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TCs scoop the Awards!



It was "Therapeutic Community, Therapeutic Community, Therapeutic Community" at the National Drug and Alcohol Awards ceremony, held in Brisbane at the end of June.

Firstly, the Gold Coast Drug Council, which manages Mirikai, received the Excellence in Treatment Award and this was followed with the induction into the Honour Roll of Lynne Magor-Blatch. The evening was then capped when Garth Popple received the Prime Minister's Award.

Prime Minister, Hon. Julia Gillard, provided the following message in recognition of Garth's award.

"It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr Garth Popple as the worthy recipient of the 2010 Prime Minister's Award for Excellence and Outstanding Contribution to Drug and Alcohol Endeavours.

Mr Popple has been working in the Alcohol and Other Drugs sector for the last 20 years and in the wider non-profit sector for almost 30 years. He is the Executive Director of We Help Ourselves which operates six residential Therapeutic Communities within NSW and Queensland. The Therapeutic Community movement has been the focus of Mr Popple's esteemed career.

In recognition of his tremendous service to the community, Mr Popple was appointed as an Honorary Fellow of the University of Western Sydney and recently, in 2007, he received a

National Honour Roll Award for persons who have made a significant contribution, over a considerable time, to the Drug and Alcohol field. The presentation of this equally prestigious award tonight is a terrific opportunity to celebrate Mr Popple's remarkable contribution to the field.

While the non-government sector is crucial in this field, it is also vital that governments take a strong and active role in combating the harmful effects of substance abuse. The Australian Government's National Binge Drinking and National Drug Strategies include a range of measures to assist Australian communities and individuals to do just this and the extra \$50 million invested in binge drinking in this year's budget demonstrates our commitment to tackling these problems.

I thank Mr Popple on behalf of the Australian people for his tireless dedication and commitment to the field. I wish Mr Popple every success in his ongoing work helping Australia tackle this very important issue".

Garth's acceptance speech has been distributed via Update and media release, but it is important to highlight aspects of this, which particularly emphasised the place of Therapeutic Communities in the AOD sector.

"Tonight, from my point of view I am actually accepting this award on behalf of the Therapeutic Community (TC) movement, which has evolved and diversified over the past decade to provide tremendous treatment and support for people dealing with drug dependence within Australia & New Zealand.

Our TCs and the wider treatment sector truly are leaders in this field internationally. The Australian drug treatment sector is looked upon throughout the world as innovative and cutting edge but I don't believe we do anywhere near enough to promote and export this expertise, particular to Asia and the Pacific. I know this is a view shared by many of my colleagues and I hope this award will allow me to draw some attention in that area and hopefully make a difference".

Garth went on to focus on another group of concern to all TCs, "This group are the families of people with drug and alcohol and associated problems. I want to acknowledge the pain,

powerlessness and suffering felt by some families and how we in the drug and alcohol sector need to work harder in ensuring families are also assisted - of course this would be easier with additional funding and if we stay vigilant I am sure that will happen soon. We need to support organisations who are leading the way with this initiative such as Family Drug Support (FDS)".

Over the next year, Garth is committed to using his award to promote the good work done in the treatment sector and to ensure that those who want and need assistance are able to receive it.

The Gold Coast Drug Council's Award under the Excellence in Treatment category highlighted the variety of activities being undertaken by the organisation.



The Gold Coast Drug Council is the first Australian alcohol and other drugs agency to be certified for both AOD programs and mental health.

Over the past decade, research into drug and alcohol problems has shown that there are significant linkages between mental health issues and AOD use. Being dually accredited enables the program to engage clients in a holistic manner, increasing likelihood of treatment success.

The Mirikai Residential Program aims to help clients develop the skills and attitudes to make long-term changes towards an alcohol and drug free lifestyle. Like other TCs, Mirikai offers a staged program, which utilises peers, program stages and program structure, daily regimens, privileges, and sanctions in a "community as method" approach to achieving lasting behavioural change

Results from the OASIS program, the halfway house that Mirikai graduates enter following treatment, indicate that 76 per cent of clients are able to maintain or improve personal functioning skills, including the ability to manage crisis and prevent relapse, and that 65 per cent of OASIS clients were engaged in study, training or work.

