THE ROE OF A LIFETIME

JEFF KENNEDT REFLECTS ON HIS JOURNEY WITH BEYONDBLUE

COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES BACKED BY SCIENCE • EXPERTS PONDER THE FUTURE

HEALTH PROGRAM EMBRACES BOTH SIDES OF MEDICINE
Editor’s Note

When pondering which theme to tackle in this issue of Wellspring Magazine, I couldn’t ignore the topic of mental wellness. It is an area which has touched so many of us, whether we’ve experienced a mental health issue directly or through the eyes of a loved one. The balance between work, family and other personal stresses can all too often take its toll – and it is something that can easily happen to anyone from any walk of life.

With 3 million Australians living with anxiety or depression, the ripple effects of these illnesses are being felt by families and workplaces across the country. The decision to delve further into the topic was therefore a simple and important one.

Mental wellness is also something we are focussed on as an organisation, as greater awareness continues to unfold about the strong role evidence-based natural therapies have to play as a complement to conventional treatments in treating mental health issues.

When considering the most important stories to tell in the area of mental wellness, we couldn’t go past the journey of former Victorian premier and Liberal leader Jeff Kennett, who has led the non-profit beyondblue to become an uncontended force in shaping public policy and introducing innovative new mental health programs. It was a privilege to share his achievements and unique insights with you.

You will also find on these pages a snapshot of some of the most innovative mental wellness programs supporting Australians today, empowering stories of battlers who have leveraged their own experience of mental illness to help others and the latest research on complementary therapies supporting people with mental health issues to lead fuller lives.

Most of all we hope this issue will help promote greater understanding of one of the most important topics on the health agenda today. I encourage you to join us in doing all you can to reduce any stigma you encounter surrounding mental health issues and empowering people in your life experiencing these issues to seek help early.

We all have a part to play.

David Hoey
Editor
 twitter.com/davidhoey
Each year one in five Australians will experience a mental illness (Sane Australia).

One million Australian adults and 100,000 young people live with depression each year (Mental Health Council of Australia).

Two thirds of people with a mental illness don’t receive treatment in any twelve month period (Sane Australia).

65% of Australians suffering a mental health illness will not seek help (Black Dog Institute).

Life expectancy for people with a mental illness is up to 30 years lower than the general population.

Six people die in Australia each day from suicide and rates are three to four times higher among males than females.

Green spaces provide lasting boost
People living in towns and cities with more parks and gardens tend to report greater wellbeing than those without, according to research from the European Centre for Environment and Human Health.

Poor diets linked to mental health issues in teens
Teenagers who eat unhealthily are more likely to develop mental health problems than those with balanced diets, a study by Deakin University of Australian teenagers showed.

Get those endorphins pumping
16 weeks of regular exercise has been shown to be equally effective as an Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI) antidepressant medication in the treatment of mild to moderate depression in older inactive adults, according to two trials (Black Dog Institute).

Smiling Mind and beyondblue recently launched the world’s first mental health-related pregnancy app of its type to help expecting parents manage the stress of pregnancy and reduce the risk of postnatal depression. Mind the Bump is a free and clinically-based program. 🧿 smilingmind.com.au
HOW JEFF KENNETT STARTED AUSTRALIA’S MOST IMPORTANT CONVERSATION

No report card on Australia’s progress in supporting people with mental health issues would be complete without considering the achievements of former Victorian premier and Liberal leader Jeff Kennett.

by Nina Tovey
Known for his tough, no-nonsense character and his achievements as one of the most decorated premiers in Victorian history, Jeff Kennett applied his well documented tenacity to establish not-for profit organisation beyondblue after leaving politics in what he describes as ‘the role of his lifetime’.

He has a reputation as a polarising public figure, but Mr Kennett’s achievements in putting anxiety and depression on the map in Australia are undisputed. Since establishing beyondblue in 2000, under his leadership the organisation today employs 100 staff and is known as a major force in shaping public policy and introducing innovative new mental health programs.

Mr Kennett’s journey with beyondblue began when his daughter experienced the loss of two of her friends, both young men who had died on the roads.

“She was very upset and we spoke about what could be done to lower death tolls on the roads. When we looked into the matter more closely we realised both men were emotionally depressed after breaking up with their partners and used their cars to take their lives,” Mr Kennett said.

“This changed my approach entirely and I started trying to better understand suicide and what could be done in the community. Without my daughter asking that one simple question beyondblue wouldn’t have been born.”

Mr Kennett soon decided a national body was needed to examine depression and educate the public to encourage them to seek help early and remove the public stigma surrounding the illness.

“I wanted to ensure mental health was widely understood, acknowledged and addressed by the wider community. I also saw a need for improving services for people experiencing anxiety and depression – and their family and friends – together with motivating action in the area of prevention.”

beyondblue was established in the Australian context of the World Health Organisation’s projections of an increasing global burden caused by depression. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide and is predicted to be the leading cause of burden of disease by 2030, ahead of heart disease.

