

# Recovery College Establishment Project

## Update #1

### Have you heard about the Recovery College?

Recovery College is coming to Australia, starting with Wangaratta and Cheltenham!

A Recovery College is a place where people come to learn and share knowledge about mental health, life skills, and anything else they think will help them get what they want out of life. The College will provide people with a welcoming place to learn the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their goals.

Mind Australia is keen to expand the choices Australians affected by mental distress have for supporting their recovery. Overseas experience is showing the benefits of education opportunities tailored to the learning needs of people with lived experience of mental distress when offered in ways that make them accessible. It is expected that this approach will also draw a broader audience including families and carers, professionals, and people from the wider community.

The College will draw on the wisdom, knowledge and skills of people with a lived experience of mental distress. Courses will be produced by people with such experience, supported where needed by people with additional professional learning and development skills.

Mind will be working with people in Wangaratta and Cheltenham to develop a pilot for Australia's first ever Recovery College. We'll start offering courses at these two sites before Christmas this year.

### In this issue...

This is the first of a series of updates about Mind's Recovery College Establishment Project. It is intended to provide updates on progress to anyone interested in the project.

1. Intro to the project
2. Meet the project team
3. What's happened so far
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If you have any questions or comments, we'd love to hear from you!

[recoverycollege@mindaustralia.org.au](mailto:recoverycollege@mindaustralia.org.au)

### Meet the Team

#### Graham Panther

I'm a new arrival to these fair shores, having spent 10 years getting to know New Zealand's mental health sector in a variety of roles – consumer, support worker, and in recent years, public sector consultant.

In my life, mental distress has been nothing more or less than a philosophical challenge, one that has taught me a great deal more than I could have imagined when first experiencing those strange, unexplainable things. I love the idea that the College will provide a space in which the learning that comes from mental distress is truly valued, a space where people can develop skills and knowledge they once thought were beyond their reach.

#### Dianne Hardy

My interest in this project stems from more than 13 years supporting someone close to me who has a severe post-traumatic stress injury.

I am excited about this Project because it allows me to use the education and project management skills that I have developed throughout my career, to help create a place where people with a lived experience of mental distress, their families and carers can learn and move along their recovery paths.

Another aspect of this role that I enjoy is working with people from a wide range of backgrounds. Building something together from the ground up is great!

11 September, 2013

## What's happened so far

- The Mind Board has made a strong commitment to supporting the establishment of the College, over a three year period
- The Ian Potter Foundation and Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation are providing funding for the Project
- Two pilot sites have been chosen for the College: Wangaratta and Cheltenham in Victoria
- A project plan has been drafted, and a Governance Committee has been established for the Project
- Consultation has begun in both areas, starting with people who are involved with Mind's existing services as clients, family and carers, and staff
- Numerous international studies have shown that people's recovery from mental health issues is greatly enhanced by self-determination and participation in community life. In line with this evidence, and guided by our consultation, Recovery College courses will impart skills that help people achieve their goals in a range of life domains, such as:
  - Career & Education
  - Relationships
  - Housing
  - Finances
  - Health
  - Recreation
- We have been asking people what they might like to learn, and what they might be able to teach. So far, people have suggested a number of topics, as well as a range of ways to make the College accessible, including:
  - Communication skills
  - Leadership & Advocacy
  - Learning to learn
  - Managing money
  - Education about mental health
  - Job seeking
  - Creative Writing
  - Cooking
- We are currently working with people at Wangaratta to identify the first two courses which we aim to develop and run before Christmas
- On the afternoon of Tuesday 24 September, we'll be having an open consultation with interested people in the Cheltenham area to see what topics they would like to be able to access through the college

### Some of the comments so far ...

*"I've done courses, health and safety, security courses, and I was the only one with a lived experience. It's daunting!"*

*"It would help to have people who understand me, and particularly people who have had the experiences I've had!"*

*"I want to do things slowly, not commit to full time all at once."*

## How to get involved

Ideas and comments are welcome. People outside the pilot areas can keep up to date via this bulletin, and we're happy to talk about potential future developments elsewhere.

For those who live or work near Cheltenham or Wangaratta, there will be a range of ways to get involved, including undertaking courses at the College, and applying to undertake work developing and teaching courses. We are also in the process of setting up working groups at both sites to help make decisions about further consultation, course choices, venues, and communication. These will consist of people with experience accessing mental health services, families and carers, and mental health staff at Mind's existing services.

Contact us at [recoverycollege@mindaustralia.org.au](mailto:recoverycollege@mindaustralia.org.au)  
Dianne Hardy – 03 9455 7988  
Graham Panther – 03 9455 7930