



'A Calm in the Sea of Addiction'

odyssey NEWS

A road to recovery - Jimmy

Kicking a soccer ball around with friends in an old street in Balmain was a normal day in my childhood, as it was with many other kids.

From an early age right through high school I had a passion for sports and no real focus on academics; I only ever did the bare essentials. Now I can reflect and realise that I did not use any of my potential and I really had no direction.

At 15, peer pressure led me to start smoking pot and before I knew it I was smoking daily, often before the school day even began. I managed to finish Year 12, but I was still lost and didn't know what I wanted to do with my life.

Over the next few years, I worked at different places and travelled here and there.

By the time I was 22 I had stopped smoking pot, but then I met Laura.

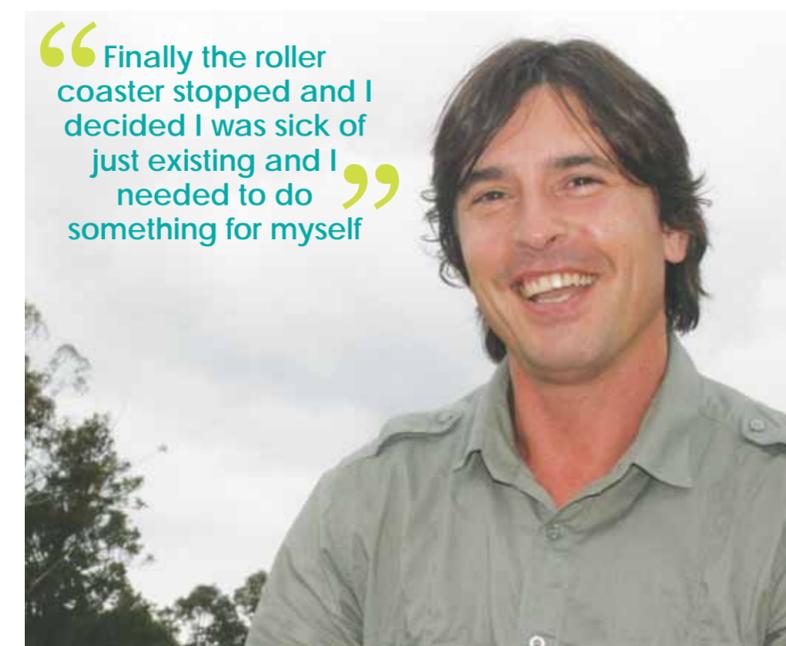
Laura was the girl of my dreams (well, so I thought at the time). It was not until eight months into our relationship that she finally confessed she was secretly dabbling in heroin and her sister had a serious heroin addiction.

Living with Laura's habit and with more friends buying, selling and smoking heroin, I eventually gave in to temptation and tried it.

After a couple of times I was hooked. I felt what it was like to go 'cold turkey' and to 'hang out' for the next hit. I never realised just how addictive heroin was until then.

Four years soon passed. Laura and I went our separate ways as I felt it was time for me to focus on getting clean, but Laura had other plans. Despite my good intentions, the next fifteen years were like being on a roller coaster as I continued to battle my addiction. I travelled alone with no direction, and no mental or physical motivation.

Finally the roller coaster stopped and I



“Finally the roller coaster stopped and I decided I was sick of just existing and I needed to do something for myself”

decided I was sick of just existing and I needed to do something for myself.

I had never been to a rehab program or spoken to a therapist, so it was time to start. History had proven I couldn't do it on my own, but nothing was going to stop me now.

I spent 13 months in the Odyssey House program. It was hard work; my biggest challenge was redefining who I was and learning not to judge people – I hadn't realised that I did.

I now pride myself on being a mentor to other clients in the program and being a positive role model. I was in addiction for a large portion of my life and lost sight of who I was. If I could complete this journey, anyone can.

While at Odyssey I also discovered dragon boating through the Sandy Point Dragon Boating Club, which dedicates time each week to Odyssey clients. The club has embraced my recovery success and I am now an official member. None of this would have been possible without Odyssey House.

After discovering a passion for design, I am now moving into the next stage of my life studying an Advanced Diploma of Interior Design at the Enmore Design Centre. Odyssey has given me back my life, and it will always be a part of who I am.

Please donate online
www.odysseyhouse.com.au

Mingu Yabun improves outcomes for indigenous clients



Leonie Murdoch, Aboriginal Liaison Officer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) clients make up approximately 11 per cent of residents in the Odyssey House program. However, staff had noted that many ATSI clients were emotionally and physically disconnected from their culture and their families, exacerbating self esteem problems and resulting in a lack of community support. ATSI clients were also finding it difficult to deal with the strict structure inherent in the residential rehabilitation program, leading to low retention and completion rates.

