



# Project Outlines

for

Inner City Mental Health Services in  
City of Sydney

September 2016

## Overview

Creativity and innovation are the 'buzz words' for business in Australia today.

There is no reason why those words should not also apply to fund raising and activities for those at disadvantage in our society.

The Project Outlines developed by MH-worX and described below, rely very much on seeking creative and innovative solutions to providing assistance to those members in our society who suffer from a mental illness or are homeless. In most cases, they have particular application to those who receive treatment in the inner city of Sydney.

In industry parlance, people with a mental illness are referred to as 'consumers'.

The aim of each of the projects is to provide cost effective and in some cases, cutting edge solutions, not only for the treatment of consumers, but also about how they go about their daily lives and interact with society. The solutions are founded in respect for the consumers, and in most cases aim to achieve inclusiveness in the activities of wider society.

Whilst each of the projects has direct relevance to consumers in the inner city of Sydney, there is no reason why the ideas cannot be replicated and used in other mental health units in hospitals and consumer related organisations across Sydney. Some will have application in other parts of Australia and indeed, internationally.

The Project Outlines set the 'bigger picture' by describing the value and need for each project. They also give an overview of what each project could look like.

It is hoped this will give sufficient information to enable applications to be made for approval and funding of each project. It will also allow donors to set funding and reporting guidelines and where appropriate, stage the progression of projects.

# Project Outlines

## 1. Community Internet Project

### Background

For those in mainstream society, the information revolution has transformed their lives. It has done this in four distinct ways:

- it has informed them
- it has entertained them
- it has educated them
- it has enabled them to communicate with each other quickly, widely, effortlessly and in a cost effective manner.

Conversely, for those outside mainstream society such as the homeless, the mentally ill and the sick and elderly, it has had the opposite effect. For most of them, the information revolution has served mainly to isolate them further and place significant hurdles in their way of participating meaningfully in or with mainstream society.

It has done this by failing to facilitate access to the tools necessary for these groups to participate in this revolution. Those tools include mobile phones, computers, the internet and the necessary education and training to use them.

As the lives of those in mainstream society continue to advance faster and faster through the use of these tools, the gulf with the groups outside mainstream society is widening because of these access problems, and at the same rapid rate.

### The project

This project is about providing a significant service to the community by bringing the tools of the information revolution to those who cannot readily access them. Although initially designed to service the needs of our local community, the ability to extend it to similar groups in both national and international communities is obvious.

It has its genesis not just in the idea that those in our target groups need to be able to meaningfully participate in and with an ever changing mainstream community. It also has its genesis in the likelihood that if these tools are made available to these groups, the transformative effect on their lives is likely to be even greater than those experienced by mainstream society.

For people in these groups information, entertainment, education and communication, are four of the most critically important factors in their lives. The ability to access mobile phones, computers and the internet with proper training, will quite simply change their lives.

The prospect of extending these resources to those in remote communities through the roll out of the NBN, significantly broadens the number of people who can enjoy the benefits of this project.

### *Community social media*

Having access to the four critically important services the information revolution can bring to people's lives is only part of the story.

To have access to email platforms such as hotmail and gmail, and to the existing social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook as well as appropriately designed Apps, will not only allow these groups to meaningfully participate with each other and mainstream society, but will change the way carers of people in these groups interact with them.

For instance, through Facebook groups with the homeless, providers of food, clothing and medical services will be able to tell them where they are and make arrangements to see them. Providers of accommodation in shelters will be able to tell people if beds are available. For those suffering with a mental illness, through personal web pages, information on their illness, treatment programs and medications including side effects can be made available to them.

Homeless people will be able to use Twitter to communicate with each other and the wider world. As a result, they will become more 'engaged' with society and more able to see themselves as being very much a part of that society, rather than an isolated, forgotten segment.

This form of community social media will also lead to important cost savings. For example, the cost of printing and publishing hard copy information pamphlets will drop significantly. Patients from these groups in hospital can be discharged earlier because they are more contactable to (for example), change dressings. By making members of these groups more contactable, it is easier and more cost effective to arrange appointments, meetings, social functions and access to resources.

### *Conclusion*

The arguments in favour of this project proceeding are so compelling that it should really be a matter of *'when'* and not *'if'*. Because the tools and the resources are already available, and because the numbers in the target groups are in comparison to the size of mainstream society quite small, the cost of implementing the project is in relative terms not likely to be significant.

Additionally, because of the nature of this project and the likelihood of positive publicity being generated for those who participate in it, there will be an attraction for major corporations including resource providers in related industries, to participate by donating resources, time, money and services.

## **2. Musicians Hear Your Voices Project**

### **Background**

Music therapy is well recognised for the treatment of mental disorders.

Unfortunately the programs are expensive to create. Setting up the facility itself and purchasing the musical equipment is costly. The wages of specialist music therapists are also significantly higher than many other mental health therapists.

This project is about using the goodwill of St Vincent's Hospital to collaborate with former patients who share a passion and connection with music. The aim is through that collaboration to provide ongoing funding for such a program to be set up and funded in an ongoing manner in the O'Brien Centre, the inpatient mental health unit at St Vincent's Hospital.

### **The project**

The proposal involves prominent musicians donating their time to perform on stage at the Garvan Institute Theatre, next door to the Hospital.

To keep costs down and the project manageable the initial thought is that apart from standard equipment such as microphones, piano and acoustic guitars, the performances would be 'unplugged.'

