MY UNCLE SAYS
IF I WANT TO
GET OVER
MY DEPRESSION
I SHOULD EAT
MORE PORRIDGE.
Welcome to the youth edition.

Young people aged 12 to 25 are at a time of great personal change. What we do to help them maintain or improve their mental wellbeing could be crucial for their future health.

I am heartened by the number of services and programs that are improving the lives of young people. In this edition we have aimed to highlight a cross-section of these community and government supports.

We look at personal stories, resilience, mentors and peer support groups, the role of the arts in promoting wellbeing, new online services for young people, and more.

The cover artwork by Robert Jenkins celebrates the vitality of youth. It expresses a love of music and dance, which are both important in youth culture. I am also pleased that several articles are accompanied by the work of young artists and photographers, some of whom were featured in the Year 12 Perspectives exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this edition, whether you are young, supporting young people or young at heart.

Dr Steve Patchett
Executive Director, Mental Health
“Music gives you that feeling that you’re not alone. There’s a million musicians out there that will sing about dark times and stuff that they’ve been through,” says Gyroscope guitarist Zoran Trivic.

“One the best parts of the job is when kids come up to us after a show and say, ‘look I was going through a really tough time and your music helped me pull through.’ It’s such a good feeling!”

Gyroscope were interviewed for the Music Feedback documentary, along with End of Fashion, Birds of Tokyo, The Yabu Band, The Kill Devil Hills, Abbe May and Roly Skender. The documentary and WA music features on 20,000 CD/DVDs that ask, “What if we talked about music the same way we talk about mental illness?”

This resonates with Gyroscope drummer, Rob Nassif, who reckons talking about problems helps to sort things out. “The first thing I think you should be doing is talking about it and not brushing it under the carpet or treating it as if it’s not happening. To discuss it openly with the person is the best way,” Rob says.

“Mrs if we talked about music the same way we talk about mental illness?”

The documentary director, Richard Eames, believes creating art, music, poetry and films are great ways to express our feelings about life and the world we live in.

“They are a positive and constructive way of dealing with issues, rather than keeping it locked up inside or turning to substance use,” Richard suggests.

“At times musicians and their songs can have more influence over our values and attitudes than family, teachers or any other authority figure. Musicians speaking openly about mental health goes a long way to remove stigma.”

Jeremy Harris, lead singer and guitarist of rock band Stone Circle, recently shared his experiences of depression at a public forum on music and wellbeing.

“My psychologist suggested picking up music again. It was a great way of dealing with things I couldn’t talk about; I could write and sing about them instead,” Jeremy reflects.

“Our song ‘Touch the Otherside’ is about overcoming depression and suicide. It’s about facing challenges, finding a reason to believe and coming out the other side in one piece. It acknowledges those who stuck by me despite my self-destructive ways.

“Most people wouldn’t know I suffer from depression. I still go to gigs and do normal everyday things like shopping, washing and paying the rent. When I tell someone they either say ‘no way!’ or become distant, as if hanging with me might cause them to suddenly develop depression. When I talk with them some more, they usually get this look of understanding and clarity.”

Jeremy’s advice to aspiring musicians is to believe in themselves.

“It can be hard when everyone around you is negative. I’d rather have a crack at something and see where it takes me. The only real measure of success is the one you place upon yourself. Everyone else is just a gauge along the way.”

To get involved in Music Feedback, contact Pui San Whittaker on (08) 9222 4099 or at Puisan.Whittaker@health.wa.gov.au

To win a copy of the CD/DVD, visit www.musicfeedback.com.au

Entries are now open for the WA Music Song of the Year Competition, including a new Mentally Healthy category. Visit wam.asn.au
Getting the Recipe Right

Perth-born teacher James Pengelley will attempt to swim the English Channel later this year. James is also a young carer. He tells us about his experience of being a carer and how he came to be known as the hairy chef.

What are the “perks” of being a young carer? What does it teach you? I’m not entirely sure.

It would be hard to explain my experience as a young carer without stating that I believe I am a better person for it, in the sense of something intangible and very personal.

My memories of growing up in a single parent family with a mum suffering from clinical depression are tinged with frustration and a huge sense of isolation from the “normal” life experiences my friends seemed to be having.

For me, there has always been a cloud of extra responsibility, above and beyond what most of my friends would have been accustomed to.

“I now spend a lot of my time cooking and looking after my health.”

In basic terms, I see this as the result of exposure to a wider spectrum of experiences and of living in an unusual environment.

As I walk into young adulthood, I have a very proud sense of my own achievements that have been fuelled by the independence my situation has fostered.

It’s not true to say that mum was absent from my childhood—I think that in light of her own condition she provided me with more love and energy than two parents combined.

I hope that one day I will be able carry her love into my own family.

Yet I know there have been moments when she has had to step back from her role as my parent and that in those moments I had little choice but to stand on my own two feet as best I could.

It hasn’t been easy, and most of the time it has been a case of taking things as they come because when you grow up in a stressful environment it becomes your own version of “normality.”

But in the long run, I have been given this wonderful gift of resilience and admiration for her perseverance that brings with it a unique outlook on everything I do.

Living with mum has taught me to be patient.

Patience is not something that comes to me naturally. But you eventually learn that there’s nothing you can do except be there for someone with a condition that is beyond their control.

Above all I have learnt that the best way to look after yourself is to find constructive things that make you feel good.

I now spend a lot of my time cooking and looking after my health. Cooking is one of the most relaxing and creative things I know how to do, and the knowledge that I have my health intact is incredibly special.

Inevitably, I know that I would not have been exposed to many of these things if mum had never been sick, but often the greatest gifts come at the greatest prices.

The Commonwealth Government recently announced an additional $16.7 million over three years for community mental health carer respite and family support services.

If you are a young carer, contact Carers WA on 1300 CARERS (1300 227 377) or visit www.carersaustralia.com.au

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Professor Paula Barrett is Director of the Pathways Health and Research Centre in Brisbane. She authored and implemented a program called Friends. The program runs in Australia and around the world and is considered best practice by the World Health Organisation for the prevention and treatment of childhood and adolescent anxiety and depression.

According to Professor Barrett, when it comes to the mental health of children and adolescents, there is no single cause of either their happiness or their distress. Instead, there are various risk and protective factors determining the extent to which a child is at risk of, or protected from, developing emotional difficulties.

Positive factors help build resilience, the ability to bounce back from adversity and stress. Resilience can be nurtured by parents and other adults, peers, and programs such as Friends. Friends uses cognitive behavioural therapy to help children think positively and act appropriately when facing life challenges.

“Social and emotional skills are the most important skills we can give our children for long-term happiness and success in life,” Professor Barrett says.

“We can give our children for long-term happiness and success in life.”

“Social and emotional skills include looking people in the eye, learning to speak with a confident voice, recognising feelings in ourselves and others, learning empathy, learning to make positive friendships and to share, and learning how to behave in social situations.

“Social and emotional skills are the most important skills we can give our children for long-term happiness and success in life.”

“Children who have learned these skills will be more resilient than others. They will adjust better to change, have a more positive start to schooling and know how to form and maintain positive friendships. They will relate better to parents, siblings and teachers and know how to calm down and regulate their feelings when things get tough.

“These children will be happy to try new things.”

Further protective factors include having a strong positive attachment to at least one adult, such as a parent, teacher or friend; possessing or developing a positive thinking style; having a strong support network such as an extended family, sport club or church group; and being in a school environment in which a child feels at ease and accepted.

Being active is another important factor. Professor Barrett recommends that children walk, run or cycle a minimum of three kilometres a day.

Diet is another crucial factor. “Too much sugar in the bloodstream can lead to hypertension, the development of diabetes and the related anxiety of daily injections,” she says.

Professor Barrett also believes that children should sleep a minimum of nine to 10 hours a day. “Lack of sleep leads to a greater vulnerability to stress, illness, lack of attention, inability to cope, irritability and anxiety symptoms.”

The good news is that there are more protective factors than risk factors.

“While the brain, particularly up to the age of 16 or 17, is especially vulnerable to emotional trauma and traumatic life experiences, it is also open to neurological growth through brain exercise. The brain is plastic,” Professor Barrett says.

“Despite trauma or lack of early loving experiences, some damage can be repaired at a neurological level through the development of close, loving relationships at any stage of life.

“There is hope for emotional repair for both children and adults.”

Visit: www.pathwayshrc.com.au
Changing the Script

Dr Abigail Bray lectures in Women’s Studies at UWA. She has published on eating disorders, child sexual abuse moral panics, and the history of psychiatry. She also co-wrote the book *Body Talk: A Power Guide for Girls* (Hodder Headline Australia). We interviewed Dr Bray about the link between mind talk and body talk.

**What motivated you to write the book?**

I am concerned that our society still turns a blind eye to the particular suffering of girls.

I am quite alarmed about the rise in eating disorders, self-harm and suffering in general among teen girls and quite simply wanted to reach out to them.

“The book is an attempt to create positive internal and external scripts which can interrupt and challenge the humiliating body talk we so often find ourselves trapped by.”

Also I think there are many ways in which girls’ voices are still silenced and one effect of this silence is that their own mental health literacy is marginalised, so including the voices of girls in this book was an attempt to overcome this silence.

I am influenced by critical psychology and the passionate work of people such as Craig Newnes who link mental suffering to social inequality.

**Why the title Body Talk?**

Because on one simple level the book is about how our talk about our bodies impacts on how we live our lives. The book is an attempt to create positive internal and external scripts which can interrupt and challenge the humiliating body talk we so often find ourselves trapped by.

**How were you able to incorporate academic ideas into a book aimed at teenage girls?**

Feminist ideas about positive social change have often come from the experiences and ideas of women and girls outside the academy, many of whom do not identify as “feminists.” It is therefore relatively easy to translate these ideas back into the kind of language that teenage girls can access. It is really a matter of reconnecting these ideas to their source.

**Can boys and adults benefit from reading this book?**

I hope so! Parents will find ways to talk with girls about a range of vital issues, and I do think the book provides compassionate insights for boys about why girls suffer so much anxiety about their looks.

Also, as one reviewer put it, these issues unfortunately haunt many women’s lives well past their teen years.

