

Sharing our stories with you



Jon with his masterpiece, Hope the elephant. Hope now lives at Maroondah PARC and continues to inspire other clients.

The elephant in the room

Like everyone who has come here to Mind's Maroondah Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) service in Melbourne, and those who will continue to come, I had reached a point in my life where I felt that there was no light at the end, no future, no end to the pain, and no hope.

I had been suffering deep depression, anxiety and had been diagnosed with complex post traumatic stress disorder. My world had turned upside down, and I just wasn't able to cope. I had lost the

will to leave my home, and couldn't bring myself to sculpt or carve, which as a paleoartist, was like the death of a part of me.

Thankfully, I realised how badly it was affecting me, and that I was afraid of it affecting my wife and young children.

I sought help.

For me it was a huge step, but a step we all have to take if we want to get help and hope to get back on track to claiming each little piece of ourselves back. I was referred here to PARC, and once I had settled, I discovered that this was a place of peace, love, community, and hope.

For the first time since it all began for me, I felt safe, I felt as though I could actually

start to regain those parts of me I had lost. It wasn't just the incredible staff, who were so amazing in their ability to give the right support when I needed it most, it wasn't just the activities and support programs, or the incredible people who had come here to get help, it was all of it together that makes PARC a place of healing, a place of hope.

The last time I was here, I was asked by my case worker, Linda, if I could possibly make a sculpture of an elephant for both Mental Health Week, but also as part of my own path to recovery. This was a bigger challenge than it superficially appears, as I hadn't been able to sculpt since my breakdown. It has taken three months, a lot of tears, anxiety, and pushing me to remember that nothing worth doing is

The elephant in the room (continued)

easy. So now I gladly return this little elephant called Hope to her home here at PARC. I hope she can send her message to everyone who is lucky enough to come here to PARC and that is:

That we are all here, we are all carrying our scars, our burdens, our struggles and doubts. But PARC is a place where you will find the ability to plant the seed of hope in your journey of recovery. So let's all just talk about the elephant in the room, and plant our own seeds of hope.

Thank you, PARC.

Words by Jon Wickenden



Mind's Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) services provide short term care in a residential setting for people who need intensive recovery support. PARCs help people with the transition out of an acute mental health facility or can offer them the extra bit of support they need to avoid hospitalisation.

98% of clients said they would use the PARC service again if they had a need for it in future (*Prevention and Recovery Care Exit Survey, Mind Australia, 2012.*)

To find out more, visit our website www.mindaustralia.org.au or call Mind Connect 1300 286 463

Sylvie and me

by Lianne Yearbury

It was 1972 in the suburb of Papa2toes (Papatoetoe, New Zealand) where me and Sylvie were practising our laughs in an open field. We tried out all different laughs but nothing too strange, and no snorting. I wanted to have a laugh that wouldn't stand out too much from the kids at school. The field matched Sylvie's orange/yellow dress. I had a keen eye for that sort of thing and would often do things in two's, like matching my clothes or saving only two biscuits for after school.

Sylvie had milk blonde hair which I envied, knowing the boys went after the blonde girls at school. Mine was slowly fading from blonde to mousey grey but it did not stop me chasing the boys and pretending to kiss behind trees. Did you do it? the other girls would ask then laugh at the thought of kissing a boy.

Talking about Sylvie with the other girls they said, "Why do you hang out with her. She comes from a poor family." But that is not what I noticed when I was invited around to her place. For me it was a place of noise and adventure. Her brothers would be racing up and down the hallway and there would be dogs yapping. They dared us to sniff the petrol in the car and it had a somewhat addictive smell. It smelt different in the 70s.

They even had a whole bucket full of tadpoles. I plunged my hand in and felt the little tadpoles wriggling and sucking at my fingers. Such adventures we had there, it was a place that seemed alive with life. I wondered how they could have so much freedom.

Their mother was fat which was unusual for then so she seemed a big heavy presence but then she would hand out slices of homemade chocolate cake which was the best I ever had. So I tried not to be afraid of this big woman who could be so friendly to kids.