There were limited benchmarks overseas to draw inspiration from at the time, with few countries having attempted a national response to depression, and those that had gotten off the ground often meeting with limited success.

With just nine staff and a passionate Chairman in Mr Kennett, the organisation rapidly grew, with an independent evaluation prepared by the University of Melbourne in 2004 commending beyondblue for ‘achieving a significant amount in a relatively short space of time’ and becoming ‘the public health face of mental health in the country’.

The report also recognised beyondblue’s results in the face of numerous obstacles.

“Given the well documented shortfall in mental health services alongside the long-standing problems with stigmatization and discrimination towards people with mental illness, this [its progress] is a considerable achievement,” the report read.

Quick to point out much of the success of beyondblue should also be credited to the wider team, Mr Kennett names the widespread public awareness of the organisation as one of its biggest achievements.

“Our recognition rate is a huge 91%. There aren’t many organisations that have been operating for such a short period of time that are as well respected and understood,” Mr Kennett said.

Support from the media in giving beyondblue a wider public platform to raise awareness of its work and to start removing the stigma surrounding mental illness has been another milestone.

“Working with the media has allowed us to open Australia’s eyes to depression and mental health in a way we’ve never seen before. We talk about these issues on the radio, on TV and in newspapers, whereas ten years ago you would have never seen discussions like this happening in the mainstream media,” said Mr Kennett.

Part of beyondblue’s resonance in the community also comes down to the work it has done to tailor its program and approach to meet the needs of various communities – whether it be Indigenous, childhood, rural communities, the lesbian, gay, bi, trans or intersex communities, men, new mothers, the workforce or older Australians.

The former premier is matter of fact about the determined focus of the organisation.

“We have so many programs badged beyondblue so we’re always in your face. It has worked in our favour,” he said.

Mr Kennett, who has dedicated 40 per cent of his time to his work at beyondblue since
2000, attributed part of the organisation’s success to the bipartisanship existing within the political spectrum.

“When I may disagree with politicians from time to time, the reality is they continue to support our work, and this has reinforced in my mind where there is bipartisanship in government a great deal can be achieved,” Mr Kennett said.

“We have seen every government in Australia give mental health a far greater priority since beyondblue began its work. All have invested new funding into the cause, and many governments have even employed ministers for mental health. None of this existed previously.”

Part of Mr Kennett’s influence on beyondblue can be seen in the organisation’s determination to travel around Australia to ensure its services and support are able to be accessed by all Australians.

“When we established beyondblue I travelled all over Australia speaking to smaller outback towns and larger metropolitan areas – we literally covered the country from top to bottom and went to the places other people don’t go.”

As an example, beyondblue launched a National Roadshow in 2014 which will travel more than 50,000 kilometres in a big blue bus through every state and territory of Australia holding more than 200 events to support healthcare professionals and the community to become more active in tackling mental health issues.

When it comes to the biggest challenges faced by the organisation, Mr Kennett is straight to the point.

“As you destigmatise something the demand grows exponentially. Today we have tens of thousands of people presenting to medical professionals for help and there aren’t enough services and facilities to meet the demand. It is putting pressure on our medical profession, many of whom are overworked and underpaid,” he said.

“Medication can certainly help people with symptoms of mental illness. It was the result of making greater financial demands of the Government I would say it is important to illustrate you can responsibly handle what the public purse has given you before requesting more. I am sympathetic to the cause, but there needs to be parameters in place.”

Government financial support for people with mental health issues

“The mental health plan available through GPs is the result of the advocacy work we’ve done over the years and has been a wonderful support to many people. To those making greater financial demands of the Government I would say it is important to illustrate you can responsibly handle what the public purse has given you before requesting more. I am sympathetic to the cause, but there needs to be parameters in place.”

“I want to encourage people to learn more about mental health because even if they have never experienced it personally, there is no guarantee they won’t. We could all wake up tomorrow in a comatose position due to a chemical imbalance in the brain. The more we learn about these issues the better we can support others – our parents, children and colleagues.”

When it comes to looking back over his tenure with beyondblue, the role he famously described as ‘more important than my political career’, Mr Kennett is remarkably humble.

“I have been a great beneficiary of this experience as I have learned so much. I may not be a professional, but I am now a very well educated layperson.”

beyondblue.org.au

Jeff on...
The role complementary health has to play

“Medication can certainly help people with mental health issues lead fuller lives. However, the reality is medication is not always the answer and therefore dietary changes and physical exercise also have a role to play. At the end of the day mental health is experienced differently by everyone and different things will work for different people. The scientific professions help us learn more about these issues all the time.”

Which mental health issues keep him up at night

“None, because getting a good night’s sleep is terribly important for your mental health. I developed a system a good many years ago where I run through the day every night before I go to sleep. I deal with all the issues then so I can sleep well – it is such an important factor in facing the day ahead refreshed and positive.”

beyondblue’s standout programs

**Man Therapy**

*beyondblue* launched Man Therapy in 2013 to encourage men to take charge of their mental health and look out for their mates to reduce the far higher rates of male suicide in Australia when compared with women.