**If there is one thing you would like girls to change about themselves after reading Body Talk, what would it be?**

My hope is that they feel liberated from the silencing body shame that binds us all; that they begin to celebrate themselves and other girls and develop strong, healing, life-affirming bonds with each other and the wider community.

One thing girls have told me is that the little cruelties they endure (the putdowns, the snide remarks, the bullying and exclusions games) have a big impact on how they feel about themselves and each other. Encouraging compassionate connections between girls is an important step in creating a healthy culture for all of us.

These girls are the mothers of the future.
Mentors

Movies and Makers

Youth Week allowed young artists to benefit from the experience of mentors.

Twenty three emerging young artists showcased their visual and performing arts skills at Make a Move, which kick-started National Youth Week at Perth Town Hall earlier this year.

Make a Move is a joint initiative of Propel Youth Arts WA, the Department for Communities’ Office for Youth and beyondblue.

In the eight weeks leading up to the event, each artist was partnered with an established artist to help them explore and develop their talents.

Eliza Laschon, a Curtin University journalism and film student, and her mentor Rob Boulton share with us their experience of the mentorship program.

**Eliza Laschon – the artist**

I decided to make a documentary about the other young artists in the program. I thought it would be a good way for people to understand the ideas and concepts behind the work they’re seeing at the launch.

“I love documentaries because they can bring different issues to light.”

This mentorship was good because Rob was able to help me to achieve my creative vision. I’ve learnt so much from him about making documentaries, from interviewing techniques to using the editing software. I’d done things like this before at university, but I’d never had to do it from beginning to end by myself.

I will definitely apply what I have learnt to my own individual projects.

I love documentaries because they can bring different issues to light. I have a big interest in homelessness, so I hope to document activities run by The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia who deal with the issue. I might create a 60-second advertisement campaign.

**Rob Boulton – the mentor**

Propel Youth Arts WA contacted me through the Film and Television Institute where I graduated from last year. They were looking for someone who had the skills that would suit what Eliza wanted to do.

I hadn’t mentored before, but I found the experience to be a lot of fun. Eliza had a vision of what she wanted her film to look like and it was mainly technical skills that she needed to have been shown. We got along very well.

I’ve found this to be a very rewarding experience. I’ve developed teaching skills—I’d never really had to teach before.

I would definitely love to mentor again. It’s very satisfying to see Eliza apply what she’s learnt and I’m very proud to be part of that process.

**For more information on the National Youth Week mentorship project, contact Susannah Day at Propel Youth Arts WA on (08) 9328 5855 or at suzy@propel.org.au**

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Young filmmaker Eliza Laschon. Photo by David Hall
Vets Leading the Way

Vets are four times more likely to take their lives compared to the general population. Now mentors and wellness promotion are helping new vets cope with the pressures of the job. Dr Paul Davey tells us more.

I wear a couple of hats.

First, I own and work in a companion animal practice in Wembley.

Second, for the past 10 years I have been coordinating the Australian Veterinary Association WA (AVA WA) Graduate Support Scheme.

This formal program has been running since 1996, following a number of tragic suicides by newly graduated veterinarians.

My role allows me to coordinate the support of Murdoch University’s recently graduated veterinarians. We partner the graduates with experienced veterinarians who will mentor them at this critically dangerous period of transition.

To my knowledge, there have been no suicides of newly graduated veterinarians involved in this program.

Partly born of this role is my interest in AVA VetHealth. AVA VetHealth was formed due to mounting evidence that our profession has one of the highest rates of suicide compared to other professions.

Closer to home I know a number of colleagues who have taken their lives over the years, and I am into double figures if I count the number of people I have known who have committed suicide.

“To my knowledge, there have been no suicides of newly graduated veterinarians involved in this program.”

Suicide is a massive social issue, but as veterinarians, we are keen to develop strategies to address the issue from within.

AVA VetHealth rapidly moved from an initial focus on suicide to a more positive and preventative focus, by providing a list of resources, network contacts and information. Our goal is to attack the precursors of the problem.

We have developed a system of referral to ensure that someone at imminent risk of suicide is identified and referred as efficiently as possible.

AVA VetHealth has also presented a few information sessions, such as a series of lectures at last year’s National AVA Conference in Perth.

At the conference, we were also able to construct a Wellness Booth, where we performed health assessments on delegates, and included blood pressure assessments and mental and physical health surveys. This was done to promote mental health as simply a part of an individual’s overall wellbeing.

We also handed out 200 showbags containing health and mental health information brochures.

In May this year, we repeated the Wellness Booth at the National AVA Conference in Darwin, and the response was very positive.

Closer to home, we are hoping to do something at our State Divisional Conference in September. Given that 80 percent of local veterinary graduates are now women, we are hoping to attract a high-profile woman to speak of her experience around depression.

For more information on the AVA (WA) Graduate Support Scheme and AVA VetHealth, contact Dr Paul Davey at Paul@petwellness.com.au

Illustration by Jessica McLeod, www.jessicamonster.com
The Freedom Centre is celebrating 15 years of helping same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people. Coordinator Dani Wright tells us what's available and what's new at the centre.

Freedom Centre Coordinator Dani Wright (left) and centre volunteer Savannah Zwickl

Freedom Centre supports young people under 26 and their communities to be informed, happy and healthy about their sexuality and gender. Our Northbridge drop-in centre and online forum offer safe spaces for young people to hang out, have fun, get peer support and information, and meet other lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersex, queer and questioning young people.

Freedom Centre is funded by the Department of Health’s Mental Health Division as part of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. We are auspiced and managed by the WA AIDS Council. Our aim, therefore, is to enhance the mental and sexual health of young people who are same-sex attracted and gender diverse. Staff includes the Coordinator, the Peer-Educator and a dedicated team of 15 trained young people.

The centre provides an early intervention and prevention service that is particularly unique in its use of a peer-based model. This means that we are run by same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people with the aim of curbing social isolation, increasing community support, informing, and thereby decreasing contributing factors to mental health issues.

Over my four years on the team, I have seen an increase in the number of visitors. I have also seen several emerging trends in access.

First, the average age is lowering, with our youngest visitors being 13 years of age and the majority of people currently accessing the centre being under 18. Second, we have an increase in the number of trans* and genderqueer visitors, thereby enabling the visitors who aren’t trans* or genderqueer to come into contact with a greater diversity of people and gender experiences.

Another trend has been the increasing demand for an updated, expanded and interactive online presence. As a result, we have a new website that has a range of features, is packed with useful information about sexuality and gender, and contains a glossary and the new Freedom Centre Forum (FCF).

“The over my four years on the team, I have seen an increase in the number of visitors. I have also seen several emerging trends in access.”

The forum has taken off and is now an essential part of the Freedom Centre community. We are overjoyed by how popular and fantastic FCF has become! One of the best things about FCF is that it is accessible to most people, whether they are in rural and regional WA, travelling overseas or are just too busy to drop in.

I’d like to end with testimony from young people we have helped over the years.

One person says, “FC [Freedom Centre] provided a fair few ranks in the ladder that I used to crawl outta big black hole called depression. I was at the lowest point in my life when I came to FC and it has remained one of the few constant positives in my life.”

And another: “FC is an escape from the moulds that are forced on me, and FC is a place where I can be myself, without having to make excuses or having to change. It’s ... freedom, I guess.”

To find out more about the Freedom Centre, or to apply to be a volunteer, contact (08) 9482 0000 or info@freedom.org.au or visit www.freedom.org.au
Everybody has attractions. Yet people are sometimes surprised by who they are attracted to, and even more surprised to learn that one in 10 young people are same-sex attracted.

Most people know about their sexuality at a young age; in fact a third of young people realise they are same-sex attracted before they become teenagers, and most realise during high school.

At True Colours we understand that people don’t choose their sexuality or gender and that, at times, everyone can find it hard to feel like they fit in. A lot of issues can come up when people are trying to understand their sexuality and/or gender, including what this means for their identity and relationships with friends and family.

For people living in a small community, these issues can be particularly challenging. This is where True Colours can help. We provide safe and inclusive spaces for young people up to the age of 25 with diverse genders and sexualities, their families and friends.

“For people living in a small community, these issues can be particularly challenging.”

True Colours is a program of UnitingCare West, a not-for-profit community services organisation. True Colours runs facilitated social spaces in Albany and Bunbury on a fortnightly basis. There are also lots of events and activities throughout the year for young people, their families and the broader community.

For more information about True Colours, contact them on 1300 663 298 or at truecolours@unitingcarewest.org.au or visit www.unitingcarewest.org.au

On the Other End of the Line

Helping others has a positive effect on your emotional wellbeing. Other reasons for volunteering are as diverse as the number of volunteers.

Trained volunteers form the lifeblood of the Samaritans’ 24-hour telephone crisis lines. Last year, Perth Samaritans answered more than 14,000 calls.

Samaritans volunteers come from all walks of life, but they are united in their goal to offer non-judgmental and emotional support to the lonely, despairing and suicidal.

Samuel volunteers a few minutes of his time to tell us about his Samaritans role.

What motivates you to volunteer?
I find that volunteering helps make my life one that is worth living rather than a life that is just being lived. I’m motivated to go to my Samaritans shifts by the opportunity to offer assistance to someone in need.

What are the rewards and challenges of volunteering?
When a person in great distress says at the end of the call, “Thank you, I feel much better now,” it makes me happy to know I have made a difference to someone at a dark time in their lives. From volunteering I get a sense of achievement, especially after a very difficult call.

Volunteering with Samaritans has increased my people and communication skills and confidence more than I could ever have expected it to.

What training was provided by the Samaritans?
The training is comprehensive and has been recognised by the World Health Organisation. There are eight classroom sessions followed by four weeks on the job and three months probation. There is also ongoing training annually.

I felt very much prepared for what was to come. In fact, after the initial nerves I realised the training had prepared us for the hardest of calls and that most were not as difficult.

What would you say to people who are considering volunteering?
Do it! There is very little else that has ever made me feel more valuable. Know what you are letting yourself in for and if you feel you can commit then do so.

To be a Samaritans volunteer, contact administration on (08) 9831 5725 or at samswa@bigpond.net.au or visit www.thesamaritans.org.au

For 24-hour telephone support, call Careline (08) 9381 5555, Youthline (08) 9388 2500, Toll Free Countryline 1800 198 313 or email samaritanscrisisline@bigpond.com

“Last year, Perth Samaritans answered more than 14,000 calls.”

