



## Road to Recovery - Rose's story of addiction, rehab, recovery and living life to the full

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Rose had a traumatic and turbulent upbringing, exposed to violence, emotional abuse and family dysfunction. She didn't get to be a carefree teenager and adopted a persona of being the biggest, loudest and toughest in order to cope, along with misusing alcohol and other drugs.

Rose started drinking at the age of 12 and by 14 was binge drinking every weekend and smoking pot. After being kicked out of home at 16, she started using cannabis daily, progressed to using speed and then heroin. She lived a 'sordid lifestyle' for three years in her late teens that left her with a serious drug problem and a dark, futureless outlook on life.

At the age of 20, Rose was arrested and sent to jail. Although the court gave her the option of entering rehabilitation as an alternative, she resisted, until after four weeks she was eventually released on her own recognisance... the day of her release she used heroin again.

Upon facing the reality of the path she was once more travelling, Rose approached her solicitor the next day, had her bail conditions changed and turned to Odyssey House for help. She entered the residential rehabilitation program in 1985. She progressed well through the program, attending regular therapy sessions, interacting with other residents in the therapeutic community, and learning to deal with and communicate her feelings.

After 11 months, felt she was ready to leave. Her counsellors disagreed, believing she had more work to do on overcoming the reasons she resorted to drugs and developing coping skills.

After 18 months back in the community, Rose relapsed. She had been faced with the same situations that had driven her to the drug-using lifestyle: family, same friends, same way of life.....it was a matter of time. She began drinking and then used speed. She knew she was on the road back down, but also knew what she had to do - and she returned to Odyssey House to get the help she needed.

Rose spent a further six months as a

resident, followed by eight months in the Outpatients Program (now known as the After Care Program), which provided the support for Rose as she began establishing a new lifestyle. Rose was proud to finally graduate the Odyssey House program in 1989.

She went on to have two children and entered University of Western Sydney as a mature age student. Rose thrived, receiving first class honours in an Environmental Management degree and winning the university medal.

Challenges in life still arise and the demons from her childhood still hang around at times, but Rose has a solid sense of self now and has learnt and practised the art of living in a manner where they do not affect her ability to live life to the fullest and make positive strides in her day.

"While I didn't think it at the time, in retrospect I regard all that I have gone through as a great gift. I have an enormous array of insight and the vibrancy and will to share it. If I can inspire one other person with my journey, I am happy, and this is what I do.

"It is an honour to have the opportunity to do some motivational speaking and mentoring, and share my story with others who need to know that anything is possible. It was an honour to return to Odyssey House to speak at the Celebrate Recovery Day festivities on 30 October last year to recognise all those people who have come through the same doors I did, seeking to change their lives.

"People who knew me in my late teens and early twenties wouldn't recognise me now. I actually look the same except for a couple of wrinkles, but the sparkle in my eye is very different. I used to struggle to communicate my feelings, I couldn't connect with people, particularly women, and I lacked confidence. Now, I embrace life, I have a wide circle of close female friends, two great children, a passion for cooking and a very positive outlook, and I can talk under water with marbles in my mouth! The wrinkles I have formed are not from frowning but from laughter. I have

A message from the Chairman



Doug Snedden

The saying "no margin no mission", which is much used in the not-for-profit sector, also applies to us and so the continued financial health of the organisation is essential.

At this time of year the management and the board formulate a budget for the coming year. Our funding comes from the Federal and NSW Health Departments, from our clients and from the community through donations and other fundraising. Government funding is linked to grants for the delivery of health services.

We believe we provide a cheaper and better result than if the government were to deliver rehabilitation services and that the human and community value of our services is positive. The case for government support is therefore strong.

With increasing demand for services and funding the Board was pleased to receive advice that the federal government will continue its funding of the Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit, Parents' and Children's program, JANUS and After Care program.

We are determined to continue to offer the same quality services and to expand our programs by reviewing our spending and further diversifying our revenue base so we can continue to assist people to overcome dependence on alcohol and other drugs.

The NSW Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, was genuinely impressed with the people she met during her recent visit to our facilities, particularly Aggie and Steve who led the tour.

When you read about the outcomes we can achieve for our clients – such as 1989 graduate Rose, whose story features in this newsletter – it brings home the fundamental importance of our mission and the role Odyssey plays in the community.

The courage and determination shown by those who participate in our programs and the dedication of our staff are a priceless source of inspiration to us all.

Doug Snedden  
Chairman

## Health Minister visits Odyssey House to find rehab saves lives and money



NSW Health Minister Jillian Skinner recently toured the facilities at Odyssey House in Eagle Vale and Minto. Mrs Skinner met Odyssey House Board members and staff and spoke with residents.

"This is a fantastic example of how such programs can help people get their lives back on track while avoiding unnecessary hospitalisations," Mr Pitts said.

"The clients I've met here today want to get back into the community and lead happy, productive lives free of addiction and it's heartening to see the support and services on offer at Odyssey House aimed at helping them achieve this."