The federally funded campaign featured a fictional ‘man’s man’ Dr Brian Ironwood as the campaign’s advertising spokesman. Its ability to communicate a serious message using humour struck a chord with Australian men, resulting in thousands of Australian men visiting the website.

Man Therapy’s website includes tools to help men recognise the signs of depression and anxiety and seek support and a discussion forum for men experiencing symptoms of mental illness.

* mantherapy.org.au

**The Check-in App**

*beyondblue* launched a mobile app in 2014 to make it easier for young people to initiate a conversation with friends they are concerned may be experiencing depression or anxiety. It was the result of *beyondblue* winning the 2013 Vodafone Foundation App Aid competition after receiving more than 700 crowdfunding donations.

The free app provides a range of things young people can say to their friend, and where and when to say it, along with tips from other young people who have reached out to a friend successfully. The app was developed in response to research which showed only one in four young people aged 16 to 24 experiencing a mental illness will seek support from a health professional.

**The Heads Up Program**

*beyondblue** teamed with the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance earlier this year to launch a national campaign to encourage Australia’s business leaders to take action on mental health.

The campaign addresses a growing body of evidence pointing to the cost of untreated mental health conditions to the Australian workforce ($10.9 billion a year according to a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers report).

The Heads Up program offers free tools and resources for business leaders, who are encouraged to register to learn how to make their workplace more mentally healthy, productive and profitable. Leaders can also download tailor-made mental health plans for their workplace.

headsup.org.au
The facts about mental illness are confronting – it accounts for a third of adult disability globally¹, resulting in significant damage on a social and economic level. When considering the pivotal role healthcare has to play in managing mental illness, one prominent mental health researcher is arguing improved treatment measures is the ideal way forward.

Dr Jerome Sarris, Senior Research Fellow at The University of Melbourne, Department of Psychiatry believes consideration should be given to evidence which shows mental health issues are not treated sufficiently overall in Australia and across the world.

“Research tells us the traditional medical approach of drug therapy appears to only achieve first treatment remission for one third of patients living with depression when used in isolation,” said Jerome.

“Medication certainly has its place, but embracing an integrative approach from both sides of medicine to a greater degree will see the healthcare industry make a far greater impact on the lives of people with mental health issues.”

Jerome, who has dedicated his career to anxiety and mood disorder research and is a founding Vice Chair of the International Network of Integrative Mental Health, said although complementary therapies are already widely used to treat mental illness, more research and advocacy work needed to be done.

There is no doubt in my mind that an integrative approach is an important part of the solution in reversing some of the concerning trends we are seeing in the area of mental health. That is why we are working hard to generate more mainstream acknowledgement of the importance of lifestyle medicine and the positive impacts of evidence-based nutraceutical treatments in this area,” said Jerome.

“We also need to address the fact that few people disclose their use of complementary therapies to their conventional healthcare provider despite around half of all people with a mood or anxiety disorder using complementary therapies. This is a concern as there are some treatment combinations which interact with each other, so a proactive conversation about complementary medicine use is in everyone’s best interest.”

Research has shown 43% of patients with anxiety disorders and 53% with depression use complementary therapies².

In addition, the Bravewell Collaborative published a survey which shows integrative care is often beneficial for common psychiatric disorders, and highlights depression and anxiety as among the top five health concerns for which integrative medicine is most helpful.

“We also need to challenge concerns about the higher costs associated with an integrative approach to treating these issues, as these are likely to be offset by future savings from greater workplace productivity and lower demands on health resources,” said Jerome.

“The evidence behind the importance of healthy interpersonal relationships and strong support networks, and a range of lifestyle factors (such as exercise, dietary and sleep quality) is undisputed, so it is important any integrative treatments should address these components.”
Which integrative and complementary approaches have been shown to be most effective?

**Food as medicine**
Foods rich in omega-3, amino acids, B and C vitamins, zinc, and magnesium are recommended, as they are necessary for the production of neurotransmitters and for neuronal communication. These include whole grains, lean meat, deep-sea fish, green leafy vegetables, coloured berries and nuts. Research has shown the reduction of alcohol and caffeine can help ease certain mental health symptoms.

**Practising mindfulness**
Mindfulness techniques have been shown to be beneficial in preventing fixation on past problems or future concerns.

**Naturopathy**
A Canadian study showed adults with moderate to severe anxiety who received naturopathic care of dietary counselling, multivitamins and Withania somnifera saw their anxiety scores decrease over the treatment period by 57% compared with 30% of those who underwent standard psychotherapy.

**Exercise**
Several modes of exercise have been shown to have antidepressant effects, with higher intensity exercise and weight training shown to have the greatest antidepressant effect.

**Supplements**
Commonly researched supplements are:

**Omega-3 fatty acids**
Studies have shown low dietary intake of these fish oils may relate to a greater risk of depressive symptoms. Clinical trials on major depression indicate these fatty acids (in particular EPA) can alleviate depression taken alone or with antidepressants. Omega-3 fatty acids are contained in many foods and are also available in capsule form.