Odyssey House's Mingu Yabun Aboriginal Group was created within the main residential program to help indigenous clients reconnect with and celebrate their culture, build their self esteem and share common experiences to assist them in their rehabilitation and prevent relapse in the long-term.

Significantly, the Mingu Yabun group adds cultural relevance for ATSI residents. It also assists clients to understand and cope with the highly structured way Odyssey House operates, such as having to follow a set schedule of activities throughout each day and waiting a short time after entering the program before they can have visits from their families.

The group (which ranges from 5-15 residents) meets fortnightly at the Tharawal Aboriginal Co-Operative to discuss cultural

issues as well as their progress in recovery, relationship and family issues, how to deal with any difficulties they may be having in the program, and strategies for rebuilding their lives in the community. Most participants identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but mothers and fathers of indigenous children are also invited to participate.

Culturally-specific activities are also integrated into the Odyssey House program where possible, such as using traditional Aboriginal art techniques in the art-as-therapy sessions and encouraging story-telling during group counselling. Local Aboriginal Elders are also sometimes involved as mentors; this may be particularly appropriate where there is multi-generational drug misuse or violence in the client's family and a direct connection with family members may not be advisable at the time.

Odyssey House is currently one of only a few rehabilitation providers to offer services tailored to ATSI clients. Mingu Yabun has become an integral part of the Odyssey House program. Empowering residents with information about their culture, heritage and language allows them to better deal with the reasons they resorted to drug misuse and helps them remain in the program and reap the benefits of recovery.

in the press

Struggling to break the bonds with booze

ALCOHOL has once again outstripped illicit drugs like heroin or amphetamines as the leading reason for admissions to rehabilitation service Odyssey House. The Macarthur-based service showed in its 2011 annual report one in three people cited alcohol as their primary

addiction. It is the fifth consecutive year alcohol has topped illicit drugs. Odyssey House chief executive officer James Pitts said the figures had dropped from the previous year but numbers were still concerning. "Australia has a seemingly unbreakable cultural

attachment to drinking alcohol, often to excess, and we continue to see the human toll among the men and women in our treatment programs and among their families, particularly children," he said. During the year, 651 clients entered its withdrawal and residential rehab programs.

Booze is biggest addiction

Evelyn Yamine

ALCOHOL continues to be the leading cause for people seeking treatment in one of our largest rehabilitation centres, surpassing illicit drugs such as heroin and cannabis. Odyssey House releases its annual report today which shows that 30 per cent of its clients nominate alcohol as their major addiction problem, followed by opiates 27 per cent, amphetamines 25 per cent and cannabis 15 per cent.

Odyssey House CEO James Pitts said even though alcohol treatment was down from the 2010 figures, it was the fifth year straight it topped the list. "The one thing we strive for is to educate the public that alcohol is a drug, a very powerful drug and it causes more harm to the community than all the illicit drugs combined," Mr Pitts said.

Mr Pitts said the effects of alcohol abuse range from physical to psychological harm, as well as violence and even loss of life.

In past years amphetamines abuse and treatment had fallen but 2011 showed a 16 per cent increase in treatment for amphetamine-type stimulants such as ice and speed.

Alcohol consumption costs an estimated \$5.3 billion a year in healthcare, crime, road accidents and other issues such as pain and suffering.

50% In the past 50 years, coral cover has decreased this much in the Great Barrier Reef, according to WWF.

Getting Help

Rehab facility says 30 per cent of its clients cite alcohol as their principal drug of concern.

Odyssey House, a rehabilitation facility, has released a report claiming that 30 per cent of its clients have more problems with alcohol than with any other drug. Clients cite their average age of first intoxication as 12-13 years. The report also indicates that alcohol use with depression continues to be the highest occurring dual disorder among clients. In Australia, 28 per cent of males and 11 per cent of females are 12 or over drink them at risk of their lifetime. Federal funding

Two potential Macarthur region projects are still in with a chance to receive funding support through the federal government's Regional Development Australia Fund. Campbelltown Council's Northern Macarthur Regional Sporting Precinct project and Odyssey House's Medical Assisted Withdrawal Unit have progressed to the next stage and both organisations have been invited to submit a full application. The full application stage closes on February 15.



ODYSSEY Recognition

Support that Odyssey House has recently received from the following donors is greatly appreciated.

- Mr R Albert
- Australian Youth & Health Foundation
- Ms C Bishop
- Bizzell Foundation
- Mr R Brierley
- Mr P Clarke
- Mr C Grubb
- James N Kirby Foundation
- Liangrove Foundation
- Mallesons Stephen Jaques
- Ms A Page
- Mr R Waters
- Mrs H Waters
- Dr E Wills

YES! I would like to help Odyssey House assist residents to live a drug free life.