Jaye Edwards is a social worker who draws on her experience of coming out in the country to support young people in regional areas. She tells us about the True Colours program running in Albany and Bunbury.
Focus on Peers

The person who can help you the most might also be experiencing what you’re feeling. Youth Focus has a peer support program that helps young people to connect with each other and heal.

Depression, suicide and self-harm are very real issues for many young West Australians.

At these times, having someone to reach out to is vital.

Youth Focus’ unique and supportive Peer Support Program enables young people to reach out to each other as they explore the issues impacting on their lives.

“The program’s popularity with young participants has enabled it to grow.”

Youth Focus is a not-for-profit community organisation dedicated to the prevention of depression, suicide and self-harm in young people between the ages of 12 and 18. The organisation provides free holistic, early intervention and prevention services across much of WA.

Its Peer Support Program brings together groups of up to 25 young people with professional counsellors and volunteer support who offer therapeutic and physical activities at a two-day camp.

Camp Coordinator Sally Easthope says participants find the program a unique and worthwhile experience.

“The participants are young people with a variety of issues including social isolation; lack of positive peer support networks; sexual, physical and emotional abuse; and school difficulties,” she says.

“The program offers a safe environment in which to share their stories and emotions without being judged. It is a rewarding experience to support others while being supported—it is important to know you are not the only one feeling this way.”

The Peer Support Program helps young people to identify realistic solutions for issues such as low self-esteem, relationship difficulties, anger and grief.

The program’s popularity with young participants has enabled it to grow.

As one participant said last December, “It’s a positive place where you can tell the truth.”

For more information, contact Youth Focus at youthfocus@yct.asn.au or on (08) 9361 4222 or visit www.youthfocus.com.au

Illustration by Robert Jenkins

YOU, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR MENTAL HEALTH – the path ahead

19th annual TheMHS Conference 1 – 4 September 2009
3rd WA Transcultural Mental Health Conference 2 – 4 September 2009
1st Australasian Refugee Health Conference 1 – 2 September 2009

Perth Convention Centre

This unique joint event focuses on individuals, families and communities and the connections which strengthen and support mental health and emotional well-being.

Keynote Speakers: Judy Atkinson, Gregor Henderson, Rufus May, Kim Mulholland, Jill Benson, Carmen Lawrence, Wen-Shing Tseng

Register online: www.themhs.org

Email: info@themhs.org • Phone: 02 9810 8700 • Fax: 02 9810 8733
A new Youth Advisory Group (YAG) will help young people to have their say.

YAGs allow young people who either live with a mental illness or know of someone with a mental illness to share ideas in a fun and friendly environment.

Merryn Kenderine, YAG organiser, says that the new group in Perth “will allow young people to meet every month and join a support network.”

The YAG will help raise awareness of the needs of young people with a mental illness.

“I’d like to have a regular fundraising event,” says Merryn. “The money will be put back into youth services to fund things like a Wii console or educational materials.

“I feel that I’m making a difference and that makes me happy.”

“Places like headspace and YMCA have been so helpful and supportive of this project. We’re working together with other youth services to ensure it is successful.”

At the age of 21, Merryn is no stranger to mental illness, having experienced depression from an early age. “In the beginning, I think my friends were taken aback by how strongly I could react at times. My moods would go from normal to really depressed to suicidal and angry.”

Merryn credits her partner, family and friends for helping her through the hard times. “Having supportive people around me has been a huge factor to my recovery,” she says.

Setting up a YAG fulfils one of Merryn’s ambitions to inform young people about where to seek help when they’re struggling.

“When I was at school, I was able to see the school counsellors about my problems, but I wasn’t informed of other youth services and community support networks.

“So, one of my goals is to inform school kids about the many services available to them, because mental illness does affect a lot of school children.

“I feel that I’m making a difference and that makes me happy.

“By working together, young people can change the mental health system for the better and get the word out about mental health and mental illness.

“Having a mental illness doesn’t make us any different from anyone else.”

For more information on the Youth Advisory Group, contact Merryn Kenderdine on (08) 9222 0237 or at Merryn.Kenderdine@health.wa.gov.au

“I love the challenging but rewarding nature of working in mental health”

Cara, Occupational Therapist

“Catch the new wave….”

Peel and Rockingham Kwinana Mental Health Service
A new accommodation facility is currently being built in Fremantle for young people aged 17 to 22 years. The facility will have capacity for 16 people with early stages of mental illness who are unable to live in their existing setting without support. It is designed to be homelike and provide stable accommodation for up to 12 months.

Anthony Collier, Manager of YouthReach South, which helps marginalised young people with a mental illness, says that the facility will help people get back on track and return to the community.

"Homelessness brings with it many factors which reinforce the distress, isolation and symptoms of mental illness. For young people these circumstances are often frightening and can lead to despair and years of lost potential," he says.

"The facility will provide direct assistance to help young people deal with their mental health issues. It will provide health services and help reconnect the young people with their family, friends and community."

It is estimated that homeless young people deal with a mental health problem at a rate that is three to four times higher than the general youth population.

Providing appropriate support and treatment to a person in the early stages of a mental illness can significantly assist in their recovery and long-term wellbeing.

"Too often, homeless young people who are dealing with a mental illness become vulnerable to exploitation and trauma. A safe place to receive comprehensive services is a wonderful addition to services in WA," Anthony says.

The facility was developed in partnership between the Department of Health, the Department of Housing, and non-government youth, mental health and related organisations. A range of supported accommodation options for people with a mental illness is being developed and a number of these facilities are in operation. The remainder, such as the Fremantle homeless facility, are in the final phases of planning and construction.

The new accommodation site will provide residents with individualised care and support leading to greater physical and mental wellbeing; increased community participation, employment and education opportunities; more engagement with other services, such as GPs; decreased hospitalisation; and better relationships with families.

Residents will be provided with ongoing assessment, treatment and rehabilitation support with the goal of encouraging and supporting their return to independent living. They will have access to clinical and other external support services.

The facility will be managed by a not-for-profit non-government organisation specialising in supported accommodation and psychosocial support.

"The partnership of a non-government organisation working with mental health services will greatly assist in establishing these comprehensive services which are so desperately needed," says Anthony.

For further information, contact Phillippa Farrell at the South Metropolitan Area Health Service, Mental Health on (08) 9319 7221 or at Phillippa.Farrell@health.wa.gov.au.
I have found in my professional experience, and from previous YouthLink research, that homeless youth with significant mental health problems can be reluctant to seek help from counselling and youth mental health services. This well-documented phenomenon is known as help negation. I wanted to find out why this occurs in homeless youth and what changes services can make to improve their access to young people. A few key findings emerged.

My results indicated that homeless youth experience complex problems and at a high intensity; 55 percent reported multiple problems and 70 percent rated the intensity of these problems at “moderate” or higher. The greatest problem identified was around anger. This suggests that youth crisis accommodation services may benefit from the inclusion of aggression management programs.

"This well-documented phenomenon is known as help negation."

All the young people who reported experiencing problems indicated they were hopeful their situation would improve. Furthermore, 70 percent identified that they would be more hopeful if they accessed a counselling or youth mental health service.

Over 44 percent identified that their friends would have an influence on their decision to access these services. However, 50 percent reported that their peers would have little or no influence. This finding is not consistent with previous research that indicates that friends are the most favoured source of advice. One service provider suggested that the chaotic nature of the youths’ relationships with peers may lessen their influence on decision making.

Homeless youth provided equally polarised responses about the influence of family on their decision to access youth services. Service providers did not identify family members to have an influence. Previous research in other populations, however, has indicated that family members can be influential in help-seeking behaviour for physical and mental health problems. If the young person is willing, the involvement of families and family reconciliation services like Reconnect in youth crisis accommodation services may effectively support homeless youth.

Previous negative experiences of youth counselling and mental health services were also influential. Fear of disclosure, loss of choice and loss of trust had a significant impact on a young person’s decision to access services.

This research brought up more questions than definitive answers. It highlights how much we don’t know about the experience of homeless youth. From a clinical point of view, it seems important to collect a comprehensive history of the young person’s experience of homelessness, including preceding events and triggers, problems, maintaining factors and protective factors. An awareness of barriers and strengths allows clinical services to meet the needs of homeless youth more effectively.

The research highlighted that young people want services to enact the standards of confidentiality, collaboration and consistency that services strive to implement. They also want youth counselling and mental health services to adopt more flexible approaches such as mentoring, outreach visits, internet counselling, involving family members or friends and reducing waitlists. To engage homeless youth, services need to be responsive to their specific needs. This will in turn allow services to be more inclusive.

For more information, contact Jason Ellis at YouthLink on (08) 9227 4300 or at Jason.Ellis@health.wa.gov.au

“Every Night in My Dreams” by Cherina Hadley, www.cherinahadley.com
All’s Well in Melville

The City of Melville encourages young people to have a voice, be active in the community and achieve wellbeing. We find out how the city is promoting young people’s involvement and health.

Young people are discovering The Vault.

According to Callum Prior, Melville’s Community Development Officer – Youth, The Vault is dedicated to young people.

“The Vault is Melville’s dedicated and premier youth space, offering computers, a pool table, projector and screen, and music equipment,” he says. “Young people can drop in and chill out on Thursdays from 5.00pm to 8.30pm, when Youth Officers are always present.”

Additionally, The Vault hosts holiday programs, all-ages music events, and youth meetings. It is available for hire to youth groups, services and organisations.

“Melville also has a Youth Advisory Council (YAC), comprising young local people who meet once a month to discuss youth issues, plan youth events and voice youth concerns to local and state government,” Callum continues. “Members are aged between 14 and 23, with nominations open each August and September.

“Melville has also produced a DVD called 6, which aims to assist young men in coping with emotional health issues.”

“Recently, some YAC members joined other passionate young people in becoming involved with the city’s Youth Research Team, RESET. The team aims to make a positive change in their community and has surveyed young people to find out what they think of living, working, studying, or even just hanging out in Melville.

“The research findings and recommendations will feed into the city’s Direction for Youth Strategy,” Callum says.