**SAMe (S-adenosyl-methionine)**
SAMe has been shown to be as effective as antidepressants with fewer adverse effects when treating mental health issues. Dr Sarris is currently conducting a large NHMRC funded project assessing this in treating clinical depression. Available in tablet form.

**St John’s Wort**
Trials have shown patients taking St John’s Wort were more likely to respond to it than a placebo, with a comparable effect to antidepressants in reducing depressive symptoms. It was recently estimated that if Australians switched from their antidepressant to St John’s Wort they could save the economy $50 million a year, according to analysis by Access Economics. St John’s Wort is most often taken in liquid or capsule form.

**Kava**
Clinical trials led by Dr Sarris have shown this plant compound can improve symptoms in chronic anxiety sufferers, with potential less risk of dependency and side effects than other pharmaceutical treatment options. He is currently conducting a large study confirming the efficacy of Kava in treating generalised anxiety disorder. The study will also utilise neuroimaging and genetic technology.

**NAC (N-acetyl cysteine)**
This amino acid has been found to significantly reduce depression in bipolar disorder, improve certain symptoms in schizophrenia, and reduce symptoms of people with obsessive compulsive disorder. It is most commonly taken in capsule form.

**Zinc**
Emerging evidence indicates this mineral significantly lowered depressive symptoms when taken with an antidepressant. Zinc is contained in many foods and is also available as a supplement. People considering the use of any treatment for mental health issues should seek professional health advice.

**About Jerome Sarris**
Dr Jerome Sarris has completed a doctorate at the University of Queensland in the field of psychiatry and undertook his postdoctoral training at The University of Melbourne (Department of Psychiatry); The Centre of Human Psychopharmacology (Swinburne University of Technology) and the Depression Clinical and Research Program (Harvard Medical School). He also has a Bachelor and a Masters of Health Science in the field of herbal medicine with other qualifications in naturopathy, acupuncture, nutritional medicine, and exercise instruction.

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2 As above
3 Sarris J. Whole system research of naturopathy and medical herbalism for improving mood and reducing anxiety. Australian Journal of Medical Herbskism 2011
4 Sarris J. Five Supplements That May Help With Depression, The Conversation, 25 August 2014
Tiffany Dunk

“I was in my late teens when I had my first experience with depression. Mum had just moved overseas. I’d moved in with my dad but wasn’t getting along with my stepmum and was also dealing with the stress of my final year of high school. I felt awful a lot of the time but told myself that it would pass. I got better at dealing with it until a combination of relationship and financial pressures bought on a second bout. Eventually I stopped getting out of bed, with my partner coming home after work to find me in the same spot as when he’d left. I began to lie to people and pretend I was feeling better than I was. It wasn’t long until I started to cut myself off from those closest to me.”

Remarkably, about this time I got a big break and landed a job in the magazine industry with Lisa Wilkinson as my first boss. I still had dark days but even during my lowest points I managed to get myself to the office. It was a very exciting period of my life. In my early 30s I had another depressive episode. I was upset all the time and ended up in the shadows. I shared my experiences with Dolly readers and was touched when I was approached at an event by a reader who was struggling with depression and told me my letter had helped her friends understand what she was going through.

After leaving Dolly on amicable terms I went through a complete meltdown as I struggled to transition towards the next phase of my life. I realised I needed professional help and saw an amazing doctor, did some blood tests and started seeing a psychologist. I also decided to start taking anti-depressants and was amazed at how different I felt within weeks. My psychologist taught me to understand the thought patterns and processes associated with going in to a depressive phase.

I decided I wanted to turn what I went through into a positive by helping educate teenagers on mental health issues. I was given an opportunity to work with Fresh ED, an interactive student program which positively impacts young people’s attitudes about health and wellbeing. Through them I speak publicly about my story and share what I’ve learnt and relish the opportunity to help educate young minds on the issues they may face in life.”

About Tiffany

Tiffany is a freelance editor, journalist and brand consultant.

tiffanydunk.com
fresshed.com.au

Emily Holmes

“I was living a blessed life with a fantastic partner, a home by the beach and had finished university with my dream job as a town planner for a private consultancy. I had everything I wanted including wonderful friends and family but felt as if I had no control over my moods. I couldn’t explain or understand what was going on in my mind and many of my friends thought I had simply moved on from my friendship circles as I stopped socialising with them. They had no idea I was experiencing a mental health issue.

I was good at putting on a smile and operating day to day as if everything was fine but I pushed friends and loved ones away over time until I had isolated myself from everybody. I felt extremely alone and ashamed of myself.

Even though I was fortunate to have an amazing and extremely supportive partner, my behaviour was beginning to affect our relationship. My partner actively encouraged me to talk to a professional but I resisted and felt I wouldn’t be able to explain myself. At the same time I knew something had to give as I had been suffering in silence for about a year.