Lynne Magor-Blatch, who is Executive Officer with the ATCA and Associate Professor at the University of Canberra, was inducted into the Honour Roll. She joins other TC members - Garth Popple, James Pitts and Barry Evans, who have all become members of the Honour Roll in recent years.



Lynne was acknowledged for contributing to the alcohol and drug field, and more particularly to the Therapeutic Community movement, for over thirty years. She has brought a wealth of experience to the sector, having worked in both England and Australia. Lynne is also the National Convener of the Australian Psychological Society's Psychology and Substance Use Interest Group.

In accepting the award, Lynne stated that, "The journey from 1970s art teacher to this point has been quite amazing. I have been privileged to work with many wonderful people both in the UK and Australia over the past 36 years, and to have been a part of many miracles as thousands of lives have been changed. We know from research and experience that TCs work, and the "family" that makes up Therapeutic Communities is unique".

Lynne stated she was humbled by the nomination and the letters of support from a number of people and by the fact that she now joins some inspirational people on the Honour Roll.

However, the awards were not restricted to the ceremony in Brisbane. In the weeks leading up to the National Drug and Alcohol Awards, the Salvation Army's Bridge Program, received the University of Wollongong Vice Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Achievement in

Research Partnership.

The award recipients (pictured), Professor Frank Deane, Major David Pullen, ATCA Director, Gerard Byrne and Dr Trevor Crowe, represent a partnership which has been established between the Illawarra Institute for Mental Health School of Psychology, University of Wollongong and The Salvation Army Recovery Services.



The research project provides The Salvation Army with research, evaluation and advice on its broad range of AOD services, including its Therapeutic Communities. It has helped to develop a culture of reflective and evidence based practice that has led to improved service delivery practices and outcomes.

One of the research areas is the measurement of change with a Therapeutic Community. This is undertaken utilising the Client Assessment Summary (CAS; Kressel, De Leon, Palij & Rubin, 1999) one of the first standardised measures specifically developed for measuring change with a TC.

The CAS is 14-items in length and assesses the developmental, behavioural and social aspects of change promoted within the TC philosophy.

ATCA Training & Research Symposium

Plans are well underway for the 2010 ATCA Training and Research Symposium, to be held in Sydney on 11th & 12th October.

Keynote speakers Professor Ann Roche and Professor Shane Darke will address the Symposium on the opening day, with Professor Roche looking at the issue of Quality Improvement and Workforce Development in the AOD sector. Professor Darke will focus on

research studies, particularly highlighting TC outcomes and resident profiles, drawing on research from Australia and abroad.

On Tuesday, Dr Maggie Brady, Fellow at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, will focus on the AOD treatment needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the TC community might support this process.

While the Call for Abstracts has officially closed, we are keen to hear about your research and innovations. If you haven't already sent your abstract through – get it in fast! This is the time to tell others about the innovative work you have been undertaking in your TC and to provide information about research projects, program and service evaluations and treatment outcomes.

The Symposium will take place at the Salvation Army, 140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Hotels have not been arranged as there are plenty to offer to suit all budgets in the immediate vicinity. Registration details have now been released and so you will know that we have an offer too good to refuse!

Register five delegates at the full registration cost (either as an ATCA member at \$180 or a non-member at \$220) and bring one additional delegate for free. That's right – pay for 5 and bring a 6th person for free!

The ATCA AGM will also take place on Tuesday 12th October – information will be provided to all members shortly.

ATCA Board & Member Update

Over the past months the ATCA has continued to address the goals developed in consultation with the Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing and well before the end of the funding period in June, had exceeded the targets set in the key performance indicators.

A survey of members has revealed that our 32 organisational members are now operating a total of 65 therapeutic communities in Australia and New Zealand. These services employ more than eight hundred staff and treat over ten thousand people annually, as well as providing additional critical services such as detoxification units, family support programs, child care facilities, exit housing and outreach services.