YAC and RESET member, Timothy Colgan, says he became involved with YAC to give a voice to marginalised youth within the community. “Knowing that if at least one person’s life is just slightly improved by our work makes volunteering worthwhile.”

The city recently staged a free music event called Showdown at the Vault as part of the WAMi Festival 2009. Performers included End of Fashion, Sugar Army and Boys Boys Boys. The event also launched the Music Feedback CD/DVD, developed by the Department of Health’s Mental Health Division. The gig was organised by the Melville All Ages Committee, a group of young people that runs all-ages gigs at The Vault.

For girls aged 13 to 17, the city’s Bloomers program aims to improve self-esteem and confidence through a range of challenging experiences including go-karting, circus skills, chocolate-making, a DJ workshop, hip-hop dancing, urban art and sailing.

Bloomers enables girls to try new things, make friends and simply have fun.

Melville has also produced a DVD called 6, which aims to assist young men in coping with emotional health issues such as self-esteem, relationships, sexuality, suicide and drink driving.

The DVD is composed in themes of six—six mates, six stories—with input from male students at Melville Senior High School and young men from youth services. The accompanying booklet is designed for teachers and health professionals, and contains synopses, discussion questions and exercises.

Janet Armarego, Melville’s Health Promotion Officer, notes that “an overarching theme is that young men are able to move forward with support and information.”

When it comes to young people, Melville is moving in the right direction.

For more information on initiatives for young people at Melville, contact Callum Prior on (08) 9364 0624 or at callum.prior@melville.wa.gov.au

For more on 6, contact Janet Armarego on (08) 9364 0280 or at jarmarego@melville.wa.gov.au
Youth Participation

Youth Participation

Youth Reach South, however, brought the help out to Megan, by allowing her to meet with Haylee in locations where Megan felt comfortable, such as at home and in cafes.

Megan and Haylee currently meet at Cockburn Youth Centre, where YouthReach South is now located.

Haylee describes how she is able to support Megan.

“I was pretty open with Megan about all aspects of her mental health treatment. For example, I explained to her that we use a mental health clinical information database called PSOLIS, which records information about her treatment.

“Megan regularly completes the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which is a great way for us to kick off discussions about how she is feeling and coping, and some of the reasons she might be feeling that way.

“Also, Megan and I rate her mental health regularly using the HoNOSCA (Health of the Nation Outcomes Scale for Children and Adolescents). This gives both of us information about how she is progressing, and Megan is able to understand how I assess her symptoms.

“Then we use information from both outcome measures to build a care plan for Megan’s treatment for the next 3 months.

“It’s important to build trust between you and your mental health worker so that you feel safe to share everything. It’s reduced my fear of the mental health system.”

“Megan is a talented singer and her care plan includes exploring opportunities to write and record her own songs. Her plan has also included individual therapy and liaison with her GP, consultant psychiatrist and family.”

“It’s awesome!” says Megan. “Haylee treats me like a mature, independent person. Helping me get involved with the outcome measures and my care plan really helps build our trust.

“It’s important to build trust between you and your mental health worker so that you feel safe to share everything. It’s reduced my fear of the mental health system.”

Megan hopes to continue having her say about young people’s participation in their own mental health treatment, through a Youth Consumer Group at YouthReach South and at the upcoming TheMHS Conference, to be held in Perth in September.

For more information on the use of outcome measures, visit www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth

For more information on YouthReach South, call (08) 949 94274 or 1300 362 569 for triage. Visit them at Cockburn Youth Centre at 25 Wentworth Parade, Success.
Tried and Tested

In each edition, we feature what people have “tried and tested” to promote their mental wellbeing.
Illustrations by Anita Ristovski, a_ristovski@hotmail.com

Running Fit
By Lyndsay Pekin

I have been involved in sport since I was five, starting in basketball and later moving to athletics. My lifestyle has evolved around being fit and active every day, bringing balance to my work and study commitments, whilst also providing structure and routine.

I am often asked how I find the motivation to exercise every day. It’s quite easy to keep a positive outlook on training, as being active seems as beneficial to my health mentally as it is physically. It provides me with a relief from work and study, a chance to clear my mind of stress and leaves me feeling accomplished. As a result I will rarely leave a training session in anything less than a good mood.

Sport can provide you with a great sense of achievement, especially if you set yourself goals. I took a few months off athletics following high school and it was difficult to get back into the routine. I started by setting small goals like getting fit and then setting goals to keep improving my time in the 400m hurdles. Each time I ran a new personal best I felt like I had achieved something and in turn become more and more motivated to keep improving.

From teams to training squads, I have made many friends through people I have met in sporting environments. As the intensity of my training continues to rise, it becomes

more apparent

how significant
these friendships
are to my
development
and enjoyment
of the sport.
Training at this
level is constant
hard work, but
being surrounded
by friends who
encourage you,
congratulate you, discuss injuries
and share experiences makes it all the more worthwhile.

Lyndsay Pekin

Lyndsay is a 23-year-old track and field athlete at the WA Institute of Sport, specialising in the 400m and the 400m hurdles. She is currently ranked 3rd in Australia in the 400m hurdles and 9th in the 400m. Lyndsay works part time and is in her final year of a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

The Art of Comedy
By Josh Makinda

Stand-up comedy and laughter are among the most amazing occurrences I can think of. The performer is onstage generating instant feedback and the audience’s response is involuntary. The exception is a few people in the crowd designating pity laughs to a poor performance.

In such poor global circumstances it is even more necessary for people to have a good laugh. Watching comedians do well or badly is a lovely treat that can be experienced at any comedy night around town.

The medical benefits of laughter include: reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, elevating mood, boosting the immune system, improving brain function, protecting the heart, connecting with others, relaxation and simply feeling good.

I started comedy at the Brass Monkey Hotel in Northbridge when I was 14. I had to almost sneak in because I was too young, although I went with a guardian. Fortunately, I’ve always looked a lot older than I am and was probably taller than the doormen anyway. After performing there for a few months I got my first paid gig.
Music Matters

By Matt Larsen

Music is one of those mysterious things that can bridge the gap between our deepest feelings and our outward expressions. It’s rare that a person can just speak openly about what’s churning them up inside. But it seems to me that writing those thoughts down on paper and then adding music to them somehow makes it easier to express. What may seem impossible to say in a conversation becomes in a song so much easier to communicate.

As a young person, I am yet to experience much of life’s ups and downs—but sometimes just writing down my everyday thoughts and feelings as songs is a great way of chilling out and being relatively stress-free. I’m sure it doesn’t make me immune to the bad days, but it’s one way of turning potentially negative thoughts into something positive. As Berthold Auerbach stated, “Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

Usually when you really enjoy listening to a song or piece of music, there’s a kind of emotional connection—something hard to describe. It’s where you and the music are one—you feel it and you relate to it. As a songwriter, you aspire to create that connection between your music and your audience. And when you do, it’s the greatest thing.

Not only are songs used to convey to others how you feel, but they can also be used to work through the things that you don’t understand. Sometimes they even help you to understand yourself.

I hope somehow this message is able to encourage those of you who are feeling low or misunderstood because music really is an amazing thing. You’ve just got to let it show you.

Matt Larsen
Matt is an award-winning 15-year-old singer/songwriter based in Perth. To find out more about him and his EP Undeniable, visit www.myspace.com/mattblarsen
Kirsty Scholes with fellow researcher Kate Chitty

Kirsty Scholes is a UWA researcher completing a PhD in pharmacology at the Centre for Clinical Research in Neuropsychiatry (CCRN). Kirsty is investigating how cannabis might affect the human brain in people with schizophrenia and in people with no history of mental disorder. She tells us more about it.

How did you get into pharmacology research?
I've always been interested in mental illness, in particular schizophrenia, as it is such a disabling disorder. It is hard to imagine exactly what people with schizophrenia go through. The effects of cannabis use in people with schizophrenia is a very controversial issue, and more research on this issue is needed. So I was interested in exploring this.

Can you tell us more about your project?
The “startle reflex” is a blink of the eyes when a sudden loud sound occurs. This reflex is controlled partly by brain areas that are affected by schizophrenia and by a number of drugs, including cannabis. It is possible that these brain areas also influence attention and other cognitions.

The study aims to investigate how cannabis use may affect eye blinks, attention and cognition in people who use or don’t use cannabis, and in people who suffer from schizophrenia. This research will tell us more about relationships among cannabis use, schizophrenia and brain function.

What do you really enjoy about your study?
Meeting all sorts of people who have lots of very fascinating stories to tell.

How do you think your project will benefit people with a mental illness?
There are two main lines of thought on the effects of cannabis use in schizophrenia.

First, that cannabis use can cause schizophrenia or interact with other factors such as stress to cause schizophrenia. Second, that cannabis use in patients is for “self-medication” as an antipsychotic.

By understanding more about the effects of cannabis use in people with schizophrenia, we can better inform them of the effects of cannabis and formulate better treatments.

Crime and Misconception

A Perth study has been investigating the link between schizophrenia and criminal offending. The aim is to provide data to counter or temper popular misconceptions.

The study was conducted by researchers at UWA’s Crime Research Centre and the Neuropsychiatric Epidemiology Research Unit (NERU).

Using existing records, the study found a high prevalence of arrest in WA – 14.4 percent of the population had been arrested between 1985 and 1996.

But the joint prevalence of having a diagnosis of schizophrenia and an arrest is rare at 0.1 per cent.

The study found that the same area or community processes that generate high arrest rates for individuals with schizophrenia produce high crime rates for the general population.

The results of the study have important implications for policy and program development in criminal justice and mental health. In particular, there is a greater need for services for people with serious mental illness living in areas characterised by social disorganisation or inequality.

For more information, contact Dr Vera Morgan at the NERU on (08) 9224 0235. Please note that the NERU does not provide clinical services to consumers.
Deliberate self-harm is a hidden and costly epidemic. Between 1970 and 1996, there were 33,321 hospital admissions in WA for a self-inflicted injury—on average, over a thousand admissions every year. There are also approximately 11 hospitalisations for deliberate self-harm for every death by suicide. North Metropolitan Area Mental Health Services’ Clinical Applications Unit (CAU) is tackling the issue head-on with the Deliberate Self Harm Project. Gayle Corbould, a social worker experienced in the care of people who self-harm, is managing the project. The project has linked the post-discharge care of people who deliberately self-harm to the resources of the Perth Primary Care Network (PPCN). This GP-based network is offering follow-up and ongoing support to all patients, with contact occurring within 3 days of discharge. Importantly, the service follows the consumer from hospital to GP, and enhances communication and shared care. CAU director Dr Daniel Rock says that the project is not about re-inventing the wheel. “Patients can be best managed by the most appropriate existing services, with various feedback mechanisms built into the clinical pathway to minimise the number of individuals lost to follow-up,” he says.

