



Support through connection

Chris Nolan still recalls the feeling she had when she first discovered Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program.

"It was a connection with other people in the same experience to you – for the first time, I actually felt ok," she says.

The year was 2005 and Chris' 21 year old son Luke had tragically taken his own life months earlier. A friend recommended Support After Suicide, and Chris was surprised that such a specialist service existed.

"In the early days, we weren't capable of even looking or thinking that there would be specific support for those left behind after suicide. We didn't think there would be any other normal, everyday person like we used to be, going through what we were going through."

Support After Suicide was established in 2004, and provides support including counselling, home and group visits to thousands of people each year. Given people left behind after the suicide of a loved one are an estimated five times more likely to take their own life, the program performs the unique dual role of bereavement support and postvention service.

The program is federally funded until June 30 next year, and its future remains uncertain beyond then.

After attending the program's Early Bereavement Group, Chris began attending monthly meetings and engaged in individual counselling.

"It was a life saver for me as my husband and I returned to work and tried to reshape our family and our whole life in some way," she says.

Chris now volunteers with the program and is able to use her family's own experiences to assist others who are bereaved.

"It is very satisfying to be able to give something back to a program which has helped me so much."

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Helping those less fortunate



As we approach Christmas and look forward to celebrating the festive season with loved ones, it is an opportune time to reflect on how fortunate we are. For many of us Christmas is synonymous with sharing joy – however for many people on the margins of society, the festive period is one of the more difficult times of year. One of our four core areas of work is in mental health and wellbeing.

Through our Support After Suicide program, we support those left behind after loss of a loved one. Our Artful Dodgers Studios, Connexions and The Outdoor Experience programs work with vulnerable young people often dealing with drug and alcohol problems in addition to mental illness. Many of these young people have faced significant barriers to participating in society, and their mental health problems can often lead to a cycle of disadvantage including homelessness, unemployment and involvement in the criminal justice system.

For many of the people we work with, Christmas can exacerbate painful memories or feelings of isolation. Throughout this newsletter, you will find a number of stories about our work in the mental health space. The programs you will read about face uncertain futures due to funding instabilities, which makes your support all the more valuable.

You may have also noticed a new look and feel to our newsletter. This is the first stage in a refresh of the Jesuit Social Services brand. We welcome your feedback about the new design, please see the back page for further details.

Have a safe and happy festive season.

Sally Parnell

Acting Chief Executive Officer, Jesuit Social Services

CEO Julie Edwards is currently on an extended study break and will return to work in early 2016.

Our little school

Ask Christos what he likes most about Artful Dodgers Studios, and he doesn't hesitate in answering.

"I just love the atmosphere whenever I go into the studios, everybody helps each other out on what they're working on and it feels like a really welcoming place," he says.

The budding photographer has been attending the studios since last September, after being introduced by a friend.

"Even though there's no classes, it feels like a little school," he says.

"All the staff are really helpful and friendly and always happy to teach me things to make my work better."

Artful Dodgers Studios was established in 1996 as a 'soft entry point' to support services for young people experiencing marginalisation including mental illness, drug and alcohol problems and homelessness.

Participants have the chance to work on art, music and design projects under the guidance of staff and professional artists like ARIA-winning musician Jesse Hooper.

While Christos has relished the chance to improve his photography and editing skills ahead of potentially pursuing a career in the field, he says engaging with Artful Dodgers Studios has assisted him just as much in a personal sense.

"It's definitely made me a lot more sociable coming here," he says.

"It has helped my confidence in some ways but more socially - just meeting new people and being around people similar to you is a really good thing."



Christos

The great outdoors

The most satisfying part of Clare Easton's job is "the sparkle in a participant's eye".

"It makes all the hard work and effort worthwhile when a participant has achieved something they didn't think was possible."

Clare is a Field Educator with The Outdoor Experience (TOE). For more than 30 years, TOE has facilitated change in the lives of young people experiencing mental illness and drug and alcohol problems, through adventure and wilderness activities.

This year alone, Jesuit Social Services has run eight multi-day programs engaging more than 70 participants, in addition to a number of single-day activities. One recent program included a five-day white water rafting trip in the Mitchell River National Park, and in early December, a group will embark on a four-night hike to the summit of Victoria's highest peak of Mt Bogong.

"Participants are required to pack all their gear, learn all of the skills required to survive in a camping environment as well as live together alongside other team members without the ability to distract themselves with technology," says Clare.

As well as the outdoor activity element of the program, TOE participants are involved in therapeutic components before and after the excursion. This allows participants to work as a team to prepare for the wilderness journey, to reflect on the experience and to seek ways to incorporate change into their day to day lives.

"Through our programs participants are given opportunities to broaden their comfort zones, through outdoor challenges and experiences that allow them to learn about themselves and what they are capable of, each other and experience the healing power of the natural environment."

Clare says that participants noticeably change during their time with the program.

"One woman who was markedly shy at the beginning, volunteered to do a presentation in front of everyone at the end of the experience. You can really see the progression and it is these changes that are wonderful to bear witness to and we hope they take through into other aspects of their lives and challenges they face."