New members have recently joined the ATCA and we would like to welcome Individual

members Marika Guggisberg from WA and Robbie Ferris from Queensland. Namatjira Haven in NSW has also recently been welcomed as a Provisional Member, bringing the total membership of Full, Provisional, Affiliate and Individual Members to 36.

The ATCA is receiving regular enquiries now from organisations that are not yet ready to become Provisional Members, but are increasingly embracing the TC philosophy and method. These organisations are joining as Affiliate members and asking for support to undertake the self-review process against the ATCA Standards to move to Provisional and ultimately, Full Membership status.

All TCs would now fit within the concept of the Modified (or Enhanced) Therapeutic Community, with length of programs shortened, complex populations, families, young people and children now part of the TC treatment landscape.

The Association is continuing to move forward with the implementation of the *Australasian Alcohol and other Drug Therapeutic Communities Standards and Training Package (2009)*, with workshops completed in Perth (March), Sydney (April), Melbourne (May) and Brisbane (May). A further Peer Reviewers Training Workshop was conducted in Sydney in mid-June. There were 150 participants involved in the Implementation Workshops across the four sites, representing a 138% increase on the expected number of 63 participants. Thirty-three people became trained as peer reviewers – once again a significant increase on the expected 10 required as part of

the funding agreement with DoHA.

The ATCA Board was also delighted to receive financial support from the AER Foundation, and this will assist in the provision of workshops in New Zealand in the coming months.

Four therapeutic communities (TCs) have indicated their willingness to undertake the review process against the Standards and have commenced the self-review process. These are: Karralika (ACT), Cyrenian House (WA), Logan House (Qld) and Selah Farm (NSW), which is part of the Salvation Army's Bridge Program.

The roll-out of the Standards is taking place at a time when improving the capacity of the AOD workforce to better respond to people with co-existing substance use and mental illness is a stated Government priority in both Australia and New Zealand. The ATCA Board's aim is to expand the role of the Secretariat to realise this.

A funding submission was provided to the Australian Government for the 2010-2012 period, and support has also been sought from the New Zealand Government to support New Zealand ATCA members.

As members will know, the Australian Government is currently reviewing funding for all stakeholders, and has therefore provided interim funding to the ATCA for a further six months while these deliberations continue.



ATCA Board Members Eric Allan, James Pitts, Carol Daws, Barry Evans (Chair), Lynne Magor-Blatch (EO), Garth Popple, Stuart Anderson and Mitchell Giles at the National Drug and Alcohol Awards

This will enable the ATCA to continue with the Standards project, to develop and hold the Training and Research Symposium and to maintain our involvement in a number of external reference and working groups.

The Board is also looking to appoint a Project Officer to continue to support members undertaking the self-and peer-review process and to establish mentoring networks amongst member agencies.

The ATCA Board of Directors provided a submission in relation to the evaluation of the National Drug Strategy and a further submission regarding the evaluation of the Non-Government Organisations Treatment Grants Program (NGOTGP). We have also provided input through consultation with PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) who have been appointed to undertake a review of the Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (MCDS) and its related committees, including the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs (IGCD).

The ATCA, as the peak body representing therapeutic communities, is ideally placed to broker change and to work with Government to ensure quality services are established and maintained across Australia. This role has been further strengthened with the inclusion of the ATCA as a member of the IGCD Expert Reference Group (ERG) whose role is to provide a consistent source of expert advice on, and review of the Drug and Alcohol Clinical care and Prevention (DA-CCP) model – a national population-based model for drug and alcohol service planning – as it develops over a two-year period from April 2010 to March 2012.

The ERG is responsible for advice and review of all matters related to components of the DA-CCP modelling, including epidemiological and clinical aspects of drug and alcohol treatment, and service delivery and planning, including:

- Identifying literature reviews and other literature relevant to the DA-CCP project
- Consulting within jurisdictions and/or professional networks to obtain and supply information needed for the project

The inclusion of the ATCA in this process is, we believe, vital to the provision of information to the IGCD in the development of a model which adequately addresses the considerable treatment needs of the 10,000 people who annually access TC services. The appointment of the ATCA to the ERG is for a two year period commencing April 2010.

