged emergency accommodation.



TC NEWS

It was uncertain as to when exactly the roads to the rehab would be open, if there was any damage to the buildings and when we would be able to get clothes, medication or personal belongings. Management kept up to date with the news as things unfolded so we knew what was next.

'Some people were getting stressed, we really needed to support each other at this time... we wanted to get back, we didn't know if all our things were gone in the fire or not, how long we would be out for.. It wasn't all easy'... Brett 22yrs

'I had to organize formula for my baby, Reonna was great, we rang to inform DCP about where we were staying each time we had a change of plan, I was glad I wasn't on my own with this' Keira 32yrs

'When we finally got the word to go home we were all relieved, we packed up our things and headed back. Driving back we didn't know what to expect.' Sam 20yrs

'Down the driveway.. we were shocked.. the whole property was burnt... .. the bush was completely black,... The fire brigade had saved

the buildings... it was really frightening just how close the fire actually came... really, it came right up to the buildings... the art rooms...the houses... it was really frightening... amazing that they saved it..' Judy 45yrs

'It must have been a big fight to keep the fire back... We were all so grateful... grateful to the rehabs, the fire brigade it makes you realize just how dangerous fire really is' Amy 26yrs

The TC was able to manage on what it knew best. .. responding well to crisis, reaching out, supporting each other. By remaining open and flexible, sharing who we are our strengths and weaknesses in adversity, we learn through experience how to hold ourselves and support and care for others. This is what the TC is.

The fire evacuation was successful and people were well supported. What we realized on this day especially was that 'Therapeutic Community' did not stop at the gate... That we are also part of a whole and greater community of people who are kind, dedicated to what they do, loving, generous and supportive...

Knowing this is a gift.



The devastation



CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

2007 ATCA CONFERENCE

by Eric Allan, Conference Committee Chairperson

It was with great pleasure that the staff and clients of Odyssey House Victoria, Windana and the Youth Substance abuse Service in a collaboration with Janice Jones Executive Officer of the ATCA hosted the 21st annual ATCA Conference “Past, Present & Future” held at the Park Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne from the 14th to the 16th November 2007.

We were indeed privileged to have:

Mr. Nigel Dick AO, to open and M.C. the first day of the conference

Dr. John Herron, Chairman of the ANCD address the conference delegates

Dr Rex Haigh and Natalie Wood of the Royal College of Psychiatrists’ Centre for Continuous Quality Improvement.

Mr. Daryl Smeaton, CEO of the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation

Alfonse Joseph from the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities sending congratulations from Monsignor William O’Brien.

Joe Lamberti, the founding President of the Association speaking of the early years of the Association.

Mr. James Pitts from Odyssey House N.S.W. taking us through a history of the TC movement in Australasia.

Ms. Gill Calister of the Drugs Policy Services Branch, Victorian Department of Human Services.

Delegates arrived from all over Australia, New Zealand, the U.K and America to join us in what was an inspiring and highly charged conference. The theme of past present and future was one that fitted celebration and the coming of age of the association.

Presentations and photographic displays of years gone by showed the establishment of TCs around the country. They also served as an interesting anthology of fashion through the last 21 years with depictions of early building projects being carried out by staff, residents and volunteers of various agencies. These people were the heart and soul of the establishment of Therapeutic Communities in Australia and New Zealand. We heard of the international history of the movement From Dr. Rex Haigh in an extremely interesting key note address.

Many delegates took the opportunity to showcase new initiatives from their programs which gave others the opportunity to draw on the rich tapestry of knowledge and experience at the conference. Delegates were given the opportunity to consider everything from standards developed in the U.K by the Royal College of Psychiatrists Centre for Continuous Quality Improvement to some very interesting presentations on the use of creative therapies and promoting Insight Through Group feedback via the Use of Psychometric Assessment as an intervention in itself in a Therapeutic Community.

On the second evening of the conference we held the Gala Dinner and presentation evening hosted by Mr. Tony Charlton AM. The ATCA chose to acknowledge those people who have made a significant contribution to the movement along with those who had contributed through the development of innovative practice. Congratulations to all those who received awards. We were all treated to the very talented Sweethearts Dance Band and many delegates took the opportunity to dance the night away.

The conference wrapped up with a forum chaired by Mr. David Crosbie CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia including Senator Lynn Ellison focused on the way forward for T.C’s into the future and how best to influence the decision makers about the efficacy of the movement.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

LIVING LEARNING EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOP

by Susan Pepper, Odyssey House Vic.

Immediately following the ATCA conference 15 brave souls headed off from a city hotel in Melbourne to Lyrebird Park, an adventure campsite/conference centre, tucked away in a beautiful valley off the road to Warburton. We were participating in a short intentional community experience.

Apart from our bags, we soon discovered that we had each brought with us expectations of the weekend, that were as varied as everything else we brought. Initially, some people were expecting bag searches. Some people thought the weekend would be highly structured with consequences for being late to group, and not doing what was expected. So it was somewhat of a surprise, and relief, that apart from some set times for community meetings, small groups and meals, we could do what we decided we would do. The structure was ours to create, if indeed we wanted any more structure, and group time was ours do what we would with it.