Care coordination for deliberate self-harm is a more efficient use of existing resources. It can reduce admissions to inpatient care from the Emergency Department, and prevent consumers with better access to the most appropriate services after discharge. The Deliberate Self Harm Project is undertaking an audit of the pathways of care offered to people who deliberately self-harm, and who are subsequently discharged from the Emergency Department at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

For more information, contact Gayle Corbould at the CAU on (08) 9347 6409.

Please note that the CAU does not provide clinical services direct to consumers.

Often in the field of youth mental health, there is a tendency to focus on avoiding negative outcomes such as drink driving, bullying and drug abuse. In contrast, a positive psychology approach focuses on strengths as well as behaviours and strategies that can enhance wellbeing and happiness. Positive psychologists believe that increasing happiness and helping young people flourish are important goals. Helping young people to develop their strengths and increase their perception that life is meaningful can protect them from developing mental health problems.

“We found that adolescents value their wellbeing.”

In a recent study, we asked 159 Australian adolescents about their happiness, mental health, hope, strengths, gratitude, and social support. One of the key findings was that adolescents with high hope reported greater happiness and fewer mental health problems than adolescents with low hope. Hope can be conceptualised as a cognitive process that comprises goals, strategies to work towards these goals, and the motivation to achieve them.

Another key finding was that many adolescents were able to identify a diverse range of strengths. For example, some participants identified strengths—such as kindness, empathy, and listening skills—that are important for interpersonal relationships. Other participants identified strengths related to wisdom and courage, including creativity, open-mindedness and staying true to their principles.

Helping adolescents identify and develop their strengths may therefore help them to overcome challenges and increase their sense of personal wellbeing. We found that adolescents value their wellbeing. One participant told researchers that “every adolescent deserves to be mentally healthy.” However, another participant made the important point that “we can’t do it by ourselves.” This study is being used to develop a pilot mental health promotion workshop aimed at enhancing the happiness of adolescents.

For more information, contact Jacolyn Norrish at Monash University’s School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine at jacolyn.norrish@med.monash.edu.au
On 10 June 2009, the Minister for Mental Health, Dr Graham Jacobs, launched a project to develop a framework for action that will deliver a stronger mental health system.

The launch at the Boulevard Centre in Floreat was well-attended by representatives from government and non-government sectors, service providers, consumers and carers.

The Department of Health has appointed PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct the review of mental health services and to develop the State Mental Health Policy and Mental Health Strategic Plan 2010–2020 for WA that will guide service reform.

Dr Steve Patchett, Executive Director of WA Mental Health, says the policy and plan will recommend how the mental health system can better meet the needs of the community, including consumers, carers and families.

Comprehensive consultation is underway and includes online surveys and submissions, focus group workshops and interviews.

Key issues emerging from a workshop on infant, child and adolescent mental health included mental health promotion in schools, building stronger families, outreach for young Indigenous Australians, and a mental health crisis accommodation unit for young people. Participants also called for more early intervention and prevention initiatives that use actors, musicians and artists to promote mental health and positive lifestyles.

Workshops were also held for consumers and carers. Participants at the consumer workshop urged the government to prioritise independent auditing and monitoring of services, consumer and recovery focus in care, holistic approaches and increased supported accommodation facilities. Calls for an increase in accommodation facilities also emerged as a key theme at the carers workshop.

A separate workshop was conducted for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) consumers and carers. Main areas of discussion included early intervention for new arrivals to assist with cultural adjustment, measures to reduce social isolation, culturally appropriate treatment and accommodation, and additional mental health promotion in CALD communities.

People in rural and regional areas of WA will also be given the opportunity to have their say through a series of videoconferenced workshops.

Telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of over 500 current adult consumers to assess four domains of the consumer experience of care: general satisfaction, quality and appropriateness of services, outcomes and access. The high response rate of 86 percent will provide an invaluable insight into the consumer experience.

Additionally, personal interviews were conducted with representatives from commonwealth and state government departments and agencies.

A mental health forum to be held in mid-September will be open to anyone interested in mental health in general and in the review in particular. The forum will offer an opportunity for the community to provide further input. PricewaterhouseCoopers will be on hand to present a progress update of the project.

The State Mental Health Policy and Mental Health Strategic Plan 2010–2020 for WA will be completed by January 2010.

For more information, visit www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth, email mentalhealthsurvey@au.pwc.com or call (08) 9238 3126.
Bell-Vista is proud to support the John Da Silva Carers Award in the 2009 Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards

John Da Silva CitWA JP is the Managing Director of the Bell-Vista Group of companies which consists of Bell-Vista Fruit and Veg Company, one of Western Australia’s largest fruit and vegetable wholesalers; Allstates Fruit and Vegetable Merchants, a growers agent; Allstates Export, fresh produce exporters; Allstates Marine and Food Services, ship suppliers; Allstates Liquor Wholesalers, liquor importers; Allstates Agricultural Products, seed and fertiliser suppliers; Allstates India; and Allstates Mauritius.

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A new approach to health

Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute (CHIRI) - proud supporters of the 2009 Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards.

Australia’s population is undergoing dramatic changes in health, ageing and longevity patterns. While medical advances have improved child and maternal health, and prolonged our life spans, chronic illnesses associated with longevity, lifestyle and the ageing process - diabetes, obesity, cancer and cardiovascular disease - are increasing.

Curtin University of Technology recognises that new health care models must be developed.

The Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute (CHIRI) is bold, integrated and relevant. It works with community, governments and industry partners in the prevention and management of chronic disease through strategic, collaborative and interdisciplinary research. It is a unique facility that integrates the three cornerstones of research, education and practice and demonstrates a revolutionary approach to health care in Australia.

For further information, please call the Faculty of Health Sciences on (08) 9266 7466.

ECU is proud to support the 2009 Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards

The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Postgraduate Medicine is committed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of health professionals to deliver the most effective care to people with mental health problems and their carers.

We are equally committed to promoting good mental health for our students, staff and community.

We are proud to sponsor the Edith Cowan University Award for Mental Health Promotion and Mental Illness Prevention for the 2009 Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards.

For more info visit www.snmpre.ecu.edu.au
Finding Refuge

Refugees often suffer from the negative emotional effects of their experience. For young refugees, what is being done to help them? Amanda Gillett of the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) lets us know.

The refugee experience can have a profound impact on family relationships and dynamics.

Young people, particularly the older children, may be expected to take on responsibilities they might not be ready for. This is particularly the case if a parent or guardian suffers from the effects of physical or mental trauma, has difficulty speaking a language other than English, or experiences the strains of managing the family’s resettlement in a new country.

“Aside from the usual challenges of adolescence, many young refugees also carry the trauma of their refugee experience.”

Additionally, many families are headed by single parents or guardians. Sometimes families are composed of distant relations who disconnect on arrival in Australia, leaving children and young people in highly vulnerable situations. Some young people are themselves taking full responsibility for younger siblings with no parental or other support.

Aside from the usual challenges of adolescence, many young refugees also carry the trauma of their refugee experience. They carry the weight of major personal loss, such as the death of a parent or other close family member, or the experience of violence.

In a new country such as Australia, this trauma may be combined with the stress of dislocation, racism, other forms of discrimination and intergenerational challenges.

Despite these disadvantages, many young refugees succeed in building successful and fulfilling lives here.

The Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) is a not-for-profit organisation which provides services to people from refugee or refugee-like backgrounds. Our vision is for a more peaceful and just world where human rights are recognised, violations of human rights are challenged, and where support is given for people who have endured torture and trauma, and for their families.

ASeTTS provides free, comprehensive and holistic services including individual and family counselling, community development, training and research programs that aim to support recovery and full participation in society.

A significant number of ASeTTS clients are young people. Of the 6743 humanitarian entrants arriving in WA between 2002 and 2007, 64 percent were under the age of 25.

While young people access the full spectrum of ASeTTS services, the Newly Arrived Youth Specialist (NAYS) Reconnect is specifically designed for them. NAYS Reconnect is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government and funded through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

The program was a response to the growing issue of young people from refugee backgrounds becoming homeless or being at risk of homelessness. NAYS Reconnect is flexible, strength-based and solution-focused. Operating in a culturally appropriate manner, the program focuses on supporting young people to reconcile with family members and engage with the community and in employment, education and training.

ASeTTS runs Jungle Tracks, workshops for children and adolescents to promote hope, empowerment and recovery through the use of stories. ASeTTS also runs an interactive workshop exploring the impact of refugee trauma on children and adolescents. These workshops are provided for counsellors, youth workers, school teachers and others who work with trauma survivors.

For more information, contact ASeTTS on (08) 9227 2700 or at reception@asetts.org.au or visit www.asettts.org.au
Making the Link

A challenge for mental health services is to ensure they are inclusive and welcoming of diversity. We see how YouthLink responds to this challenge.

YouthLink is a specialist mental health service in Perth.

It provides direct clinical services to young people with serious mental health issues who are marginalised, disadvantaged and have barriers to accessing mainstream services.

YouthLink also provides training, consultation and community development for the benefit of young people.

A new addition to its training program is a workshop called Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth.

Developed at YouthLink, the two-day package is presented by Indigenous Mental Health Officer James Gibson, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Practitioner Steven Feehan.

“In our workshops we want to give participants the opportunity to learn not only from us but to benefit from the accumulated knowledge in the room.”

The workshop explores topics such as pre-colonisation, historical government Acts and Policies, cultural identity and working within a bi-cultural model.

Also included are experiential activities that aim to increase understanding of cultural loss and intergenerational transference.

According to James, “the activities were developed as a tool to allow non-Indigenous people to develop a sense of empathy.”

“You can talk about it all you like, but until you have something that you take pride in taken away from you then you can’t have an understanding of loss,” he continues.