Odyssey House CEO James Pitts said he was proud to showcase the comprehensive services offered and introduce Mrs Skinner and the Member for Camden, Chris Patterson, to the 'human face' of alcohol and other drug dependence.

"Rehabilitation not only saves lives, it also saves society and the government significant amounts of money and represents a very wise investment in the future. We're very grateful for the funding we received from the NSW government to support our programs," Mr Pitts said.

"There are no easy answers to dealing with drug problems, but research – and our own results – consistently shows that rehabilitation can work and produce long-term results."

Locally, a 2010 study of 345 residents at therapeutic communities in Australia and New Zealand, including Odyssey House, found a person who used drugs daily for a year prior to entering treatment cost society more than \$180,000 in healthcare expenses, crime and welfare benefits.

By undertaking year-long residential treatment, a client saves society \$146,000 over twelve months, including the cost of rehabilitation at approximately \$98 per day. The lifetime savings after people rebuild their lives and families and become productive members of society would be almost incalculable.

\*California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment, a study of treatment outcomes in a random sample of 1825 people representing approx 150,000 individuals who during 1991-92 received treatment and recovery services in California.

Pitts, J. & Yates, R., (2010), Cost benefits of therapeutic community programming: results of a self-funded survey, Therapeutic Communities, Vol. 31, pp. 129-144.



## The Dangers of Inhalants

Inhalants are legal, cheap and available in nearly every home and provide a quick high for those who inhale them.

Inhalants can be grouped into four categories: solvents, gases, aerosols and nitrites. Some of the most commonly inhaled products are glues, spray paints and cleaning fluids, which people can sniff through the nose or mouth.

There are different ways to inhale solvents or other substances. People either sniff the fumes from an open container or spray them directly into the nose or mouth. Huffing involves soaking a rag in an inhalant and pressing the rag to the mouth and inhaling. A third method is bagging, or inhaling fumes from chemicals that have been

Drowsiness and a lack of energy soon follow. Using inhalants leads to a hangover that lasts up to 24 hours and is often accompanied by a bad headache and a feeling of nausea.

Inhalant abuse triggers many changes to the body. Some can be reversed if the person stops; others, however, become permanent and can lead to serious illness or death. Inhaling is also a common step to more serious drug usage.

There is no typical inhalant abuser. The problem affects people from all backgrounds, regardless of income, race or religion. Learn to recognise the signs in a person who has been inhaling. For assistance or further information, contact your GP or the Australian Drug Information Network: [www.adin.org.au](http://www.adin.org.au).

Source: "Inhalants" by Sean Connolly



## Thank You

• **ASX** - Over the past year Odyssey House volunteers have assisted at a number of ASX Thomson Reuters Charity Foundation events, including a sailing regatta, golf day and gala dinner in support of a select number of charities including Odyssey House. We sincerely appreciate the assistance of the foundation and our supporters.

• **Grill'd** - In March Odyssey House was voted Number 1 by customers of community-minded Surry Hills burger restaurant Grill'd in their Local Matters Program. Each month customers are given the opportunity to vote for three nominated local charities who share in a \$500 donation – we thank Grill'd and their customers for their generous support (our Admissions and Intake Centre is located in Elizabeth St, Surry Hills).

• **McDonald's** - Odyssey House participated in the monthly charity night of the Macarthur Region of McDonald's stores in March. Our volunteers had fun across 13 stores on 21 March and the evening was a great success, raising more than \$2,500 for Odyssey House.

A message from the Chief Executive Officer



James A. Pitts

When I was growing up I loved the tales of Greek mythology which explained their interpretation and perception of the world. One of my favourites was Pandora's Box about the young girl who, despite all the warnings, opened the box she was told not to. Her decision unleashed upon the world all the evil, pestilence and negativity possible.

At Odyssey House we recently had an experience which in some ways parallels Pandora's. We were notified in early May that two of our programs would no longer receive funding under the Non Government Organisations Treatment Grants Program of the Federal Department of Health and Aging (DOHA): our Parents' and Children's Program, which enables families to stay together while the parents undertake rehabilitation; and the JANUS program, which provides tailored treatment for clients with co-existing mental illness and drug problems.

The news was not well received as both programs had been operating well and meeting their agreed objectives, confirmed by the Department's feedback in response to our half yearly reports. DOHA's decision did not appear to make sense in the context of their stated areas of priority which encompassed both programs. Needless to say, the decision caused lots of anxiety among the staff of these programs, as job losses were becoming reality. However, just before this newsletter went to press I received an email from Gayle Anderson, Assistant Secretary, Substance Misuse and Indigenous Wellbeing Programs Branch of the Mental Health and Drug Treatment Division, to notify us funding for the two programs would be restored and funded over the next three years!

You may be wondering how this decision relates to the story of Pandora's Box? After all of the ills were let loose on the world, the only thing remaining was HOPE! By the way, we are delighted to also receive federal government funding for our Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit and our After Care program.

James A Pitts, MA  
Chief Executive Officer