After some deliberation and by complete accident I found a wonderful integrative GP who diagnosed me with depression and helped me heal naturally over a period of time. It was a massive learning experience and I remember wondering what on earth she was talking about when she referred to ‘raw food’. She taught me to use food as medicine and embrace counselling, journaling, gratitude, self-help, self-love, exercise and meditation. I also began to see a naturopath and nutritionist to further support my mental health. It was a gradual process to get back to feeling like myself again but it was absolutely worth it.

After experiencing how successful natural health was in helping me, I knew I had to help others and share what I was learning. This led to me changing professions from town planning to becoming a wellness coach. Today I share what I’ve learnt about natural health and wholefoods with others. It has been wonderful to see my message resonate with so many others.

If you think you have a mental health issue, please don’t feel ashamed. As soon as you share how you’re feeling with just one person, the help they can provide is tremendous. Once you start talking about how you’re feeling, you soon learn there are so many other people who have felt or are feeling the same way as you are.”

About Emily

Emily, 25, is a wellness coach and the author of Transform Your Life in 8 Weeks.

conscious-foodie.com
facebook.com/consciousfoodie

Any readers who are seeking assistance can call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or beyondblue on 1300 224 636.
Helen Edwards

“Growing up I had an idyllic childhood and loving family. I was a straight A student in primary school until I began to experience bullying for the first time when our family moved to a small country town. The bullying continued into high school and following diagnosis with type one diabetes at 12 my mental health began to suffer. Unfortunately it was not really picked up or dealt with at the time.

The first serious signs my mental health was deteriorating were in my mid teens when I felt very alone and considered self-harm on numerous occasions. From when I was 14 I began to rebel and my risk taking behaviour started to affect my relationship with my family. My social life was impacted during my primary school until I began to experience depressive bouts and a need to fit in led to alcohol consumption which put me at even greater risk. When I was 16, low self-esteem led me to a violent four year relationship which had lasting impacts on my mental health. My academic studies suffered and I developed worsening symptoms that led me to a violent four year relationship with my creative side.

I finally saw a psychologist and it was extremely helpful. I was prescribed antidepressants which I took on and off for a number of years. I have not needed them now for more than 18 years. Mindfulness Meditation, deep relaxation and positive visualization all helped greatly in my recovery and the maintenance of my mental health and wellbeing. I use exercise and in particular running, as a strong force for physical and mental health. Music, the fresh air, nature and the rhythm of running, as well as the endorphins released are all wonderful natural medications.

I decided I wanted to use what I had learnt to help support others in their depression and this led me to become an accredited mental health worker. I built on this work by launching a website to connect people with diabetes and their families to a better quality of life and raise awareness of the link between the illness and mental health issues.

Mental illness could happen to you. It may be your friend, partner, parent or child. Nobody is untouched by mental illness. Please don’t judge, whisper, or try to avoid the issue – speak up and reach out. Caring for your mental health should be part of your everyday routine, like brushing your teeth. Find something and someone to love, something to do and something that matters.

About Helen

Helen Edwards, 47, is the founder of a diabetes support website Diabetes Counselling and the author of Diabetes Can’t Stop Me. She is an accredited mental health social worker, diabetes educator, blogger and stylist.

diabetescounselling.com.au

Carolyn King

Life before I realised I was depressed was up and down. I struggled to fit in and feel liked by others. At school I performed well academically and was successful in everything I did after that. I never struggled to find a job and had worked my way from assistant accounts to Office Manager in six months and then completed my Advanced Diploma in Accounting (Business).

I had my first child and due to lack of sleep, depression started to creep in. Lucky for me I had a supportive husband and vigilant mum who saw what was happening and stepped in and supported me. I gave birth to our second child 19 months later and when he was about three months old I crashed. My husband was travelling interstate and I was alone in the house with two screaming kids.

My rock bottom happened when I had finally had enough and took a handful of sleeping tablets. At the time I just wanted to sleep or to be taken away from everyone so I could have a break. I was thinking about how I hated my life but how could I when I had a great husband, two healthy beautiful kids, supportive parents and was successful in my job? I couldn’t rationalise it in my head.

I decided to help myself and see a spiritual counsellor I had seen many years before. I started weekly meditation classes and really looked at who I was and how I thought about my life. It took about six months for me to start feeling better. Two years on, I feel so much happier.

I became a Kinesiology practitioner after realising what a profound effect it had on my understanding of what I went through. I have worked with many clients suffering from depression and have been able to help them all in some way. And I have written a book on my journey from rock bottom to now, sharing different aspects of my depression and how it affected my life. The book also offers strategies and exercises for the reader to work through and helps them to see if they are willing to do the work, they can change their life.

Depression is something we need to talk about. People need to know that even though someone has what appears to be a great life, they can still be depressed.

About Carolyn

Carolyn, 40, is a kinesiology practitioner at EmpowerKin and is currently writing Empowered Happiness, a self-help book for sufferers of depression due to be published early to mid 2015.

empowerkin.com.au
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM EMBRACES BEST OF CONVENTIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
One Queensland business is striking a chord through pioneering a unique model of care which embraces both sides of medicine to help people battling mental health issues.