That summer was bittersweet because I knew I would be moving suburbs at the end of the summer.

Sylvie tested me, she was braver and a risk taker. She would climb the trees I was afraid of falling off. I only usually got a metre off the ground before saying "It's too high for me". She even jumped off the house roof once. I was scared she would break something but she was fine.

At night time when all the milk bottles were put out in their crates with the right coinage for the milkman she would go around stealing the coins to buy candies later. I would share in the sweets somewhat guiltily.

In contrast, my parents were rather strict. I was the eldest and my mum had just had a newborn boy. I had to creep around the place because I was always being told "don't disturb the baby", "be quiet around the baby", "don't make any noise". So I did not feel I could ask any friends to my place. So at home I would often feel lonely and to stop the lonely feeling I would make up songs. I was caught doing this one time and I don't know if it was me or the baby just started to cry. But I was blamed by my parents and sent to my room. Solitary confinement was the way to punish children then, that or the wooden spoon or hairbrush whacked on whatever part of the body could be found to hit.

I felt sorry for myself so hid in the wardrobe with all the swaying clothes and cried softly. I thought about running away. I thought about Sylvie and how she could draw horses and how clever and freeing that was. Whereas I felt no good. I had given up on drawing because I could no longer express what I wanted to. I had tried to draw a soldier's uniform covered in blood but it just seemed to come out as a big mess of colour. I was concerned about the Vietnam War. So I decided never to draw again.

I felt sad for the big dog that was chained up next door and never went for walks. He would howl, a big lonely howl. I wished I was brave enough to go up to his owners and say I will take your dog for walks. We knew about the sad dog but no one did things in those days to help animals.

I was sad about lots of things about the world. I was sad about having no say in



where I lived that I would have to leave my clever, adventurous friend behind. I was scared of the new school I would have to go to. Would I make new friends? Or would I feel lonely like now hiding in the wardrobe not being seen or heard behind the white doors.

I wanted to be bold like the boy who played the drum in the school orchestra. How much I wanted to be that boy but I was put in the school choir. I wanted to beat that drum hold the rhythm to the whole sound. But I was shy and some would say withdrawn. And I had a different rhythm to find for my life. And a sensitivity which would come out in many ways. A sensitivity to light and colour and beauty and peace and I had an active imagination.

A sensitivity that could remember a fallow field, my friend Sylvie's orange and yellow short flowery dress mixing with the gold

of the tall grasses, and the laughter of one who is ten years old and not quite sure of herself, so she is practicing her laughs to find the right one, the gentle one that would express her to others.

And I did make friends in the new school. We were a gang of nine girls who ruled the place. I was still in between a child and

a teenager and could conjure up magical worlds in my imagination. Once I was a star child who went to the moon and it was so real for me, I swore it existed. I would take my friends along for the ride.

Lianne receives and makes great use of an Individualised Client Support Package with Mind in Melbourne. As part of her recovery, she signed up for an online writing course. Her worker, Caroline, said: "I observed Lianne really thrive during the course, talking online with other students and getting exceptional feedback for her writing. She then found herself a writing mentor which has helped expand her writing talent. This course seems to have connected her in with a vibrant community and given her a sense of being part of something, of belonging which is essential for good recovery."

An Innocuous Meltdown.

Truth be told the truth is chastised.

“Oh no, I wouldn’t see a shrink.
My intuition but fear of retribution -
no one sees through my disguise.”

Clink...

Mental cased, fairy living, lunatic.
Yielding, looking, shielding, sooking.

Ebulliently raw or a joyless eyesore.

In-between dreams I’ll float to space;
enjoy the sight of my comforting commonplace -
purging memories, only to regurgitate fate.

“Oh no, I wouldn’t shrink.
I’ll stand tall; I’ll stand strong.”

A mountainous being, too proud to perish -
so much like to cherish...

“No one gave me the right to fight.
Oh no, I wouldn’t want plight;
I wouldn’t stand up tall or cause any strife,
beat the peculiar side right out of sight.”

...