ATCA Directors have held meetings and community consultations in Canberra and Hobart over recent months. Each of the community consultations was well attended and in both Canberra and Hobart, the Board was able to meet with politicians and Government officials to provide information about the ATCA, its member agencies and the needs of the AOD sector.

The Board sees as one of its priority areas, the need to provide ongoing support to current members in the development of new and innovative treatment strategies and to encourage the continuing expansion of the membership to include both community and correctional facilities and a range of innovative approaches for adults, families and young people who present with a range of issues and concerns.

Continued and increased emphasis needs to be given to early intervention and treatment strategies, recognizing that whilst reduction of supply is an important strategy, funding must also be provided and increased to address the treatment needs of the community. As some people move out of addiction, others are recruited in. The need to maintain a focus on harm reduction strategies, which includes facilitating access to treatment, continues to be a high priority.

Higher Ground's Haeata House opens its doors

Haeata House, Higher Ground's new pre-admission facility, is up and running. It opens a new chapter in drug treatment in New Zealand. Haeata – which means "dawn" in Maori – is the first staffed 24/7 pre-admission facility in New Zealand.

Haeata House provides a home for up to eight clients who are newly drug-free before they move on to Higher Ground.

Haeata is a modified therapeutic community, designed to support and integrate with the full program at Higher Ground. The brand new residential house, purchased within walking distance of the main building at Te Atatu Peninsula, is modeled on Higher Ground.

"Things are very recognisable, from the chairs and beds to the laminates of the 12-Steps and Traditions on the walls," explains pre-admission coordinator Paul Hodnett.

"That recognition is designed to be part of the flow through to the main program and continually reinforces the culture."

Haeata provides a place of recovery as well as starting the admission process into Higher Ground. Clients may have come directly from prison or from a detoxification unit, their own homes, flats or families. They comment on the simplicity, cleanliness, warmth and peaceful atmosphere of the two-storey house with its new furnishings and spacious, sunny rooms.



Planning for a pre-admission facility started 6 years ago, because it was clear that there was a great need for somewhere safe for people who were waiting for a place at a treatment centre after detoxing from drugs.

"Pre-admission is an environment where we can take a good look at levels of motivation without the intensity there is up the road at Higher Ground," says Paul. "We can see if clients are ready to engage, if they're open to hearing constructive feedback about their behaviour and ready to trust the wider group. It's a way of improving outcomes so when people go on to Higher Ground they are ready to work the program."

A pre-admission program enables Higher Ground to keep its intake stable. As clients graduate or are discharged, pre-admission residents can move up a level into the bigger community and they have already had a period of adjustment to life in a therapeutic community. Says one resident who has had seven weeks in pre-admission: "Haeata makes

the transition easy. Coming from the outside I was not used to awareness and challenges."

Haeata staff interact with the residents more than they would at Higher Ground because there are no senior peers who buddy with newcomers, explain how things work and why, supervise the running of the house and reinforce the rules.

"These people are used to manipulating boundaries to suit themselves," says Paul. "What we're doing is getting them tolerating other people's rules. I think this is a really useful understanding in early recovery and a continual challenge for people that if they want to belong to a society they have to understand that rules are there for a reason and get them on board with those rules."

Residents are fully engaged with an organised program of groups, activities and education such as relapse prevention. For example, they begin to recognise that overwhelming emotions and outside issues may lead people to leave the program and ultimately use drugs again.

Living in a therapeutic community means dealing with the issues and conflicts that come up. Family contact may also trigger deep emotions and consequences. "Naming and getting things out loud and making it real breaks denial," says Paul. "But I say to people, I would never ask the residents here to do anything that I would not be prepared to do myself."



From left to right, some of the Trustees and staff at the opening on 13 April 2010. Bill Jordan, Paula Parsonage, Janet Colby, Antonia Fisher, Paul O'Sullivan, Paul Hodnett (Pre-Admission Co-ordinator – Haeata House), Kathy Mildon (Social Worker), Fiona Howard, Penny Hulse (Deputy Mayor – Waitakere City) and Stuart Anderson (Director, Higher Ground).