The first stage of the activity explores connection to country.

It creates understanding of culture that includes basic community structure and a sense of responsibility for others. The commitment made by participants in the activity ties them together. A shared sense of pride, ownership and belonging is developed through stories from the land and the identification of significant areas.

The second stage explores the impact of settlement and the group’s interaction with settlers. The cost of progress and the consequences of industry are explored and measured against cultural loss.

The third stage of the activity challenges participants to examine how the culture has changed. The passing of information from one generation to the next is predominantly within the context of the historical, in contrast to the earlier experiences of direct connection in time and place.

“The timeline activity was developed to try to show the enormity of the history that we have to cope with on a daily basis. A lot of people either don’t know a lot of the history or relegate it to the past. These events are very real and have very real effects right now,” says James.

“We want to acknowledge the past as well as give the practical skills to work effectively with the community today.

“We want people to walk away from this training with an appreciation of the depth and diversity of our mob,” he says.

Last year, YouthLink presented workshops to over 350 participants.

In addition to the workshop on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, YouthLink offers training on aggression, self-harm, suicide, depression, psychosis, diverse sexualities and gender, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, ethics and boundaries, and more.

YouthLink training coordinator Craig Nicholls says, “in our workshops we want to give participants the opportunity to learn not only from us but to benefit from the accumulated knowledge in the room. It is also a great chance to network!”

For more information, contact Craig Nicholls on (08) 9227 4300 or visit www.youthlink.perthwa.net

Image by Debra Roberts. Created at the Creative Expression Centre for Arts Therapy (CECAT)
New DAYS

The Drug and Alcohol Youth Service (DAYS) is now operating as an integrated service.

DAYS provides individuals and their families with a comprehensive range of alcohol and other drug services. The service aims to provide holistic treatment with a harm reduction approach.

DAYS integrates three previous services, Next Step Youth Service, Mission Australia Youth Withdrawal and Respite Service, and Mission Australia Yirra Service.

This integration provides a single point of access as well as improved quality and range of client treatment and support.

Young people living in the community can attend appointments at the centre with a case manager and other treatment staff. Some outreach work is also undertaken.

The withdrawal and respite program offers a low medical, two-to-three week program with 24-hour supervision.

A residential rehabilitation program offers a three-month program that provides clients with a safe place to engage in treatment and transition back into the community.

The residential services provide group programs for drug and alcohol education, treatment and life skills training. They also incorporate leisure activities.

Indigenous clients are given the option of being assessed by an Aboriginal mentor.

Treatment services currently on offer include comprehensive assessment, case management, individual counselling, medical assessment and review, clinical psychology services, group programs, an Aboriginal and youth mentor (Music Program), opiate and alcohol pharmacotherapy, parent counselling, family therapy and complementary therapies.

DAYS duty operates from 12.30pm–4.00pm Monday to Friday. Referrals can be made on 1300 651 329.

For more information, contact (08) 9222 6300.

Fostering Care

The Department for Child Protection is developing a new residential care model.

The new model will enhance the quality of care provided, a recognised factor in reducing mental health problems for children and young people in care.

Anne-Marie Loney, Chief Psychologist at the Department for Child Protection, says that stronger engagement between the carer and child may act as a protective factor against mental health issues.

“Residential Care Officers are developing a stronger understanding of the importance of their relationship with a child or young person in their care. There is also a greater focus on planning for the educational, psychological, social and emotional needs of these young people,” Anne-Marie says.

The department is phasing out larger, dormitory-style facilities and replacing them with smaller, more nurturing group homes.

“By having fewer young people residing in the one home, staff have the opportunity to develop a closer rapport with each individual.”

Anne-Marie says that children who come into care are often at greater risk of mental health problems through neglect, abuse or the impact of their parents’ mental health issues. This is often compounded by a lack of stability and consistency in their care and schooling.

“When a child enters care there is often associated trauma, which can have a detrimental effect on mental health. Early detection and intervention can make a significant difference to the child’s mental health outcomes, and this is where our efforts are focused,” Anne-Marie says.

Partnerships are being formed between the Department for Child Protection District Offices and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in the north and south metropolitan areas. This improved collaboration and communication will lead to better mental health outcomes for children and young people who are at risk.

Visit: www.dcp.wa.gov.au
Teachers Learning about Wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing was one of the key topics at the inaugural Positive Schools Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference.

Associate Professor Helen Street is a psychologist who specialises in wellbeing in schools. As a UWA lecturer, she has firsthand knowledge of the importance of promoting positive mental health in teachers.

Professor Street spoke of the importance of teacher wellbeing at the Positive Schools Conference.

“I wanted to use my opening address to convey the importance of incorporating wellbeing within the art and process of teaching, rather than as yet another activity competing for timetable space,” says Professor Street.

“I hoped to emphasise the importance of nurturing teacher wellbeing in ensuring that schools were equipped to create an optimal learning environment for students.”

Professor Street also highlighted the importance of teacher wellbeing in ensuring that teachers were able to present a caring and interested approach to teaching and that they did not leave their profession with stress and burnout.

Positive Schools was presented by Wise Solutions and held at UWA in May.

Wise Solutions co-founder, Neil Porter, says the aim of the conference was to explore positive solutions for developing mental wellbeing within schools.

“Positive Schools provided an opportunity for Wise Solutions to bring together professional Australians actively interested in mental health and wellbeing.”

The importance of teacher wellbeing was a theme revisited by Professor Fiona Wood, Head of Royal Perth Hospital’s Burns Unit and a former Australian of the Year.

Professor Wood injected humour and passion into personal anecdotes of her experiences as a medical student, plastic surgeon teacher and mother of six.

David Price, the Department of Education’s Assistant Executive Director of Student Support, brought the day full circle when he emphasised the importance of managing teacher stress in schools.

Teacher stress management was addressed in the two most popular workshops on the day. With the aid of mindfulness techniques, delegates were able to tackle the management of stressful thoughts and pursue healthy goals.

“Positive Schools provided an opportunity for Wise Solutions to bring together professional Australians actively interested in mental health and wellbeing.”

Other talks on the day focused on a range of student mental health issues. UWA’s Associate Professor Sue Byrne spoke on the development of positive body image, and author Ken Rigby explored the link between bullying and mental health.

Offering inspiration was 21-year-old student Albie Lyons, who captured the hearts of the delegates with his retelling of a serious assault he had suffered two years ago. Albie told how his resilience and positive outlook enabled him to navigate a long pathway through rehabilitation.

The success of Positive Schools has proven that the resources for creating mentally healthy schools are here in WA.

“It is all too easy to look overseas for answers,” says Neil, “but we have wise solutions available right here on our doorstep.”

Positive Schools 2010 will be held at The Esplanade in Fremantle on 21 May 2010.

Jane Elliott (Brown Eyes, Blue Eyes), will present a keynote address.

For more information, contact Neil Porter on (08) 9388 8843 or at enquiries@wisesolutions.com.au or visit www.positiveschools.com.au
Aussie Optimism

Aussie Optimism is a mental health promotion program designed to enhance children's resilience and interpersonal skills. Last year the program was awarded the Youth Award for Suicide Prevention by Suicide Prevention Australia.

The Aussie Optimism Research team recently presented findings on the long-term benefits of their program at the Australian Guidance and Counselling Association conference in Hobart.

According to the large dissemination study, students who received the program were less depressed and less likely to take up smoking, drinking and use illicit drugs than those who did not receive the program. Additionally, teachers (with access to coaching) who use the program are more likely to report better job-related wellbeing than teachers who did not use the program.

For information on Aussie Optimism, visit www.psych.curtin.edu.au/research/aussieoptimism

Drug and Alcohol Office

Free, confidential and anonymous telephone counselling is available 24 hours a day to people who are concerned about their own or somebody else's drug or alcohol use.

The Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) has trained counsellors who can provide information, referral to other services, assessment and counselling on any drug or alcohol issue.

The Parent Drug Information Service line (PDIS) provides parents with the opportunity to talk to a counsellor or a trained parent volunteer who has experienced their own child's drug or alcohol use. PDIS is the first place for parents and families to call.

The Clinical Advisory Service (CAS) provides health professionals with 24-hour access to information and advice from experienced clinical staff.

Contact ADIS on (08) 9442 5000 or country freecall 1800 198 024; PDIS on (08) 9442 5050 or country freecall 1800 653 203 and CAS on (08) 9442 5042 or country freecall 1800 688 847 or at nextstep.cas@health.wa.gov.au

Fremantle headspace

Fremantle headspace provides free mental health and wellbeing support, information and services to young people aged 12 to 25 and their families. headspace is funded under the Commonwealth Government's Youth Mental Health Initiative.

Services offered through headspace and consortium partners include psychological and counselling services, alcohol and drug information and counselling, access to specialist mental health services, vocational and educational support, general youth worker support and referrals on to specialist services.

Fremantle headspace is now on the social networking site Facebook. Facebook users can become “friends” of headspace and interact one-on-one with the service and access updates.

The new General Practice for Young People service allows young people to access GPs for free and is funded by the Department of Health's Mental Health Division.

For more information, contact Raff Di Bartolomeo on (08) 9335 6333 or visit www.headspace.org.au

North Metropolitan Area Health Service

The new building and fit out for the Complex Attention and Hyperactivity Disorders Service (CAHDS) in Lakeside Joondalup is due for completion in July 2009.

Recruitment for the multidisciplinary specialist team is underway and the team is expected to be fully operational by October this year.

The service is based on a consultation and liaison model, providing specialist assessment, diagnosis, treatment and interventions for children and adolescents with suspected ADHD or related disorders.

The service supports capacity-building with mental health, child health, research and education disciplines, with a strong support focus for WA country services.

For more information, contact Talei Marshall on (08) 9347 6536 or at Talei.Marshall@health.wa.gov.au

Office for Youth

Inspirational 23-year-old Kalgoorlie-Boulder man Terrence Winner is the recipient of the 2009 WA Young Person of the Year Award. Terrence, who identifies as Koori, is Chief Executive Officer of the Eastern Goldfields YMCA. Terrence is known for his passion, initiative and dedication in advocating for local and statewide youth from a range of cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

The WA Youth Awards, now in their 11th year, recognise outstanding Western Australians aged 13 to 25 years.