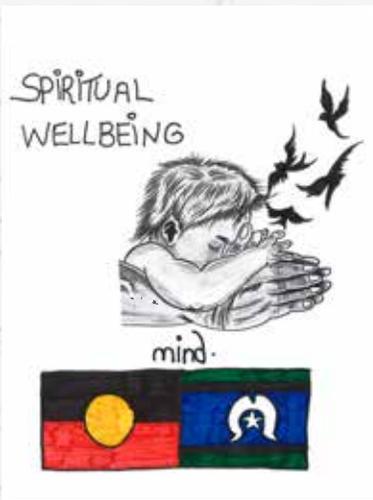
Sending shock waves all around -
leaping through the heat -
stomping down, never to admit defeat.

James Mulcaire

James is a 25 year old garbage collector from Melbourne and is in the process of making a very interesting kind of book...

He has schizoaffective disorder and has had two major psychotic episodes - his last admittance to hospital being about two years ago.

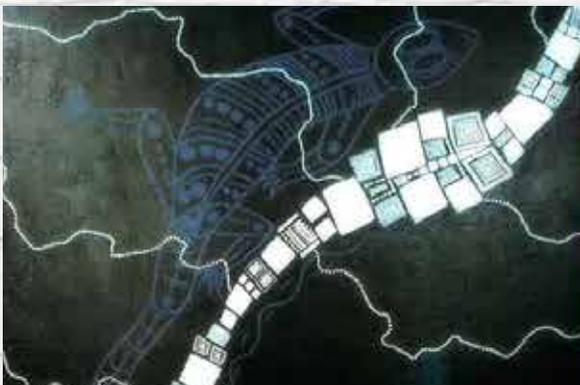
“I have used writing as a type of cathartic outlet, since my discharge. Now, I am at the stage where I would like to compile my writing into a book; paired with illustrations, paintings and photos that complement the prose I have written. I am searching the internet for images that stand out to me and are relevant to my writing, and then I try to get in touch with their respective artists. The response has been extremely encouraging so far.”



'Spiritual wellbeing' by **Lynda Faure** (Wangaratta, VIC)



'Spirits' and 'New Beginning' by **Nancy O'Dwyer** (Wodonga, VIC)



'Walking along the same path' by **Talitha Annuscheit** (Mansfield, VIC)



'My first Aboriginal painting' by **Samantha Black** (Whyalla Stuart, SA)

Getting strong

We recently held an artwork competition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. The artists were tasked with telling a story of emotional and spiritual wellbeing, healing from mental health issues and staying strong. Whilst the competition is being judged at the time of printing, we wanted to share with you some of the beautiful entries from the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we live.



Christine Brown (Mile End, SA) pictured right. Unfortunately this submission was withdrawn, but we are pleased to be able to show you the end result of her hard work.



We can be heroes



Client, Stephen as The Joker, with Fred, 'The Incredible Hulk'

Late last year the crew at Cairns PARC in tropical north Queensland donned their superhero best for a day of fun, frivolity, singing (karaoke) and general fantastic-ness! 'Superhero Day' was the brainchild of the consumers and is a great example of the kind of influence they get to have in their services.



L-R: Cairns PARC staff members James, Cindi, Lana, Jessica, Ranjit, Kirsten, Gayle, Shaun, Jon **Front:** Tom, Shannon, and Fred



Mind Community Conference Victoria 2016

Mind Community Conference and Awards 2017

The Mind Community Conferences have become important events in the Mind calendar. They bring together all our current and past consumers, their friends and families, current volunteers and staff in a fun, relaxed and festive environment. Together we celebrate our achievements and share ideas, experiences and really feel the warmth of belonging to the Mind community. This year in Queensland and South Australia we will be holding a series of exciting community events in place of the conferences (more information to come soon). The Victorian Community Conference will be held on 26 July at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Want to know more? Email participation@mindaustralia.org.au

Contact the editor

If you are a current or former client of Mind and would like to contribute to *Write Mind* or be interviewed please contact Jess Shulman at jessica.shulman@mindaustralia.org.au or write to the address below. Copyright reserved. For permission to reprint please write to the editor.



Supporting mental health recovery

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