

*On behalf of the Iris Foundation, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the first edition of our newsletter. We decided to create this as a means of keeping in touch with our supporters, local community groups and all those in our region who are interested in the prevention of suicide on the Central Coast.*

*This edition details activities that we have been focusing on as well as some of the projects that we have supported and funded recently. It also provides information that may be useful to other agencies on the Central Coast engaged in suicide prevention.*

*I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to date. Your generosity has been fantastic! The challenge, however, is ongoing so we trust that we can rely on your continued assistance as we move forward.*

*Barry Abrahams, Chairman of The Iris Foundation Board*



## **WHAT IS THE IRIS FOUNDATION?**

The Iris Foundation is a Central Coast philanthropic foundation that supports and promotes the prevention of suicide through early intervention.

The Foundation does this by:

### **Support**

- ⇒ Raising funds for program support and sustainability of the Foundation
- ⇒ Identifying gaps in service provision
- ⇒ Allocating funds to services and programs for at risk individuals and their families when no alternatives are available
- ⇒ Maintaining up to date knowledge and access to local and national suicide prevention resources in order to share this information with target groups.
- ⇒ Evaluating outcomes of programs funding
- ⇒ Networking to encourage collaboration between groups and agencies

### **Promotion**

- ⇒ Promoting the outcomes of the programs that are funded by the Iris Foundation
- ⇒ Promoting current suicide prevention resources and/or public interest discussions

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

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[Life Connections](#) A resilience program which aims to assists individuals to become more aware of their inner resources to withstand adversity. [Page 1](#)

[Caring For Young Carers](#) - Carers, especially young people, are often isolated and unsupported. We Care! offers new ways for each person to care without losing themselves. Carers find a place to be heard, supported and nurtured. [Page 2](#)

[Information for Workers engaged in Suicide Prevention](#) Find out about Community Matters, Conversations Matter, and a free e-mental health course [Page 3](#)

[Emergency Services Workers](#)—police, firefighters and paramedics have unique stresses that can affect their wellbeing. Behind The Seen offers first responders sessions on preventative mental health strategies and ways to seek support. [Page 4](#)

[Win Vivien Thomson's book Ashes Of the Firefighters](#) [Page 4](#)

**AND MORE...**

## THE EIC COTTAGE

Thanks to an amazing contribution by Northlakes Toukley Rotary, and the generosity of Wyong Shire Council in allowing the use of the building, the EIC Cottage was renovated and opened for business in July 2014. Located in the grounds of the Old Primary School, Alison Road Wyong it is central to public transport and in close proximity to other community services such as Wyong Neighbourhood Centre.

Supported by The Iris Foundation and Wyong Neighbourhood Centre, the EIC Cottage now has a number of regular activities :



**Counselling**— Wednesdays, by appointment only and MUST have a mental health plan referral from GP

**Lived Experience Group**— meets Friday morning

**Tai Chi** Tuesdays 10am

**Information and Advocacy** Thursdays 10am-2pm

**Mens Wellbeing Group** (Closed group, referral only)

**Life Connections**— Wednesdays in May/June, bookings essential, see details below

**Wellbeing Group** for over 50's

The Cottage is currently developing several partnerships including a partnership with NSW Health.

**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES RELATED TO THE EIC Cottage please phone 43 531750**

## LIFE CONNECTIONS A pilot program on building resilience

The Life Connections Program aims to assist individuals to become more aware of their inner resources to withstand adversity. It aims to assist individuals to survive, adapt, and grow in the face of stress and shock.

Resilient people are able to apply their skills and strengths to cope and recover from problems and challenges, which may include job loss, illness, financial problems, medical emergencies, divorce or the death of a loved one.

*The program is based on the belief that for an individual to achieve this for themselves they need to develop resilience which involves:*

- ◆ Being aware of your needs and strengths
- ◆ Setting realistic goals
- ◆ Valuing yourself
- ◆ Having a positive frame of mind
- ◆ Feeling connected with others and to your community



### Pilot Program No. 3

Starting Date: 20th May

Every Wednesday for 6 weeks 10am to 12pm

Morning Tea Provided , Registration Fee: nil

Venue: EIC, Old Primary School Grounds

**BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL** For more information please email [annette@wyongneighbourhoodcentre.org.au](mailto:annette@wyongneighbourhoodcentre.org.au) or phone: 43531750



## WE CARE! Program for Carers including Young Carers

*The Iris Foundation has supported a number of We Care! Sessions on the Central Coast.*

The demands placed on carers often means they don't have time or energy to look after themselves. Carers, especially young people, are often isolated and unsupported. We Care! Started in 2010 when it was identified that there was a gap in service with regards to a holistic approach to carers and those being cared for.

We Care! is a dynamic program, incorporating Art Therapy and is designed to assist carers to work through their own healing processes, increase self-knowledge and develop greater wisdom, courage and serenity. By introducing alternatives to patterns of coping, We Care! offers new ways for each person to care without losing themselves. Carers will find a place to be heard, supported and nurtured.

