

# James Pitts, CEO, 30th Anniversary Celebration

The Odyssey House Board of Directors and Staff were joined by 65 guests at Parliament House, Sydney, to celebrate James Pitts' 30 years of service to Odyssey House New South Wales.

Kerry Chikarovski, former State Liberal Leader, was the MC for the evening, while the Minister for Mental Health, The Hon Jai Rowell, acknowledged James' many contributions to the alcohol and other drugs field.



Bryan Doyle MP, Member for Campbelltown, James Pitts, The Hon Jai Rowell MP, Minister for Mental Health



Julie Knox and Peter Miller, Australian Health & Youth Foundation, Kerry Chikarovski and Doug Snedden, Chairman Odyssey House



Odyssey House board members Garry Wayling, John Coughlan and Geoff Wilson and Bryan Doyle MP

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July 2014



'A Calm in  
the Sea of  
Addiction'

## odyssey NEWS

### Stephen's story

**Life begins at 50 for Odyssey House resident Stephen, who is a year into his treatment to overcome a fractured childhood and 35 years of drug dependence.**

"I was abandoned as a newborn and spent my first seven years in a children's home. I had shelter and food, but it was a tough environment and I didn't experience love as a little boy.

"When I was adopted I thought I'd finally got the family I craved, but my new parents were predators. Several times a week my mother would sexually abuse me and then my father would beat me. They would lock me in a cage under the house for a few days before it started again. I felt ashamed, dirty and powerless.

"One day in desperation I confided in a local tough guy. I was fourteen. He took me under his wing ... but first he urged me to bash my father and mother. When I said I couldn't, a friend injected me with speed. I immediately felt ten foot tall and bulletproof and thought I'd found my 'medicine' to deal with life. I bashed my father and left home forever.

"I'd escaped the abuse and belonged to a 'family' as part of the gang. For 35 years I lived a life of crime and violence, dependent on amphetamines and sometimes morphine to dull my pain.

"I was married, but I found emotional intimacy difficult and didn't share my life with my wife. I know now this was emotional abuse. As part of my therapy I wrote to ask her forgiveness, which she graciously gave me.

"At age 49, I saw a family walking past, holding hands and laughing. I felt utter despair that I'd never have that sort of life. I'd tried to commit suicide before, but this time I didn't want to die:



I wanted a new life free of drugs and violence.

"I had to wait two weeks to get into Odyssey House. During that time I slept rough and went through withdrawal alone. I haven't used drugs since.

"My time here has been confronting as I've worked through my issues and put them behind me. Odyssey House is my family now. I've had amazing support from the staff and my brothers and sisters in the program, including Survivors Group, which helps people who've endured trauma.

"Now, as a senior resident, I get satisfaction from sharing what I've learnt with the junior residents so they realise they can have a better life, that they're worth something. When I graduate I'm thinking of studying welfare so I can help people see it's never too late to beat addiction and rebuild your life.

"You discover who you can really be at Odyssey. I've built a strong value system based on the pillars of love, trust, honesty, personal responsibility and concern. I'm happier now than I've ever been and I can't wait to start again and experience living, not just existing."

**Watch Stephen's inspiring Studio 10 TV interview online: <http://tinyurl.com/npqnxlc>**

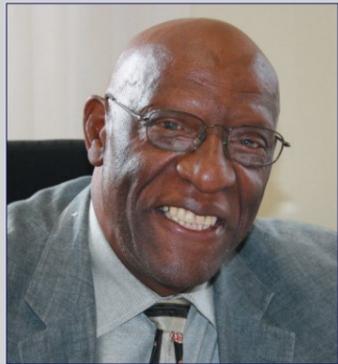
**Your donation will help people like Stephen overcome their addiction. Donate using envelope enclosed or online at [www.odysseyhouse.com.au](http://www.odysseyhouse.com.au)**

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to donate



## A note from the CEO's Desk

Challenges and more challenges! It seems at times not much has changed since I began with Odyssey House NSW in 1984: we work to continue our excellent record of delivering quality rehabilitation and other services to our marginalised client population, while dealing with associated bureaucratic and administrative issues.