Please find enclosed my donation of: (please circle)

\$50 \$100 \$500 or
\$ _____

Enclosed is my cheque / money order made payable to the Odyssey House McGrath Foundation or charge my credit card.

Visa Mastercard Amex Diners Club

Card number: _____

Expiry Date: _____

Name on card: _____

Title: (Dr/ Mr/ Mrs/ Ms/ Miss): _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Facsimile: _____

I would like to pledge \$ _____ per month to be deducted from my Credit Card until revoked in writing by me or Odyssey House.

DONATIONS OVER \$2.00 ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

For more information on Odyssey House, visit www.odysseyhouse.com.au
Phone: (02) 9820 9999
Fax: (02) 9820 1796



Please return this coupon and your donation to:
Odyssey House McGrath Foundation,
PO Box 459, Campbelltown, NSW, 2560.



Macarthur CHARITY WEIGHT LOSS CHALLENGE



In an exciting initiative that will benefit both Odyssey House and the local community, we are delighted to launch the first Macarthur Charity Weight Loss Challenge, in partnership with Connect Fitness. Starting in April, it's all about making positive, long-lasting changes to people's health and wellbeing while helping those who are changing their lives at Odyssey House.

Recruits join as individuals or teams and fundraise by asking family, friends and colleagues to sponsor their weight loss during the eight-week challenge period, with all money donated to Odyssey House. The challenge has a dedicated fundraising

website and Facebook and Twitter pages, featuring encouragement and advice from dietitians, trainers and other health experts along the journey.

To motivate participants even further, the Macarthur Weight Loss Challenge will include a Biggest Winner competition. Twelve recruits will be selected to join the Red team or Blue team and compete in fun challenges with the assistance of a personal trainer and one-on-one support.

The Macarthur Weight Loss Challenge is open to anyone who is willing to change their life for the better and help others along the way.

Visit www.macarthurchallenge.com.au for more details!



A message from the Chairman



Doug Snedden

Fundraising is critical to closing the gap between the day-to-day costs of running Odyssey House and the money we receive from government grants and other sources. We require an additional \$600,000 each year simply to maintain our services, let alone develop our facilities to meet changing community needs.

Our calendar of fundraising activities starts with the annual Odyssey by the Bay cocktail party on 23 February, held at the beautiful home of generous supporters Paul and Ros Espie. The event is a sell-out and we look forward to further successful events during the year.

An additional concerted effort to raise capital funds will be required if we are successful in our submission for government funding through the Regional Development Australia Fund grants program, which would require us to match the money received.

Underpinning our fundraising initiatives is the need to destigmatise alcohol and other drug dependence and mental illness and to foster positive public perceptions about rehabilitation and the promising future it creates for our clients, like Jimmy, featured in this newsletter.

With this change comes a better understanding of the causes of drug and alcohol problems and the role the community can play in their reduction and treatment. Our CEO James Pitts is a regular media commentator on these issues, but you too can play your part. I encourage everyone to talk openly with friends, family and colleagues about the challenges of addiction... and that Odyssey House needs our support to help people help themselves.

On that note, part of the Odyssey House mission is providing our clients with a pathway through recovery and a return to a fulfilling life. Vocational skills and education are fundamental to self-sufficiency and self-worth. I am pleased to welcome the new principal of our Progressive Learning Centre, Ted Foster, and to acknowledge the contribution of Kerry Waters who retired in February after 14 years assisting hundreds of clients to rebuild their lives and give back to the community by becoming productive members of society.

Doug Snedden
Chairman



Today Host, Karl Stefanovic

Odyssey House residents and staff mingling with a few famous faces....



OzHarvest CEO, Ronni Kahn



Celebrity Chef, Maggie Beer



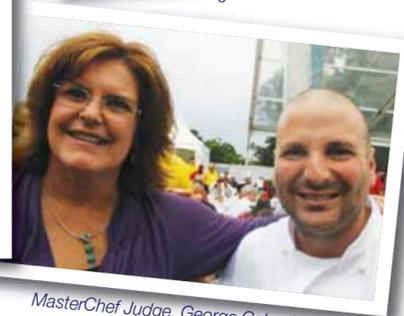
Ingeus CEO, Thérèse Rein



Poh's Kitchen Presenter, Poh Ling Yeow



MasterChef Judge, Matt Preston



MasterChef Judge, George Calombaris

CEO Cook Off

Odyssey House staff and residents enjoyed an inspirational evening of good food, celebration and competition at the inaugural OzHarvest/Qantas CEO CookOff held in Sydney's Cathedral Square on 6 February.