For more information, contact Megan Sadler on (08) 6217 8531, Freecall 1800 281 116 or at megan.sadler@communities.wa.gov.au
**SMYL Community Services**

SMYL is a not-for-profit charity organisation that offers a range of services for at-risk or disengaged youth.

SMYL has programs to assist students to either stay at school or engage in alternative schooling programs.

The Youth Pathways Program is funded by the Commonwealth Government and helps young people aged 13 to 19 who are at risk of not completing year 12 (or its equivalent).

The Community Learning Centre Program is aimed at young people aged 15 to 17 and acts as a bridging course into apprenticeships, traineeships, employment and most certificate I and II TAFE courses.

Both programs offer intensive support through qualified youth workers.

**Contact SMYL Community Services in Fremantle on (08) 9430 4921 or at Rockingham on (08) 9592 2949 or visit www.smyl.com.au**

**South Metropolitan Area Health Service**

Recruitment for the Murdoch location of the Complex Attention and Hyperactivity Disorders Service (CAHDS) will commence in September 2009.

CAHDS will provide multidisciplinary assessment and clinical treatment in shared care arrangement for children and young people with ADHD or related disorders. The multidisciplinary team will also have a strong focus on training, education and research.

SMAHS Mental Health is conducting an Aboriginal mental health workshop, “What Was, What Is and What Now?” The workshop is designed to help people better understand how to work with Aboriginal clients and communities. Topics covered include historical perspectives as well as Aboriginal notions of kinship, land and perceptions of mental health.

Presenters include Aboriginal liaison officers Fred Yasso and Des Blorton, social worker John Vandergiezen and Multisystemic Therapy clinician Shannon McNeair.

**For more information about CAHDS Murdoch, contact Margaret Stockton on (08) 9319 7200.**

**For more information about What Was, What Is and What Now? contact SiewHo Yeak at Siewho.Yeak@health.wa.gov.au or on 0404 890 252. Register at SMAHS.MentalHealth.Receptionist@health.wa.gov.au**

**WA Country Health Service**

The Rural and Remote Mental Health conference will be held at the WA School of Mines Conference Centre in Kalgoorlie from 11 to 13 November 2009.

Hon Dr Graham Jacobs MLA, Minister for Water; Mental Health will officially open the event.

The Conference theme is “Mental health in the bush: challenge, innovation, resilience.” Topics explored include innovative strategies to involve consumers and carers, children and adolescents, better outcomes for Aboriginal communities and co-existing drug and alcohol and mental health issues.

Keynote speakers include Professor Steven Allsop from the National Drug and Research Institute, Curtin University; Professor Ernest Hunter, Psychiatrist from Queensland Health; Dr Tracey Westerman, Founder and Director of Indigenous Psychological Services; Professor Graham Martin, Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Queensland; Keith Wilson, Carer Representative; and Liz Waters, Consumer and Carer Representative.

**For more information, contact Tanya Harley at Tanya.Harley@health.wa.gov.au or visit www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au**

**YMCA**

YMCA Lynks Counselling service is a community-based service that provides young people aged 15 to 25 and their families with counselling and other psychological services.

Lynks provides support for a range of issues including anxiety, depression, stress, parent and adolescent conflict, suicidal and self-harming behaviour, and relationship difficulties. It is run by youth-friendly professionals who have training in art therapy, psychology and social work.

The service operates Monday to Thursday in Leederville, close to the train station.

**Call YMCA Lynks Counselling on (08) 9328 3522 or (08) 9328 3566 to arrange an appointment.**

**Future editions of head2head**

**Summer 2009:** Culture

**Autumn 2010:** Wealth and Wellbeing

**Deadlines for contributions:**

Summer edition 2009 – 1 September 2009


Contact Duc Dau on (08) 9222 4072 or at Duc.Dau@health.wa.gov.au
**ROC on**

As many as 72 percent of young males and 48 percent of young females play an electronic game.

With this in mind, Inspire Foundation created Reach Out Central (ROC), the first Australian-designed computer game to deliver a mental health message. ROC has been developed in consultation with psychologists, young people and gaming experts, with the support of beyondblue and the Sony Foundation.

The aim of ROC is to help young people, particularly young men, between the ages of 16 and 25 develop life skills to manage depression, cope with anxiety and prevent poor health outcomes. The game combines cutting-edge technology with the established principles of cognitive behavioural therapy.

**Visit: www.reachoutcentral.com.au**

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**Developing Awareness**

Adolescents are at a significant risk of developing mental health problems. Yet they are often reluctant to seek help because of the stigma attached to mental illness.

As a result, many young people will suffer silently for years before they seek help.

Knowledge is a key weapon in the battle against stigma, and teachers can play a vital role in improving mental health literacy among young people.

*Mental Health: Developing Awareness*, by Jenni Harold, is a teaching resource aimed at helping young adults understand and cope with mental health issues.

The book breaks down myths and stereotypes surrounding mental illness. It provides teachers and students with factual information, personal stories and awareness activities to improve mental health literacy, encourage empathy and acceptance, and promote personal self-esteem in young people.

**For more information, contact Maxine Allen at R.I.C. Publications on (08) 9240 9888 or at maxine@ricgroup.com.au**

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**The Cost of Violence**

One in four teenagers is aware of domestic violence in the home.

Young women are at greater risk of violence than older women.

Girls who have suffered abuse or violence are more likely to experience depression, low self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health disorders.

These statistics come from the new report *Assault on our Future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships*, published by the White Ribbon Foundation and written by Michael Flood and Lara Fergus.

The report examines how violence against women affects children and young people. It looks at the nature of violence that young people experience in their homes and their own relationships.

*Assault on our Future* calls for action in the areas of policy and the community. The report argues that a prevention strategy that engages boys and young men is essential for the wellbeing of all children and young people.

**For more information, contact the White Ribbon Foundation on (02) 9453 1811, at admin@whiteribbonday.org.au or visit www.whiteribbonday.org.au**

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**Tackling the Tough Questions**

To combat the rate of depression and anxiety in young people, beyondblue recently launched its youth arm, youthbeyondblue.

Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health problems experienced by young people.

youthbeyondblue features 21 fact sheets written especially for youth. Topics include depression and anxiety disorders, advice on helping a friend or family member, tips on coping with stress and bullying, and how to keep healthy and improve study habits.

The site includes TV ads, news stories, personal stories and information on where to get help. There is also a fact sheet for parents and carers.

**Visit: www.youthbeyondblue.com**

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**Allied Health Scholarships**

Eleven allied health professionals have been awarded scholarships for Graduate Certificates in Mental Health Practice. Recipients are from the disciplines of social work, occupational therapy, counselling and art therapy. The scholarships were funded by the Department of Health’s Mental Health Division and Chief Health Professions Office.

The program was initiated last year and is awarded to eligible allied health professionals working at the Department of Health or at non-government organisations funded by the Mental Health Division. The aim of the program is to attract and retain well-qualified and experienced allied health staff and ensure that their organisation is at the forefront of industry practice.

**For further information, contact the Chief Health Professions Office on (08) 9222 4203.**

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**itsallright**

SANE Australia has launched *itsallright.org*, a new website for Australian teenagers with family members affected by mental illness.

The service aims to make a difference by providing information and advice, integrated with an online Helpline to answer specific questions.

A key feature of the website is the stories of four teenagers—Sarah, Rani, Jenna and Brett—who each has a family member affected by mental illness. The characters are based on the real-life experience of teenagers who helped create the site.

Other features include fact sheets, podcasts and downloadable wallpapers and e-cards.

SANE estimates that half a million young Australians have a brother, sister or parent with a mental illness.

**Visit: www.itsallright.org**
Out of the Shadows: daughters growing up with a ‘mad’ mother
Written by Catherine E. Camden-Pratt
Finch Publishing, Sydney, 2006. (Non-fiction)
Review by Philippa Martyr, Centre for Clinical Research in Neuropsychiatry

This book delivers on its subtitle, what your kids really want and need to know about alcohol and drugs. Engaging, informative, thought-provoking and practical, it is an essential guide for parents and those who work with teenagers.

In his introduction, Paul Dillon tells us of a story recounted by two young girls of the various techniques they once used to help a very intoxicated friend, including force feeding pieces of bread. The girls are upset to discover the possible life-threatening consequences of doing this. “Why didn’t anyone ever tell us?” is what they, and many other young people, ask following Paul’s presentations.

Dillon is well known and highly respected in the area of alcohol and drug education. By relating stories and questions gathered from his 25 years of experience as an educator in this field, he provides parents with valuable insight into issues and situations that teenagers encounter regarding alcohol and drugs. Dillon updates parents with current information and dispels some widely held myths. He informs parents on what teenagers want and need to know.

Most importantly, Dillon offers parents with practical prompts on how to talk to their teenagers on this subject, while always recognising it as a complex and difficult area. This book has put alcohol and drugs on the agenda at my family’s dinner table—highly recommended.

Crossing the Line
Written by Di Bates
Ford Street Publishing, 2008. (Young adult)
Review by Kat Wood, Pathways Advisor

Crossing the Line follows the story of Sophie, a 17-year-old girl who has been abandoned by relatives and a string of foster families.

On the surface it appears that things are going well for Sophie. However the reader is gradually made aware that things might not always be how they seem.

As Sophie’s feelings of abandonment resurface she resorts to her coping method of self harm. When placed in a psychiatric ward she is assigned psychiatrist Helen. As Sophie begins to trust Helen she finds what she believes to be affection in their relationship and begins to improve.

When Sophie realises her feelings are not reciprocated, she is devastated by another perceived rejection. Upon returning home Sophie becomes lost within her obsession and rejects the supports made available to her.

Crossing the Line is a confronting story that would appeal to young adults due to the increasing prevalence of self harm.

This is a well written narrative with appropriate dialogue used for the desired audience. Sophie as narrator intensifies the story and engrosses the reader as you are taken on the emotional journey of her obsessions, depression and need for affection.

This is more than the typical “teenage self-mutilating fiction” and the ending leaves you with a sense of hope for a new beginning.
Reviews

Samson & Delilah
Directed by Warwick Thornton
Review by Deborah Mayers, UWA social work student

Teenagers Samson and Delilah live in an outback Aboriginal community. Samson has developed an addiction to glue sniffing. Delilah cares for her ailing grandmother. When things turn bad for Delilah, she and Samson escape to a local town. Their inability to cope in this alien world, however, is evident when things go from bad to worse.