Like other alcohol and drugs services, we are undergoing a review of our services by the Federal Department of Health. This is being conducted by The Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre "to clarify Australian drug and alcohol treatment and prevention funding; identify the gap between met and unmet demand; and planning and funding processes for the future". We have participated in a number of consultations with the Department and look forward to the recommendations which will flow from the review.

If you own a home you know the ongoing issues of maintaining your property. Our challenge is to do this across 160 hectares of land and various buildings at our two facilities. For example, we desperately need a ride-on mower to maintain the grass to reduce fire risk. If you can help us with this mundane yet important challenge (or others in this newsletter), please contact our Fundraising and Marketing Manager.

James A Pitts MA, CEO

## Parents' & Children's Program - breaking the generational cycle of addiction

Odyssey House is only one of a handful of rehabilitation centres in Australia that cater for men and women with dependent children, enabling parents to undertake treatment while their children live with them.

Residents participating in the Odyssey House Parents' and Children's Program are accommodated with their children in two self-contained, purpose-built cottages within the grounds of the main rehabilitation centre. The cottages can house eight families in private rooms, with access to a communal kitchen and dining room, ensuring family members can live together where appropriate and also interact with other families with similar experiences.

The program is dedicated to meeting the individual needs of the parent with their drug rehabilitation and parenting, the young child/children with their educational, emotional and physical development, and the family's wellbeing as a whole. On average, the program assists 25 families each year.

In families where alcohol or other drugs are being misused, behaviour is frequently unpredictable and chaotic, emotions range from loving to withdrawn, and communication is unclear or conflicting. Often

these families have a non-existent or inconsistent structure, a lack of rules and a strong sense of insecurity. The program therefore focuses on providing structure, consistency and routine within a safe environment. For example, residents will make breakfast for themselves and their children, get them ready for school and do the school drop off and pick up, and undertake after-school activities. While the children are at school the parents participate in the Odyssey House residential rehabilitation program to help overcome their substance misuse, which includes individual treatment and group therapy, as well as working in their assigned job function e.g. cooking, maintaining the property, painting, gardening, driving, or administrative activities. This is something that every resident has to do and is part of living in the therapeutic community, which teaches them responsibility and team work.

The key long-term goal of the Odyssey House Parents' and Children's Program is to break the generational cycle of drug misuse and its attendant behaviours by overcoming personal issues underlying drug problems and developing and nurturing family relationships to help both children and parents to realise their full potential.

## Rehab rebuilds lives... and delivers 600% return on investment

Helping people overcome alcohol or other drug problems and rebuild their lives has multiple and often immeasurable benefits to the individuals themselves, their loved ones, their local communities and society.

Odyssey House's long-term, comprehensive program effectively assists clients to deal with the personal issues underling their drug dependence, overcome any mental health issues, take control of their lives, and become contributing, law-abiding citizens.

In fact, more than two-thirds of clients maintain the gains made through treatment at Odyssey House. The Australian Treatment Outcome Study followed a sample of Odyssey House graduates and found 67 per cent were drug-free and crime-free three years after completing treatment. (A ten-year follow up is underway.)

To achieve these successes requires significant investment on many fronts.

Odyssey House clients invest months and often years of their lives on the arduous journey of rehabilitation to emerge as confident, caring, responsible individuals with a sense of self-worth and adequacy who can cope with life's challenges without resorting to drugs.

Our 60 staff invest hours of effort, quality care and "tough love" to assist around 650 clients every year, rising to the challenge of seeing the true worth and potential that lies within each person we help.

And, a significant monetary investment - \$6 million annually - is required to enable Odyssey House to make high quality rehabilitation services available to a broad cross section of the community, particularly people who cannot afford treatment in a private facility. Our residential rehabilitation costs are less than the cost of keeping a person in prison.

This is funded by clients' government benefits (approx. \$5000 p.a.) and grants from the federal and NSW governments. However, an additional \$600,000 in private donations must be raised each year to keep Odyssey House going.