Performers, who received treatment at the Hospital, could be invited to provide concerts.

It is also likely that other prominent performers who have had nothing to do with the Hospital in the past, may also be prepared to perform. There are many who have regularly provided charity concerts for other causes in the past. It is likely that this particular charitable cause will resonate with their musical passions.

Tickets to the concert would be offered to both sponsors/supporters of the Hospital and the general public.

We are informed that if the event was filmed, there is likely to be a market for selling the recording through commercial outlets to raise even further money. We are also informed that musicians and others rate the Garvan Theatre very highly for its setting and acoustic qualities.

The concerts would be performed during each year to raise money for the music therapy program for that year. Who knows, one day it may be regarded as the pinnacle of a musician's career to be invited to perform at the annual 'Garvan Concert'.

To provide the necessary connection to the mental health unit in the O'Brien Centre, a suggestion is for each performer to also give a quick 30 minute unplugged performance in the Unit itself for the inpatients.

### **3. MAD PRIDE Sailing Project**

#### **Background**

Sailing has long been regarded as a very useful recuperative resource for those suffering from mental illnesses. In fact, it has often been used by support organisations involved with the Australian Military Forces to treat members who may be suffering from a range of illnesses, including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The aim is to provide consumers with access to a range of sailing programs from recreational to competitive. The programs would be provided in a respectful and safe environment using instructors who are themselves consumers running sailing classes made up of consumers alone.

#### **The project**

The program would be offered across five distinct activities. Three of the five would cater for entry level sailors;

(i) Dinghy sailing – learning

We hope to identify a sailing school in the eastern suburbs of Sydney that would be prepared to offer sailing tuition for consumers.

(ii) Dinghy sailing – racing

We hope to identify a sailing club in the eastern suburbs of Sydney that would be prepared to allow a sailing squadron to be created within its club for consumers. The aim would be for them to race against other clubs and yachts in the mainstream yacht racing pennants. (MAD PRIDE Sailing Squadron?).

(iii) Harbour/waterways - cruising

One of the consumers behind this project is about to purchase a 35' plus yacht, suitable for both cruising and racing. He has proposed that consumers who simply want to get out on the water would be able to come aboard for a recreational sail with him during the week/weekend or holidays.

(iv) Harbour/waterways/offshore – racing

The same person has offered the use of his yacht for consumers to become involved in yacht racing activities in and around Sydney Harbour.

(v) Sydney Hobart Yacht Race

It is planned that using the yacht owned by our consumer, a crew of the most outstanding consumer sailors can be trained to race in this event in 3-4 years time.

We are aware of a consumer who has skippered yachts in around 12 Sydney/Hobart races, who may be prepared to lead this crew.

#### **4. MAD PRIDE TV Project**

##### **Background**

Many disadvantaged groups amongst us have a voice and a presence in our society where they are able to express their views, showcase their talents and agitate for change (example, National Indigenous Television (NITV)).

Through using that voice and presence, these groups are also able to entertain, unify and inform themselves as well as others outside their group who have an interest in their welfare.

This project is about setting up an internet TV station for consumers with those aims in mind to overcome in particular, much of the isolation many of them feel.

##### **The project**

The project would be to establish a national online internet TV station run by consumers for consumers and their support groups. Content could include:

- performances by consumers in activities such as musical performances, book readings, poetry recitals etc;
- on line classes on crafts such as pottery, painting, gardening etc
- interviews by consumers of consumers talking about their journeys, their interests, access to resources etc;
- interviews of resource providers to consumers about the resources they offer and how to access them eg clinical resources, job hunting, education, recreation;
- interviews with specialists involved in mental health treatment explaining treatment programs and other information relevant to consumers;
- explanations and a running commentary on the changes in the political landscape relating to state and federal mental health programs and their funding (example, National Disability Scheme); and
- panel programs talking about sport, politics, events of the day etc.

To help fund the TV 'Station':

- mental health conferences could be filmed and made available to interested persons/organisations by subscription;
- because the station viewers would be their target groups, government funding could be sought to provide advertising on the NDIS; and
- mental health support groups could pay to advertise their conferences, programs, events and resources on the station.

It would be envisaged the TV station would initially run on an 8 hour loop and be also made available to hospitals, doctors surgeries and the like.

## **5. Online Gallery Project**

### **Background**

It is common for consumers to have significant talents in creating artistic works including those relating to painting, pottery and poetry.

Undertaking these works appears to not only have a calming effect on consumers, but also gives them a sense of achievement.

This project aims to encourage consumers to become actively involved in creating artistic works. At the same time, it also aims to leverage a sense of achievement about creating the works into a sense of identity, whilst also offering the opportunity to provide them with a source of income.

### **The project**

The project involves the creation of an online art gallery.

Each participating consumer would have their own 'gallery' within the gallery website, devoted to their art works. Their gallery could include their biography and/or explanations of the meanings they are seeking to impart through their works, as well as (where appropriate), the media they use to create them.

Artwork would be photographed and uploaded to their gallery and displayed on the internet.

There would be a facility for members of the public to purchase the artworks on line. A percentage of the purchase monies could be automatically deducted to help fund the gallery.

To leverage the sense of achievement, business cards would be created with the artist's name and contact details as well as the URL which links directly to their own gallery on the website.

To help create a sense of identity, the business card could describe the consumer as artist/author/potter/poet, as the case may be. For consumers who are unemployed, it is hoped that creating such an identity would be a positive recognition of that identity.