Participants and staff hike from Falls Creek over Mount Bogong in Victoria in April 2015

Growing a passion for change

If you're ever looking for John Hughes, the best place to look is in his expansive garden.

The Mount Eliza resident, who still works a day a week at a family business, can often be found with wife Betty tending to their beautifully manicured rose garden.

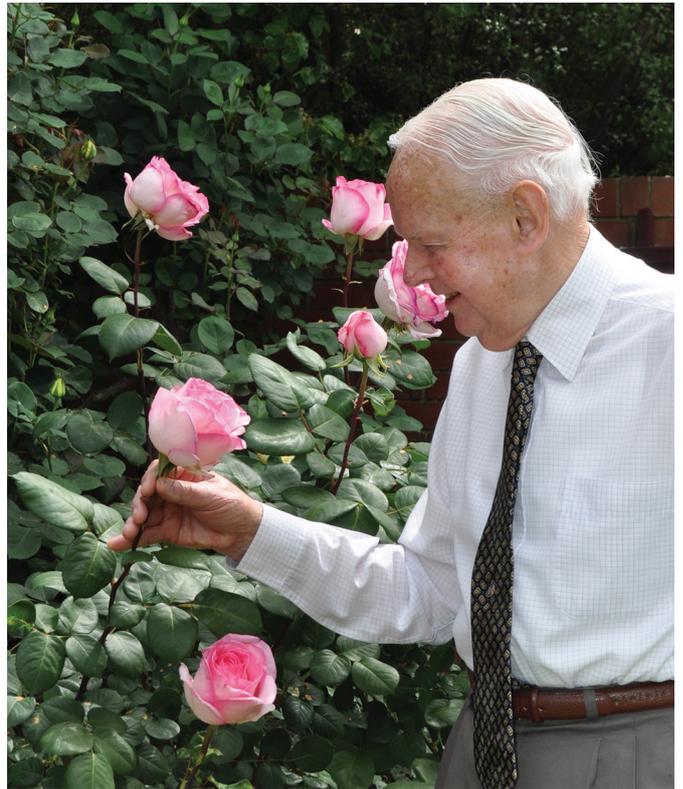
"I have about 70-odd roses, my favourite out of all of them at the moment is the Violina, which is a beautiful rose with a lovely perfume," he says.

Sitting in his lounge room, John shares stories from his life: of his beloved Richmond Football Club, his days as a wireless air gunner in the airforce and his constant quest to improve his golf game.

One of his favourite subjects is his passion for helping those less fortunate than him. Asked what he would wish for if he could have anything, his first response is "I wish I had more resources so I could help more people".

John has donated to Jesuit Social Services for 15 years, and he and Betty have left a bequest to the organisation in their Will.

His introduction to the organisation was through retired parish priest Fr Kevin Mogg, and a chance encounter with a Jesuit Social Services newsletter.



John Hughes

"I think one of the best jobs Jesuit Social Services is doing is trying to rehabilitate these young fellows that have been in prison. A lot of them come out [of prison] and can be worse off."

To discuss how to leave a gift to Jesuit Social Services in your Will, please call Nicole Dunham on (03) 9421 7617.

Learn

Visit jss.org.au to learn more about the issues that concern us.

Give

Make a donation at jss.org.com.au/donate and give hope to someone in need.

Share

Become an advocate for justice by speaking to your friends and family members about our work.

Do

Becoming a volunteer and join us in supporting people on the edges of society.

Supporting young people on a pathway to recovery

Numerous media reports have raised community awareness about the high prevalence of mental illness among young people. Data confirms that 76% of people who develop a mental disorder during their lifetime, do so before the age of 25 years (ABS, 2008). The recognition of the high prevalence of mental illness among young people has resulted in welcome increased investment in this area. However, the particular challenges facing young people with histories of abuse and trauma, and whose mental health problems are complicated by substance abuse, and other vulnerability such as homelessness, are as yet less well known.



76% of people who develop a mental disorder do so before the age of 25

Young people with complex needs often have difficult behaviour – they may be hard to engage, liable to ‘fly off the handle’, unreliable at attending appointments, and resistant to participating in formal counselling. Services designed for adults or less challenging young people commonly struggle to meet their needs, and often specifically exclude them.

Studies have found that young people in out-of-home care have remarkably poorer mental health in comparison to the general population including conduct problems and defiance, attachment insecurity and disturbance, attention deficit/hyperactivity, trauma-related anxiety and inappropriate sexual behaviour (Tarren-Sweeney and Hazell, 2005, 2006). One study found that more than half of the young people in court ordered care had a significant psychiatric disturbance (Tarren-Sweeney, 2008). The Victorian government audit of children and young people in home-based care reported that 14% had threatened suicide (Victorian Department of Human Services, 2002).

This is why Jesuit Social Services campaigned so vociferously in 2014, when specialist services like the Artful Dodgers Studio and Connexions with expertise in working with young people with both substance use and mental illness, and other complex needs were defunded, and resources transferred to mainstream programs.