So, what is the return on this investment?

Every \$1 invested in alcohol and other drug treatment results in a \$7 saving to the community, according to the large longitudinal CALDATA research project. This represents a 600 per cent return on investment. The study concluded the biggest savings were in reducing the costs associated with illicit drug use and criminal behaviour.

In the year prior to treatment, our research shows Odyssey House residents cost society approximately \$122 million or \$185,000 per person<sup>2</sup>. This is based on the costs of criminal activity, drug use, law enforcement and court costs, welfare benefits and healthcare.

Also, there is no drug use or criminal activity while a person is at Odyssey House. In 2012-13, residents accounted for 29,312 drug-free and crime-free days, saving society almost \$15 million. So, over almost 37 years of operation, we have saved society more than half a billion dollars.

But the most important return on investment is that Odyssey House has helped more than 35,000 Australians turn their lives around. This is priceless.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee (2013) Value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Pitts, J.A. and Yates, R. (2010). Cost Benefits of Therapeutic Community Programming: Results of a Self-funded Survey, Therapeutic Communities, 31, 2.



## A message from the Chairman

This year our CEO James Pitts celebrates 30 years of service to Odyssey House in NSW. We congratulate him and thank him for his enormous commitment.

Over the years James and his staff have helped thousands of people and their families break the spiral of desperation that accompanies a life of

addiction. His understanding of the issues and knowledge of rehabilitation techniques have directly benefited those affected, and through media appearances and his work on government committees and representative groups he has built better understanding of dependence in the community.

One of James's greatest achievements has been developing Odyssey House into a responsive, multi-modality organisation that offers specialised programs to complement our main rehabilitation service, enabling us to effectively address the changing, complex problems our clients experience e.g. our amphetamine treatment protocol; our Janus program for clients with a mental illness; our Parents' & Children's program. Such initiatives have improved client outcomes and increased our ability to secure funds in a challenging environment where demonstrating excellence in service delivery is paramount.

We continue to face cost increases and the risk of revenue collapse as government funding shrinks. We rely on funds from the community to bridge the gap and I encourage you to think of a donation to Odyssey House.

Doug Snedden, Chairman

## Morgan McKinley Partnership

Odyssey House is pleased to announce a new and exciting partnership with Morgan McKinley professional services recruitment agency. Morgan McKinley will work with Odyssey House and its residents in a number of ways including:- Several fundraising events and Workshops that will include CV writing, Interview and presentation preparation and help applying for opportunities.

## We need your help

Can you help us by donating items, your services or funds for these urgently needed improvements?

- 10-12 seater mini-van for Parents' and Children's Program
- Ride-on mower with catcher (preferably a reputable brand with a Briggs or Stratton engine)
- \$5,000 for plumbing, \$3,200 for two vaccine fridges and \$3,700 for two examination beds in the medical office
- External painting of buildings at our Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit
- Sanding and re-lacquering of timber floors at our Assessment and Referral Centre
- \$9,000 to refurbish one of our counselling rooms - re-carpeting, painting, curtains and seven lounges
- \$10,000 for refurbishment of the main community room at the main residential facility - carpeting, painting, fly screens, new furniture

**Please contact Alexandra Macaulay, Fundraising & Marketing Manager, on 02 8796 9970 if you are able to assist or know someone who can.**



### Yes! I want to make a difference to Odyssey House to help those individuals and families affected by drug and alcohol misuse.

- \$20 to help provide 3 nutritious meals for a child whose parent has entered the program
- \$100 to provide 2 counseling sessions for resident and their family to help them rebuild their relationships damaged by drug and alcohol misuse
- \$50 to provide a private counseling session

\$  Other amount. A gift of any size will make a difference.

Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible

OR I would like to make a monthly gift to Odyssey House of \$

Name on Card

Visa  M/C  Amex  Chq

Card number

Expiry date

Signature

Contact details

Please send me information on:  Remembering Odyssey House in my Will  I have already made a gift in my Will