



NSW Governor visits Odyssey House

Odyssey House staff and residents were honoured to host the first official visit by its new patron, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of NSW, accompanied by his wife, Mrs Linda Hurley, on 6 February.

His Excellency accepted the invitation to become patron last year following the retirement of the former Governor of NSW, Dame Marie Bashir, who was patron of Odyssey House for 15 years.

The Governor and Mrs Hurley spent the morning touring the Odyssey House Assessment and Referral Centre and the Withdrawal Unit at Ingleburn, and the Odyssey House Residential Rehabilitation Facility and Parents' and Children's Program at Eagle Vale, where they joined Odyssey House staff and board members for morning tea.

Odyssey House CEO James Pitts said he was delighted to welcome His Excellency as the organisation's new patron.

"His Excellency has shown a very genuine interest in what we do and the people we assist. He will be an excellent ambassador for Odyssey House and will advocate for the value

of residential rehabilitation services and the need for ongoing funding and support from government," Mr Pitts said.

After a singing welcome from the Odyssey House choir, His Excellency addressed the seventy residents assembled for his visit, encouraging them in their ongoing treatment for alcohol and other drug dependence.

"Being patron of an organisation is not something I do just as a matter of course. I believe wholeheartedly in what Odyssey House does and its contribution to society," His Excellency said.

"You are brave and courageous people and I want to emphasise that you are all of enormous value to your country, to your communities and your families. I particularly want to give a personal acknowledgement to your fellow residents Natalie and James, who led the guided tour today and spoke eloquently to us about Odyssey House and their own treatment journeys."

To mark his visit, His Excellency was presented with an artwork created by Odyssey House residents and said he would be proud to hang it on his office wall.

Odyssey relationships with Tharawal and UWS

Odyssey House values its relationships with key partners. This year has seen ongoing collaborations with Tharawal Corporation Medical Services, which works with our staff to enhance service delivery for our Aboriginal residents, who enjoy participating in their Mingu Yabun group at Tharawal Community Services. We thank Leonie Murdoch and the Tharawal staff and community for their ongoing support and efforts.

We continue to support student placements for counselling, psychology, nursing and medical students from many colleges and universities, including University of Western Sydney (UWS).

Our relationships with tertiary institutions also enable us to access best practice resources and knowledge and mentoring our staff members, which ultimately improves the quality of service delivery to our clients. UWS has been very supportive in helping Odyssey House develop IT&C software to streamline processes, freeing staff to spend more time with residents. Our counselling staff participated in an online mentoring module UWS developed specifically for Odyssey House. Notre Dame University has also facilitated professional development training, ensuring staff have the most up-to-date counselling and psychological skills.

Odyssey Family Dinner

Families are often vital to a person's sustained recovery from alcohol and other drug dependence. We were delighted to host more than 100 residents, their families and Odyssey House staff at our annual Odyssey House Family Dinner at the main residential rehabilitation facility in March. Guests were served an array of Italian-inspired meals prepared by residents in the Odyssey House commercial kitchen. It was a fantastic evening that provided an opportunity for all the residents and their families to interact and also speak with staff.

The Odyssey Family Dinner was a huge success and a great night was had by all; thank you to all the family members who attended.

ODYSSEY HOUSE

PO Box 459 Campbelltown NSW 2560
Phone: (02) 9820 9999 Fax: (02) 9820 1796
www.odysseyhouse.com.au

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'A Calm in the Sea of Addiction'

odyssey NEWS

John & Sharni's Story

After 20 months in Odyssey House's renowned Parents' and Children's Program, John, 39, and Sharni, 26, and their two-year-old daughter Savannah are getting ready to rebuild their lives as a happy, healthy family free of drugs.

John

I was the youngest of five children living in a small town in Tasmania. I was a lot younger than my siblings, so most of them had already left home when I was growing up. There was a lot of pressure on me and I felt that what mum and dad thought they had done wrong with my other siblings, they would fix with me.

At school I was a pretty average student; I enjoyed socialising with my friends but was never academic. My teachers always said I had so much potential, but didn't use it.

My father was the sole policeman in our little town. I looked up to him and knew I wanted to become a policeman just like him.

After school I tried but was unsuccessful twice in applying for the policeforce, so eventually I started working at the mines, which is what I did for the next 15 years.