The event raised awareness about homelessness and food insecurity, as well as funds for OzHarvest and Mission

Australia, and featured 30 top chefs including Neil Perry, Maggie Beer, Bill Granger and Guillaume Brahimi, along with Australia's corporate elite.

Founded through the passion and vision of CEO Ronni Kahn, OzHarvest collects food that would otherwise be discarded and distributes it free-of-charge to organisations

such as Odyssey House. Their support saves us tens of thousands of dollars every year by providing our residents with a variety of high quality food every day.

We were honoured to participate in the event and – as the photos show - it was a special experience for all our staff and residents.

What is a Therapeutic Community?

Odyssey House is one of sixty therapeutic communities (TCs) operating across Australasia and was one of the first therapeutic communities in Australia when it was established in 1977.

According to the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association, a TC is a treatment facility in which the community itself, through self-help and mutual support, is the principal means for promoting personal change.

Odyssey House engages everyone in the TC, including staff and residents, to manage and operate the community, which fosters a safe, cooperative environment that enables personal change to occur.

The therapeutic community at Odyssey House creates a complete lifestyle change for residents and increases more socially accepted behaviour

as they live and work together, actively participating in all aspects of the program to help themselves and each other. As residents progress through the different levels or stages, they gradually take over the day-to-day administration and running of Odyssey House. Job functions include cooking, maintaining the property, painting, gardening, vehicle driving, and administrative activities. They earn advancement and privileges as their recovery and growth progresses, rather than simply because of the length of time they have spent in the program.

Residents must work hard along the Odyssey House journey to become contributing members of society with self confidence, a sense of adequacy, resilience and coping abilities to deal with life's ups and downs without resorting to drugs. For more information on TCs, visit www.atca.com.au.

Regional Development Application Fund

On 3 November 2011, the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, Simon Crean, launched Round Two of the Regional Development Australia Fund to provide a further \$200 million to support priority projects in regional Australia.

After submitting an expression of interest, Odyssey House has been invited to complete a full application

for a new Withdrawal Unit with modern facilities. The new unit would assist in meeting the increasing demand for withdrawal services for alcohol and other drugs and would contribute towards better outcomes for clients. The new centre would allow us to use clinical leadership and innovative technologies and services to support people in need of medically supervised withdrawal services in the region.

Thank You

Over the festive season, Odyssey House supporters helped raise more than \$20,000 for our Christmas Giving Appeal. From everyone at Odyssey House, we give special thanks to all those who played Santa and donated so generously. We also extend our sincere appreciation to United Way, Audrey Page and Associates, the Rotary Club of Macarthur Sunrise, Byrotin Meats and Westpac for their kind donations of Christmas gifts and food for residents and their children. Christmas Day was made even more exciting thanks to the efforts of Ms Smith, who organised an Elvis impersonator to entertain our clients.

We were grateful to receive \$16,000 in NSW government funding in 2011 that enabled us to repair water damaged offices and security doors.

A message from the Chief Executive Officer



James A. Pitts

Each new year brings new challenges and opportunities. We start this year in hopeful anticipation, having lodged a number of significant new funding submissions with the Federal Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA). DOHA called for submissions from non-government organisations (NGOs) for programs to extend and enhance services for clients who suffer from alcohol and other drug misuse. We made submissions totalling \$8 million to fund: the Withdrawal Unit; the Parents' and Children's Program; the After Care Program; the Residential Rehabilitation Program; an Indigenous mental health worker; two Indigenous drug and alcohol workers; a research officer; and the establishment of a Sexual Health Clinic.

As noted in this newsletter, we have also applied for a grant through the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF), a federal initiative designed to fund infrastructure projects that promote economic sustainability and social inclusion. We propose to construct a new Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit on the grounds of our Assessment and Referral Centre, expanding our bed capacity from 12 to 20 and providing new office, dining and consulting/meeting spaces. This is a much needed infrastructure project that will benefit the Campbelltown and the Macarthur region, and indeed people throughout the state who need help to overcome alcohol and other drug dependence.

Our biggest challenge this year will be how to incorporate the recent wage increases awarded to the community services sector by Fair Work Australia: the first increment of the total award increase of 41 per cent over seven years starts on 1 December, 2012. A significant number of our staff are paid under the new award structure and, like many other NGOs, we will require government assistance to meet these increased costs. We are awaiting advice from the state and federal governments as to what degree they are willing to subsidise the proposed increases.

We look forward to favourable determinations in these matters. In the meantime, the harder we work, the luckier we get!

James A Pitts, MA
Chief Executive Officer