The impact of Samson & Delilah on Australia’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations cannot be overstated. This film is a powerful consciousness-raising tool that addresses stereotypes of Aboriginal people, while operating as a non-adversarial form of social action. It combines the beauty of youth, love and hope without denying the darker side confronted by many in remote communities.

The audience is given a story which pulls no punches on issues that the majority of Australians have little genuine exposure to—the isolation, lack of employment and incredible poverty within one of our most disadvantaged groups. Yet, with its Aboriginal director and actors and its remote community locations, the film enhances the power of Aboriginal Australians; empowering individuals to define themselves is central when addressing issues of mental health and social justice.

Importantly, the film gently interweaves these themes with an “everyman” story of courtship and one on the uniqueness of people and place. Ultimately, Samson and Delilah is a powerful story of resilience, love and beauty in Aboriginal communities.

Mary and Max
Directed by Adam Elliott
Review by Pui San Whittaker, Mental Health Division

Oscar winner Adam Elliott has created a magical, moving and funny claymation exploring the power of friendship in a turbulent world. Mary Dinkle (Toni Collette) lives in suburban Melbourne with a mother who overindulges in sherry and a father preoccupied with taxidermy. She wistfully fancies her neighbour Damien (Eric Bana), but is full of self-doubt, particularly around body-image.

Mary constantly questions what her parents and peers teach her. She wonders if babies really come from “the bottom of beer jugs” and whether in America they are found in coke cans. After randomly tearing out addresses from a New York phone book she writes to Max Horovitz (Phillip Seymour Hoffman) to get some answers.

Max is a reclusive Jewish factory worker with a cat named Hal, a succession of goldfish and Asperger’s. He finds in Mary a kindred spirit as they both yearn for one real friend. They exchange chocolate, snapshots of their lives, recipes and advice. Asperger’s makes it difficult for Max to comprehend his own and other people’s emotions and behaviours. Yet he is always there when Mary needs him; sending her a lolly that says “love yourself first” and forgiving her misguided efforts to “cure” him.

Like a Lily Brett novel, Mary and Max contains the perfect mixture of tenderness, melancholic grit and wit. For those of us who identify with Max’s sense of being “confuzzled”—confused and puzzled by life’s oddities—this film is truly hilarious and heart-warming.

Emcee Able
Fireworx
Review by Siu Dong Li, Scotch College, Year 8

Perth DJ Emcee Able focuses on horror themes using rap and hip hop. The songs have a sort of continuing storyline on subjects such as zombies, ghosts and killing.

The song “Storm Trek” understands the hearts of the homeless who are lonely. Many of the songs are about people’s feelings.

The album sounds a bit like Linkin Park and uses violin, xylophone, piano and the turntable. There is an exceptional use of language, which may not be suitable for younger generations. It also has a disgusting side to it and is not recommended for women or people who have just eaten.

As the cover states, A LOT of pizzas were eaten during the making of this album.

Overall it is a good album that most adults and teenagers will enjoy. I recommend it to anyone who loves blood, killing, fantasy, horror and gore.

WANTED

CDs from WA bands for review in Head2Head.
Work from WA artists, illustrators and photographers for inclusion.
Gosia Basinska has been writing her own music for over ten years and has finally released her debut album. The 10-track CD features songs with progressive introductions and catchy lyrics that will keep listeners of all generations tapping along.

Basinska's unique voice and refreshing Australian accent add a spin to the music that clearly draws on her Polish heritage. Employing a range of instruments to build her songs, from the standard guitar to the more unusual toy piano, and drawing upon influences like Tori Amos, Basinska has created a very unique CD. The variation and individuality of each track generate different types of energy for the listener; ranging from childlike delights to darker tones.

Artists like Basinska are important in maintaining the credibility of home-grown music here, so let's hope listeners don't have to wait another decade for the next CD release.

The Dark Room
Written by Angela Betzien
Directed by Adam Mitchell
Black Swan State Theatre Company
Performed at PICA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts) from 1 to 17 May 2009
Review by John Snobar

The Dark Room is a psychological thriller that tells the story of vulnerable lives and communities in the bush.

Six lives, three narratives, converge in a country motel room.

In one narrative, we are introduced to a passionate social worker and the girl she is responsible for. The girl is clearly distressed, having experienced psychological abuse under the care of her mother. Both the girl and her social worker are living at the motel until a home is found for the girl.

In another narrative, we witness the lives of a young police officer and his pregnant wife who have undertaken the challenge of living in the bush. While the husband has made connections and friendships with others, his wife anguishes over her isolation.

In the third narrative, a police officer is confronted by a gay teenager with a secret from the man's past.

These narratives—simultaneously told—form a complex tale of diversity in the country. The social worker is clearly academically equipped to deal with children, but suffers from much of the same loneliness experienced by the young wife. Characters connect at several moments, somewhat inevitably through their experience of living in a small community. Nonetheless, tensions arise from such close proximity. We see this tension in the clear dichotomy between the police authorities and those who are responsible for piecing together the tragic results of domestic crime.

The Dark Room presents the raw realities of living in a remote community and the ways in which interactions between people can be affected by the simple fact of their isolation. There is a sense that each lonely experience in the bush has been embodied here in the shared experience of solitude in a dark room.
Robert Jenkins is a freelance artist influenced by skateboard art, Japanese animation and record covers. "I love drawing and painting women, monsters and everyday life situations surrounded by psychedelic patterns and colours," says Robert.

He believes his passion for art is "in the blood." "My mum is a talented artist and my dad is a musician. My sister would make positive comments and put my pictures on her walls, which inspired me to make more."

"I've always been interested in drawing. At school my favourite class was art. It was more like a time to relax."

Robert recently painted a forest mural to add colour to Graylands Hospital's Murchison Ward. He has witnessed positive changes in people involved with the hospital's Creative Expressions Centre for Arts Therapy.

"I can feel the sense of achievement and happiness from people going through art therapy—and they're creating great pictures and sculptures," he enthuses.

"Taking a break from everyday working life, whether it be through art, music, sport or hobbies is hugely beneficial to your wellbeing and health.

“It also feels good that other people can appreciate what I do.”

Robert designed the poster for the WA Music Song of the Year Competition.

He will also be running youth art workshops on “Culture and Wellbeing” to be exhibited at The Mental Health Services (TheMHS) Conference in Perth and as part of Mental Health Week. To register contact Kieran Crowe on (08) 9222 2386 or at Kieran.Crowe@health.wa.gov.au

Check out Robert's art on myspace or email robertjenkins74@hotmail.com

For more on art therapy, visit www.health.wa.gov.au/arttherapy
# Diary Dates

## AUGUST

| Date: | 11 August 2009  
| w: www.dao.health.wa.gov.au  
| e: DAO.Education@health.wa.gov.au  
| t: 0404 890 252 – Siew Ho Yeak | |
| Date: | 11 August and 20 October 2009  
| Event: Workshop – Ways of Working with Aboriginal People – Parts 1 & 2 (Perth)  
| w: www.dao.health.wa.gov.au  
| e: DAO.Education@health.wa.gov.au  
| t: (08) 9370 0368 | |
| Date: | 20 August 2009  
| Event: Workshop – Drugs and alcohol, sexual violence and mental health (Perth)  
| w: www.dao.health.wa.gov.au  
| e: DAO.Education@health.wa.gov.au  
| t: (08) 9370 0327 | |
| Date: | 29 August 2009  
| Event: Fundraiser – Pool Together For Nathan (Perth)  
| w: www.pooltogetherfornathan.weebly.com  
| e: pooltogetherfornathan@live.com.au  
| t: 0416 272 977 | |

## SEPTEMBER

| Date: | 1 to 4 September 2009  
| Event: Conference – 19th Annual THeMHS Conference (Perth)  
| w: www.themhs.org  
| e: info@themhs.org  
| t: (02) 9810 8700 | |
| Date: | 1 to 2 September 2009  
| Event: Conference – The 1st Australasian Refugee Health Conference (Perth)  
| w: www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth/events  
| e: info@themhs.org  
| t: (02) 9810 8700 | |
| Date: | 2 to 4 September 2009  
| Event: Conference – The 3rd WA Transcultural Mental Health Conference (Perth)  
| w: www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth/events  
| e: info@themhs.org  
| t: (02) 9810 8700 | |
| Date: | 3 September 2009  
| Event: Workshop – Who is ‘addicted’ to what? Working with the distress a substance problem can create in a couple’s relationship (Perth)  
| w: www.dao.health.wa.gov.au  
| e: DAO.Education@health.wa.gov.au  
| t: (08) 9370 0368 | |

## OCTOBER

| Date: | 10 September 2009  
| Event: World Suicide Prevention Day  
| w: www.suicidepreventionaust.org  
| e: info@suicidepreventionaust.org  
| t: (02) 9568 3111 | |
| Date: | 14 to 16 September 2009  
| Event: Workshop – Working with AOD using clients (Perth)  
| w: www.dao.health.wa.gov.au  
| e: DAO.Education@health.wa.gov.au  
| t: (08) 9370 0327 | |
| Date: | 18 to 19 September 2009  
| Event: Seminar – LADS presents Professor Rosemary Tannock – From Science to Strategy (Perth)  
| t: (08) 9346 7544 | |
| Date: | 22 September 2009  
| Event: Workshop – ‘I’m all over the place’: Helping drug clients manage their emotions (Perth)  
| w: www.dao.health.wa.gov.au  
| e: DAO.Education@health.wa.gov.au  
| t: (08) 9370 0368 | |
| Date: | 29 September to 2 October 2009  
| Event: Conference – 35th International Conference of the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses: Mind to Care (Sydney)  
| t: (07) 5528 2501 | |

## NOVEMBER

| Date: | 16 September 2009  
| Event: Forum – Project Five-O: Dealing with the Impact of Mental Health in the Workplace  
| w: www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth  
| For more dates, go to www.health.wa.gov.au/mentalhealth  
| To include your event, contact Duc Dau at Duc.Dau@health.wa.gov.au | |
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