On reflection, what was available was an opportunity to create a community experience. What we collectively experienced, at least initially, was frustration at not knowing what was happening or what was expected, and the way we each dealt with that frustration.

Interestingly, the first issue that came up was about leaving - was it OK for people with cars to drive to the local shops when they decided to? As the group discussed this, it became obvious that we needed to have a protocol or agreed approach to making decisions, including how to make the decisions about how to make the decisions. It was back to basics - how would the group make its decisions - voting? consensus? What would happen if people did not cooperate? Another issue that the group spent a lot of time on was what would we do Saturday afternoon? Have unstructured free time? Workshops to allow people to share their skills, and for others to learn?

Tensions from varying expectations also played out in small group time, and it was here, in particular, that I discovered what I had brought with me other than clothing. Questions abounded. Were we dealing with the behaviour in the here and now - one of the roles of group work in a TC? Were we sharing our personal stories? What role did the facilitators play? What was it all about anyway? How would we deal with conflict?

The weekend was one rich in learning, and this short piece does not in anyway reflect the multilayered learning that was possible from participating in the weekend. I left with a deeper understanding of communities in action, and the role I play, but also with some frustrations at my expectations of others - something I had also found packed in my luggage!

I took home with me the delight of an early morning walk to the nearby creek to check out the freshwater mussels, the experience of meeting people from other TCs, the pleasure of being able to give to others in the creative writing workshop I ran, and a stronger sense of myself in community (and my preference to isolate in the evenings!).

EXPERIENCE OF A TC WORKSHOP

by Tim Drowne Cyrenian House WA

This workshop was designed as an experience of Therapeutic Community *not* drug rehabilitation. Incredibly the various AOD workers that attended initially wanted to recreate a drug rehabilitation environment. (When we can create *anything* we want, we re-create the familiar!).

This highlighted the *difference* between "pure TC" and "TC with an agenda" (ie. AOD rehabilitation) raising the question how much are we TC and how much are we rehab? Being a D&A rehab means that we need to *support* the TC with various principles/strategies (eg. Development of personal responsibility, identification of & response to destructive behaviours) but I believe we need to be careful not to *control* the TC with these strategies, otherwise we begin to lose the nature of the TC - community is the method.

The weekend highlighted that "community is". Pure TC acknowledges that community is not created, but is the instant result of bringing a group of people together. Community always has a structure, whether formal or informal, transparent or hidden. Sometimes the true structure of community is hidden behind the appearance of structure.

Our community was formed with the single goal of experiencing a TC environment. To do this it took at least a day for people to drop their expectations and adjust to community. People felt insecure initially without rules and social agreements were slowly being formed and reached. But all this happened without any input from the facilitators who were observers of the process and participated as community members, providing honest personal feedback much more frequently than clinical feedback.



ATCA AWARDS

One of the many highlights of the 2007 ATCA Conference's 21st Anniversary dinner was the presentation of the Annual ATCA Awards. These awards were presented to Individuals who had given so much to the Therapeutic Community sector and in recognition of their dedication and their willingness to go beyond the expected. Individual programs were also recognised for their innovative practice and the significant contribution they have made to raising the benchmark of TC practice.

Individual winners were:

Antigone Quince - Windana Vic	Susan Henvile - Karmira Farm NSW
Therese Power - Karralika ACT	Karen Bartlett - Fresh Hope Qld
Jean Tyler - Kamira Farm NSW	Camille Kersley - Karralika ACT
Darren Byrne - Odyssey House Vic	Robbie Ferris - Goldbridge Qld

Awards for Innovative Practice went to:

WHO'S Methadone to Abstinence Residential Programme
Karralika's Family Programme
Odyssey House Victoria's Circuit Breaker Programme

Congratulations to all the winners.

This is a good time to consider who you will be nominating for the 2008 ATCA Awards. Call for nominations will be announced soon. Watch this space...

ATCA'S 2008 CONFERENCE "ADVANCING THE COMMUNITY APPROACH" 9th 10th & 11th September 2008 Byron Bay NSW

This year's conference is shaping up to be an exciting event with exceptional key note speakers set in a wonderful environment creating a 'Conference of Communities'.

The Conference Organising Committee is currently in negotiation with Dr. George De Leon and Dr Nancy Jainchill, two of the most authoritative voices in Therapeutic Community Research. Dr. De Leon is the former Director and Dr. Jainchill is the current Director of the Centre for Therapeutic Community Research at the National Development and Research Institute in New York. Between them they have expertise in clinical practice, professional education, juvenile justice and issues of re-entry from residential settings including correctional and community based. Currently their focus is on adolescents, gender issues and co-morbidity.

This year the aim is to create a 'community' event with as many people as possible staying at the resort so that there will be plenty of time to socialise and network with colleagues. Conference registration costs include a Welcome BBQ on the Monday evening and the ATCA Awards Dinner on the Wednesday evening.

Agency visits are planned for the Monday before the Conference so please consider this in your flight arrangements

To obtain your Call for Abstracts Application form, Registration form and Accommodation details visit our website www.atca.com.au or email: 08conference@atca.com.au