I started smoking pot when I was about 14. Then, at 19, after my mum passed away from cancer, I started taking morphine, which I had first stolen from my mum and later got from my sister. She thought if she got this for me it would make me happy. My father was an alcoholic and died about eight years later, and I found it hard to cope with the further round of grief and loss.

After 15 years of addiction to morphine, which I was injecting daily, I eventually ended up in a rehab facility in Tasmania. This is where I met Sharni.

Sharni

My parents were very young when they had me and eventually broke up, so as a child I lived



with my dad and my grandparents. I was very close to my grandmother as she was my mother figure. She passed away when I was 10 years old; I was devastated and so was my dad. I now know he was smoking pot and taking morphine to deal with this. I felt like I never actually got to speak about my grandmother passing and my dad never wanted to open up about it.

I was a distracted kid at school. I didn't really like being there, but I loved music. I left school when I was in year 10 and went on to get odd jobs. My dad had just gone to rehab and I felt as if I had no guidance or role models. I started drinking heavily - I would scull a whole bottle of alcohol just before I started work. At 22 I realised I needed help; I was so unhappy and didn't want to continue like this.

John & Sharni

We both met in rehab and were unfortunately kicked out as we became a couple [most facilities discourage intimate relationships between clients]. Over the next year we were travelling around camping and unfortunately both using drugs. We had now actually combined our addictions: Sharni was now using morphine and alcohol and I was still using morphine and started drinking heavily.

During one of the times we got clean, Sharni fell pregnant with our little girl Savannah. We were so excited and felt this was a fresh start. This lasted about eight months until we were both using again.

It all came to a point when Sharni's family took away Savannah from us and said that we wouldn't get her back until we got clean. We wanted to go somewhere as a family, so we left Tasmania and came to the Odyssey House Parents' & Children's Program.

We are now coming to an end in our rehabilitation. We've been dealing with our personal issues and putting things behind us, and we've also been learning how to be better parents through the parenting education component of the program. We hope in the future to explore our passions in life and eventually go back to Tasmania.

Your donation will help people like John & Sharni overcome their addiction. Donate online at www.odysseyhouse.com.au

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City 2 Surf

Are you running (or walking) in Sydney's City 2 Surf on 9 August?

Odyssey House is one of 50 charities people can fundraise for while participating in the City 2 Surf. Register here and choose Odyssey House as the charity you wish to support:



<https://www.realbuzzregistrations1.com/events/fairfax/the-2015-city2surf/details>
For further information or any questions, please contact fundraising@odysseyhouse.com.au.

A note from the CEO's Desk

The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, recently announced the establishment of a National Ice Taskforce to address the issue of methamphetamine. Mr Abbott should be acknowledged for his initiative in establishing the Taskforce in the wake of growing public concerns about the prevalence of this drug and its profound effects on individuals and families.

The Taskforce's purpose is to examine all existing efforts to address ice and identify ways to take a systematic, comprehensive and coordinated approach to education, health and law enforcement. Its first task is to consult with all states and territories about their interventions in response to ice. From that point, perhaps we will see concrete steps and/or goals emerge.

There have been calls from many quarters asking for, and in some cases demanding, something be done about the "ice scourge". However, we, the public, need to be realistic as to what the Taskforce can accomplish. A time-honoured phrase is "One swallow does not a summer make". We need to take the same cautionary approach towards the Taskforce. It has a big job on its hands and a long way to go!

At any rate, unless this initiative is supported by solid resources – meaning money – it is unfortunately destined to fail, producing just another well-intentioned report full of unfunded recommendations!

James A Pitts MA, CEO

The facts about ice

Misuse of any amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) is dangerous, but ice or crystal methamphetamine is more potent than speed, base or ecstasy in its action on the central nervous system, is more addictive, and has more serious physical and mental health effects, particularly due to intoxication or long-term use. At its worst, ice can cause users to behave aggressively and violently, or experience anxious or paranoid thoughts, hallucinations or even psychosis.

However, someone can have a serious amphetamine addiction yet still function well and appear relatively normal. Not everyone with an ice problem is climbing the walls, acting aggressively, neglecting their family or picking their skin. This unhelpful media stereotype may discourage people from seeking help because they don't believe their problem is serious enough; it also reinforces the belief common among users that they are unworthy or undeserving of recovery.