Co-owners Pettina Stanghon and Greg Doney launched private residential program Noosa Confidential in 2009 after years of working in the rehabilitation industry to bring together the best scientifically proven traditional and alternative therapies to treat clients more effectively.

Demand for the program has been so strong that Noosa Confidential has rapidly grown, with 27 therapists now on the team with expertise spanning across the areas of naturopathy, pathology, psychotherapy, yoga, exercise and mindfulness.

“One of our biggest points of difference is the importance we place on uncovering the contributing factors at play. To treat mental health issues effectively we must help people uncover any biochemical or hormonal imbalances, as well as identify and change any foundational beliefs and thinking which are causing destructive behaviour,” said Co-owner Noosa Confidential Greg Doney.

“We are essentially teaching people a new way of being through healthier approaches to eating, moving, breathing and self-talking.”

Naturopath Talita McCleverty, 29, brought eating, moving, breathing and self-talking.”

Co-owner Noosa Confidential Greg Doney.

“Whenever lecturers would touch on the subject of mental illness my ears would pick up. It helped me better understand the triggers of my condition, the underlying factors I could work with and the role naturopathy could play in supporting people going through these issues.”

“One of our biggest points of difference is the importance we place on uncovering the contributing factors at play. To treat mental health issues effectively we must help people uncover any biochemical or hormonal imbalances, as well as identify and change any foundational beliefs and thinking which are causing destructive behaviour,” said Co-owner Noosa Confidential Greg Doney.

“Grew up without a strong sense of self-worth and this impacted every aspect of my life. I went down the conventional route of taking anti-depressants but didn’t find this to be the answer for me,” Talita said.

Talita said the self-awareness she experienced through her studies with Endeavour College changed her life and gave her clarity about what career path she’d like to pursue.

“Whenever lecturers would touch on the subject of mental illness my ears would pick up. It helped me better understand the triggers of my condition, the underlying factors I could work with and the role naturopathy could play in supporting people going through these issues.”

“When Talita heard of Noosa Confidential’s integrated approach to tackling mental health issues, she contacted them to share her story and interest in using her natural health insights to further their mission.

“Once on board, Talita established herself as a central part of the team, offering clients a unique point of view and the comfort of speaking to someone who had walked in their shoes.

“It has been helpful to be able to share my experience with clients and use my own insights combined with my naturopathic expertise to give their treatment plans an edge.”

Co-owner Greg Doney said one of the most important things to consider when treating mental health issues is a person’s back story.

“Every person needs to have their situation put into context by uncovering any trauma or biochemical factors at play. Medication isn’t always the answer in itself, although sometimes it is a necessary component of someone’s treatment,” said Greg.

“Shame and abandonment can exhibit the same physical response as depression in people and these issues often need to be resolved for a person to recover. As we work on so many factors at once we’ve been able to send people from every walk of life home extremely well.”

noosaconfidential.com.au

Four natural techniques (backed by science) to treat depression

By Pettina Stanghon, Director of Therapies at Noosa Confidential

1. Love your gut
An inflamed gut can contribute to depression due to the close relationship between the digestive tract and the brain. Studies have shown it is possible to improve depression symptoms through treating gut issues with certain species of probiotics, bone broth, Vitamin B group, Vitamin D, resistant starch and omega-3 fats.

2. Treat food as medicine
Certain foods have a powerful effect on the body and can even trigger chemical reactions which result in inflammation, definitely not our friend where depression is concerned. Removing refined sugars, grains and stimulants from your diet can be enormously helpful.

3. Check your hormone levels
Many people aren’t aware a simple, non-invasive saliva test can reveal more about your body’s hormones than conventional blood tests. Testing levels such as cortisol, estrogen, progesterone, adrenal function and melatonin can provide valuable clues about your constitution to help your healthcare professional treat you more effectively.

4. Practice gratitude and mindfulness therapy daily
As we grapple with consistently competing priorities, it can be challenging to concentrate on the present moment. Learning how to master this skill and incorporate it into our day can help improve distorted reflections, anxiety and distractions. We tend to have this distorted belief we must be busy to be valuable. It isn’t the case – sometimes we should prioritise human being over human doing.
WHERE TO FROM HERE?

“Where to from here?”

Mental health disorders have a devastating impact in Australia not only on those living with the illness and their loved ones, but also more broadly on the economy and workplace productivity.

To put the issue into perspective, there were almost 16 million general practitioner appointments made in Australia for mental health-related problems in the 2012-13 financial year, up almost 12 per cent over the previous year.

The estimated total costs of mental illness reached $190 billion in 2013, more than 50 per cent of the costs incurred by obesity. It is estimated 19 million absentee days are taken because of mental health issues every year.

With this reality in mind, Wellspring spoke with five of Australia’s finest minds committed to the mental health cause to get their perspective on what needs to change.

“We have to hold the system accountable”

“We have to set ourselves some measurable goals about what we want the mental health system to achieve. Until we are clear on this we can’t expect to make any progress. We need to listen much more actively to the point of carers and consumers and help them shape our programs to ensure they are approachable and accessible.