We campaigned also to address the process barriers to accessing services put in place by the former Government, including the funnelling of all intake for support through phone-based intake, and requirement to have a recent medical diagnosis of mental illness. This process flies in the face of all we know about engaging vulnerable young people: they often don't self-identify as having a mental health problem; they are reluctant to discuss their symptoms with a stranger over the phone, and not sure what is relevant to tell; they are resistant to medical diagnosis.

The new Victorian Government refunded specialist programs and recently reviewed the intake and other new arrangements. We await outcomes from this process.

The most recent Victorian snapshot of young people in custody found 34 per cent presented with mental health issues and 28 per cent had a history of self harm or suicidal ideation.

Jesuit Social Services continues to point to the critical need to have a ‘soft entry’ to mental health care: spaces in which staff can develop supportive relationships with young people, and build confidence in them to open up. This foundation provides the base from which staff can support young people on a path to recovery.

Great Australians Gala Dinner 2015

We were proud to welcome more than 300 guests to the National Gallery of Australia's Great Hall on October 10 for the second annual Great Australians Gala Dinner.

The event featured a who's who of Australian identities from the worlds of politics, sport, entertainment, academia and law including Gold Logie winner Daryl Somers, world champion boxer Danny Green and AFL great Kevin Sheedy.

Guests enjoyed interviews with Great Australians by event MC Stephen Quartermain, as well as live entertainment from the likes of Kate Ceberano, Jon Stevens, Ross Wilson and Glenn Shorrock.

CEO Julie Edwards spoke about our work in four key areas: justice and crime prevention, settlement and community building, education, training and employment and mental health support and wellbeing.

Dozens of live and silent auction items – including an Audi A3, a package to London to attend Wimbledon (including flights, accommodation and tickets) and meet-and-greet tickets to see KISS – were sold on the night.

All money raised at the event will help support our mental health programs including Support After Suicide, Artful Dodgers Studios, Connexions and The Outdoor Experience.

We thank all the Great Australians, guests, speakers and event partners Incognitus for their generosity and support.



Table setting (top), CEO Julie Edwards (middle) and Australian music legends entertain the crowd (bottom)

Save the date
19 March 2016

Our most recent Annual Dinner in March 2015 was a big success, so we ask you to Save the Date for our 2016 Annual Dinner! The event will be held on 19 March 2016 at the Members Dining Room, MCG. Special guest speaker will be announced soon. Stay tuned to our website for more information www.jss.org.au

Reducing stigma around suicide

To mark World Suicide Prevention Day, held annually on September 10, a group of staff, volunteers and participants of our Support After Suicide program joined a community awareness walk at Melbourne's Birrarung Marr. More than 70 people took part in the walk, which included a speech from program manager Louise Flynn. The aim of the walk is to reduce stigma surrounding suicide.



Louise Flynn (top) and participants in the walk to raise awareness (bottom)

Artful Dodgers compilation launch

Artful Dodgers Studios has worked alongside marginalised young people with multiple and complex needs using arts and music mentorship as a way to get back on track since 1997.

We are gearing up for the release of *Reverberate* – a compilation album of songs by young musicians affiliated with the studios. For many young people involved, *Reverberate* is the first time their music has been released to a wider audience.

"Young people have been working on their music and as part of a committee organising the launch. Being involved in an event like this is important for confidence building and professional development, and has longer-term positive impacts on their future choices," says Artful Dodgers Studios Coordinator Marianna Codognotto.

This could not have happened without donor support. The Gertrude Players held a fundraiser that paid for mentoring of young people over 12 months. We were delighted to receive an additional \$1,200 through the Telstra Kids Fund. Huge thanks to Janet Pelly from Telstra, who helped us apply for this funding. More than \$3,500 was raised during a recent crowdfunding campaign on the StartSomeGood platform. All funds will help with the recording and production of the album.

The album will be launched on 19 November at a free, all ages event at The Channel, Arts Centre Melbourne, as part of Melbourne Music Week. For more information, visit www.artfuldodgers.tv

This Christmas, thousands of families will have an empty seat at their table due to the loss of a loved one to suicide.

Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program was created 10 years ago to help families and individuals move on after the loss of a loved one – to navigate their complex emotions, to understand and to manage their grief.

But it's not just about support, it's also about prevention.

People bereaved by the loss of a loved one to suicide are up to five times more likely to take their own life as a result.

Every dollar you give to support our work will help us deliver counselling, comfort and a sense of community to someone suffering enormous loss and isolation.

Please give generously to our Christmas appeal and know you have helped fill the void left after suicide.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our new-look newsletter! This is the first stage in a refresh of the Jesuit Social Services brand – we look forward to sharing more of this with you soon. If you have any feedback about your new newsletter, we would love you to share it with us. Please e-mail your comments to jss@jss.org.au

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

I would like to make a donation of:

\$75 **\$150**

\$500 **\$1000**

\$

Contact and payment details

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