Increasing ice addiction

Amphetamine dependence has become a significant problem in Australia over the past few years, prompting the federal government to recently convene a National Ice Taskforce. In 2014, Odyssey House recorded its highest ever figure for ATS admissions, outstripping other illicit drugs such as heroin/opiates. Four in ten of clients entering the Odyssey House Residential Rehabilitation Program during the financial year cited ATS as their principal drug of concern. This was up 21 per cent on 2013, when three in ten of clients cited amphetamines as their main problem; it is also a 167 per cent rise since 2003, when only 15 per cent of clients had an amphetamine problem.

The increased numbers of amphetamine-dependent people seeking help from Odyssey House reflects the growing prevalence and use of ice as the 'amphetamine of choice' among existing drug users, who might previously have used speed

(powdered methamphetamine) or perhaps heroin. There has not been a significant increase in ice use among people who have never used drugs. So, although the ice problem is very serious, "epidemic" is not an appropriate term, despite the headlines.

Ice dependence can be treated successfully

It's important for people in addiction and their families to know that ATS dependence can be treated successfully, with help available right now.

Odyssey House has developed an intensive therapy-based treatment for that takes into account likely psychological problems and issues such as disordered thoughts, trouble sleeping and focusing, and issues with motivation and engagement in therapy.

Our staff are trained to deal with the challenges posed by amphetamine users, who may initially exhibit challenging behaviours and mental health problems that may underlie their drug use, be caused by their drug use, and/or be brought on by withdrawal. The first 12 weeks can be particularly difficult, which is why long-term residential therapy is recommended for many people with serious or long-standing addiction issues.

Supported by the safe, structured therapeutic community of Odyssey House, people can and do overcome their addiction, deal with their underlying personal problems, and rebuild their lives. In fact, independent research shows that two-thirds of people who complete our program are drug-free three years later, with significantly improved mental and physical health.



A message from the Chairman

Recent NSW and federal government announcements about initiatives to combat ice confirm they see the need to act. Amphetamine-type stimulants like ice are the number one drug of concern for four in ten clients admitted to Odyssey House, and we provide effective treatment for the direct impact and associated mental health issues. While our services have always been in demand, it is clear we have an increasingly important part to play.

Odyssey House receives some of its funding from state and federal governments, which have been reviewing their grant programs for the past three years. While state funding has finally become clear, it has yet to be implemented. The Commonwealth

has yet to announce any policy changes; however, funding has been confirmed for the next 12 months. We make every effort to ensure the best outcomes for our clients. The uncertainty about funding makes this challenging and we look forward to the clarity promised during the next financial year. We trust this will reflect the important role of rehabilitation services in response to alcohol and other drug problems such as ice.

The community itself has a part to play, and at this time of the year we undertake our tax time fundraising campaign. I hope you will contribute by making a tax-deductible donation.

Doug Snedden, Chairman

Tax appeal - We can achieve so much more together

Over 35,000 people having been helped to overcome their addictions at Odyssey House. With more than 640 people now coming through our therapeutic community doors every year, the need for our services has never been greater.

Each year, Odyssey House NSW is faced with new challenges as we work to achieve our goal of saving and improving the lives of people dependent on alcohol and other drugs. We rely heavily on the support of people like you.

We ask for your help, to give as much as you can so we can continue to assist those people most in need. It doesn't take much to make a difference. All donations of \$2 are tax deductible. Your support is greatly valued and together we can achieve so much more.

YOUR donation helps us provide much needed services including:

- Residential rehabilitation
- Medically assisted withdrawal
- Assessment services

- Parents' and Children's Program
- Progressive Learning Centre
- After care

If you would like to make a donation please contact 02 8307 8838 or fundraising@odysseyhouse.com.au or donate online at ohfundraising.org.au.

Thank you for your generosity.
Warm regards
James A Pitts CEO.

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
- \$50 to provide a private counseling session
- \$100 to provide 2 counseling sessions for a resident and their family to help them rebuild their relationships damaged by drug and alcohol misuse

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

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

Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible
06/15

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Card number

Expiry date

Signature

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

Please remove me from the mailing list (Include contact details and return to Odyssey)

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