We need to prevent people from becoming so ill they have to go to hospital. We must align financial incentives with the outcomes we want and we need to know who is responsible for what, and how well they are performing against agreed targets.

There are so many things currently going wrong – whether it be gaps in services or people not getting the care they need. We don’t bravely hold the government and service providers accountable. At the moment we don’t have a complete picture of how much governments spend on services for people with mental illness or how effective that spending is. We need to build a learning system – one that learns and acknowledges its mistakes in order to improve.

There has been a review into mental health every 30 months since the Second World War, and yet we still have a fundamentally flawed system where people are not getting services they need. The time for reviews is coming to an end – the time for action is upon us.”

Frank Quinlan
Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Australia

“More workplaces need to build infrastructure to support employees with mental health issues”

“It would be great if workplaces had the infrastructure to deal with mental health and to include it as part of their training, and as a necessity. The likelihood your employees will experience a problem with mental illness is high, so why aren’t we accommodating for that?

I’d like to see more funding allocated towards early intervention to help teenagers through the school system. When you invest in early intervention through education, treatment and resources you actually invest in your society in nearly every way. Telling people we could be giving those with a mental illness a better quality of life isn’t enough to warrant funding sadly. So to be more heartless, I will say, bleakly, that investing in mental health is actually a good economic decision. Early intervention means less likelihood of long-term illness, or long-term severe illness. When you have a manageable disease you have people who are more capable of employment, and participating more in society, in addition to their quality of life improving.

Filming Felicity’s Mental Mission [an ABC documentary dedicated to breaking down the stigmas around mental health] left a part of me feeling a bit helpless and hopeless after it came out because of how many people contacted me – I received hundreds of emails, messages and social media messages. It’s so insidious and pervasive, and I realised the documentary barely touched the surface of anxiety and depression. I have every intention of doing more in this area, and that has inspired me to do so, but I’m also aware of how much more needs to be done.”

Felicity Ward
Comedian

Filming Felicity’s Mental Mission

Mental Health Australia

Frank Quinlan
Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Australia

Felicity Ward
Comedian

WELSPRING: The Mental Wellness Issue
SUMMER 2015
**We need to invest in online programs and be guided by those we are supporting**

“The fact is internet and mobile phone technology is used today by most Australians across all demographics. If we make it easy for more people to use our programs online or by logging in through their phones, we may be able to prevent the number of people developing depression by as much as 25 per cent. We have found the best way to develop mental health services is by working with the recipients of that service to design it together. The mobile app we developed in consultation with suicide prevention group Alive and Kicking Goals called iBobbly was a good example of this. It is an app which provides psychological care in a culturally relevant way for Indigenous people at suicide risk.

We integrated indigenous metaphors, images and stories drawn from local Indigenous artists and performers which helped the program resonate in the community. This is one of the reasons the program was so successful, with the results of our trial showing the app resulted in a significant reduction in stress levels. This model should represent the way forward for our industry.”

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**A national campaign is needed to tackle mental health stigma**

“We need the Federal Government to fund a comprehensive, five year national campaign with a rigorous evaluation program to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with psychotic and severe mental illnesses. One of the most powerful ways to reduce stigma and discrimination is through social contact. We need to give more people with schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder and bipolar the support and confidence to share their stories of how they manage their condition, live a full life and contribute to the community.

Reducing suicide rates in Australia is also incredibly important. SANE Australia and other organisations have been advocating for a 50 per cent reduction target over ten years. For things to really change, Governments need to get behind national goals like this and ensure there are appropriate levels of resourcing for suicide prevention activities, because 2500 suicides each year is 2500 too many.

We also need to pilot coordinated suicide prevention efforts in specific towns and regions. We should apply evidence-based programs but also be open to exploring new ways to better support people who are feeling suicidal.

It remains our view that, for all our challenges, Australia does have the potential to lead the world in mental health services, programs and outcomes.

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**We need to address the increasing vulnerability of Australian youth**

“We know from the recently released Youth Mental Health Report more than 40 per cent of Year 12 students in Australia report symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress that fall outside normal ranges. It also showed the rate of mental illness is much higher among young females, Indigenous and Torres Straight Islanders and disabled young people aged between 15 and 19. There is a need for greater support to help these pockets of the community on their journey into adulthood.

Catherine Yeomans
Chief Executive Officer, Mission Australia

Jack Heath
Chief Executive Officer, SANE Australia
The time is now

Timely access to high quality care for mental health issues remains elusive to most Australians and it is time to deliver much needed transformational change, writes Professor Patrick McGorry.

Our most precious natural resource, as individuals and as a nation, is our health. Sadly, in both developed and developing countries a major part of our health is sorely neglected - our mental health. Good mental health allows us to live longer, achieve more, have a better family life, stronger friendships and contribute to a safer and more productive society. Our growing awareness of the widespread impact of mental ill-health on our lives has created overwhelming support to break the silence around these issues, to end the neglect, and to build a twenty first century model of mental health care for all Australians.

Our current mental health care system has long been totally overwhelmed by the sheer volume of need in our communities. We need a new approach to mental health care, and we need it now. Rather than mostly treating symptoms and managing crises, a new approach to mental health care must aim to prevent ongoing mental ill-health, solve the problems of needless disability and loss of life associated with poor mental health, and better meet the needs of those with long-term serious mental illnesses.

What should this new mental health care approach look like, and how should it work?

We need better education on mental health issues so that people understand what it means to be mentally healthy and are able to recognise, as they do with physical health, that they need so their life expectancy comes to equal that of the rest of the population.

Furthermore, this approach ensures all people with persistent serious mental illness are able to live in a safe and secure environment – their own home.

Our most precious natural resource, as individuals and as a nation, is our health. Stable housing is a basic human right – let’s finally correct this great failure of deinstitutionalisation.

A twenty first century approach to mental health care will take an active stance on preventive opportunities and tackle the key drivers of mental ill-health in childhood and youth, such as social disadvantage, child abuse, bullying, and poorly treated mental illness and addiction. Moreover, because the peak period for the onset of mental health difficulties is between 12 and 25 years of age, we need to provide a stigma-free stream of care to young Australians in a youth-friendly environment that creatively uses new technologies, such as that offered by headspace through its 70 centres around the nation, and e-headspace, its corresponding online service.

Finally, a twenty first century approach to mental health features strong investment in research into novel treatments and systems of care. Although we do have effective treatments, we always need to strive for safer and more effective treatments. This means not only drug therapies, but novel psychological interventions and social care.

It is heartening to see how our community’s concerns and our increasing expectation that we should have access to the same quality of care for our minds as we do for our bodies has now been reflected by government action. I sense we have passed the tipping point. If all of us play our part in this reform agenda, together we have every chance of creating the twenty first century system of care we so desperately need.

About Professor Patrick McGorry

Professor Patrick McGorry is the Executive Director of Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health. His professional interests are in the area of youth mental health, and more particularly, in early intervention for emerging serious mental illnesses in young people. He has played a major role in mental health reform both nationally and internationally, in the establishment of the pioneering Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre, a highly innovative model for mental health service delivery that has been hugely influential world-wide, and has been instrumental in the development of headspace, Australia’s national Youth Mental Health Foundation.

Professor McGorry was named Australian of the Year in January 2010 in recognition of his extraordinary 27-year contribution to the improvement of the youth mental health sector [that] has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of young people the world over!
How to help someone (or yourself)

It can be difficult for people experiencing mental health issues to take that first step in asking for help. They may need to enlist the support of family members, friends or a health professional when they begin their treatment.

Depression and anxiety can go on for months, sometimes years, if left untreated, and can have many negative effects on a person’s life. It’s important to seek help early – the sooner a person gets treatment, the sooner they can recover.

Did you know?

Mental Health Treatment Plans are available through your GP which can help you qualify for subsidised treatment through a Medicare rebate or treatment through the Government program Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS). Medicare rebates under this scheme generally range from 75 per cent to 100 per cent in some cases.

Ask the experts

These organisations have a wealth of information, resources and support on hand to support people experiencing mental health issues and their loved ones and are a great first point of call.

Lifeline  
131114

SANE Australia Helpline  
1800 187 263  sane.org

beyondblue support service line  
1300 22 46 36

Black Dog Institute  
blackdoginstitute.org.au

mindhealthconnect  
mindhealthconnect.org.au

Young people:  
headspace  
1800 650 850  headspace.org.au

ReachOut  
reachout.com

Tips for carers and loved ones

1. Learn as much as you can about depression and anxiety

Educating yourself about the illness your loved one is living with. This will give you great insight into what your friend or family member is experiencing and help you realise the person’s mood or actions are not necessarily directed at you.

2. Practice self-care

It is so important for carers and those supporting people with mental health issues to recharge and connect with the things they most enjoy to stay as positive and energised as possible.

3. Talk to someone

It may be helpful to talk to your friends or family members about how you’re feeling in your role as a carer. If you’re having trouble coping and don’t feel comfortable talking with the people you know, connect with a counsellor.

What part can you play to support the cause?

You can help reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues by understanding the key myths and facts surrounding the issue and speaking out when you hear people making incorrect assumptions about mental health.

Myth: Mental illness only affects a few people.

Fact: Mental illness is common. One in five Australians will experience a mental illness. It affects people of all ages, educational and income levels and cultures.

Myth: Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.

Fact: A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is caused by genetic, biological, social and environmental factors. Seeking and accepting help is a sign of strength.

Myth: People with a mental illness never get better.

Fact: With the right kind of help, most people do recover and lead healthy, productive and satisfying lives.

Myth: People with a mental illness can “pull themselves out of it”.

Fact: A mental illness is not caused by personal weakness and is not “cured” by personal strength.

Myth: People with a mental illness are violent.

Fact: People with a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the rest of the population. People with a mental illness are more likely to harm themselves – or to be harmed – than they are to hurt other people.

Sourced from the Government of WA Mental Health Commission.