The program is a 6 week course with 12 modules however each module is stand-alone so that it can be adapted to any group's needs. We Care! have partnered with organisations such as Commonwealth Care Respite and NSW Health. To date 12 We

Care! Sessions have been presented with the feedback received from participants and partners highlighting the positive outcomes of the program for the participants:

*The We Care staff were thorough and professional in pre-planning, setting objectives and evaluation of the sessions. The positive impact on the young people was obvious in their written feedback and comments shared in a recent follow-up planning meeting. Sian White PhD Manager, Carer Support Unit, Central Coast Local Health District*

*'This has been the most amazing, emotional, empowering 5 weeks. This has allowed me to exorcise my demons, to give me the freedom to be me. Thank you so much'* participant

*'...the openness, being able to feel out loud, sharing our stories and being understood'* participant

*'After each session I have more confidence in who I am and the role I am playing in in my daughter's life'* participant

For further information about We Care! Email [wecare4carers@gmail.com](mailto:wecare4carers@gmail.com)



Totem poles created by participants of a We Care! Session



resources for  
discussing suicide

## RESOURCES FOR DISCUSSING SUICIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS AND THOSE WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

The Hunter institute of Mental Health have developed a website with a range of resources professionals and organisations working in suicide prevention, mental health or other community services. The site includes a range of core principles and practical tips for supporting community discussion about suicide.

*Conversations Matter* has been developed to assist communities to talk about suicide in ways that breaks down stigma and increase understanding and support for those thinking about suicide and/or those affected by suicide. The professional resources have been developed in separate modules that provide advice about prevention-focused conversations, intervention-focused conversations and postvention focused conversations occurring in the community.

<http://www.conversationsmatter.com.au/>

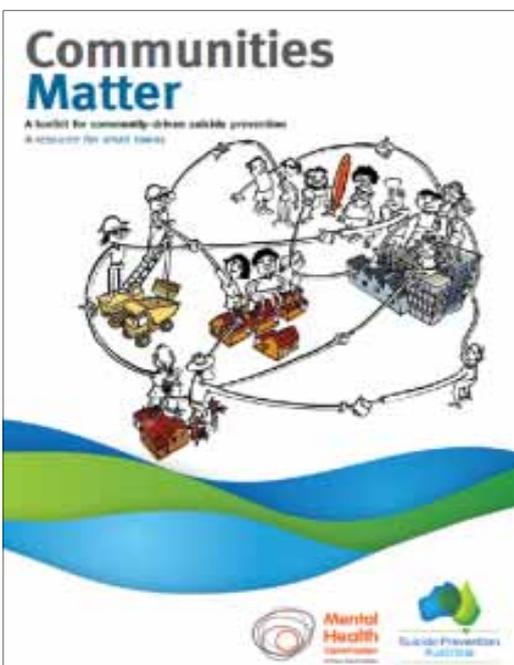


### IRIS FOUNDATION SUPPORTS GOATS FESTIVAL

The annual GOATS Festival organised by San Remo Neighbourhood Centre (trading as The Epicentre) is held during Youth Week each year. The festival supports hundreds of young people aged from 5 to 25 by giving them the opportunity to showcase their talents in music, stage management, event management, public speaking, risk management, photography, art, writing and much more.

The festival started 17 years ago with a few bands on the back of a truck, growing to the event it is today with thousands attending. Many months of preparation take place in the lead up to the event, mentoring, meeting and preparing for the largest youth music festival on the Central Coast. Multiple workshops take place over a 5 month period to support, educate and encourage those who take part in all aspects of the festival. The organising committee consists of over 40 members ranging in age from 5 to 85 and meeting as frequently as weekly in the lead up to the day. The event has community stalls, market stalls, rides, and family activities along with 3 stages of performances including bands, solo acts and dancing. This year's GOATS Festival is being held on April 12th at Koala Park San Remo. Enquiries ph 43907888 or email [jillian@sanremo.org.au](mailto:jillian@sanremo.org.au)

### COMMUNITIES MATTER TOOLKIT



An excellent resource for any community group starting up a suicide prevention program/group or project has been developed by Suicide Prevention Australia and is available for free download from the SPA site: <http://suicidepreventionaust.org>

### FREE ONLINE COURSE FOR MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS



Online mental health services play a vital role in support work with young people, connecting them to help where and when they need it, connecting them to important support communities, and giving them the tools to manage mental

health problems and to build essential skills. This online learning provides practical tools for using e-mental health services in face-to-face work with young people, based on two decades of research into the outcomes of these services and their use in youth and social work practice.

The online learning package is made up of 4 self-paced slide packages for you to read in your own time, with supporting resources for you to download and read. After you finish reading each module you will be prompted to respond to a discussion question.

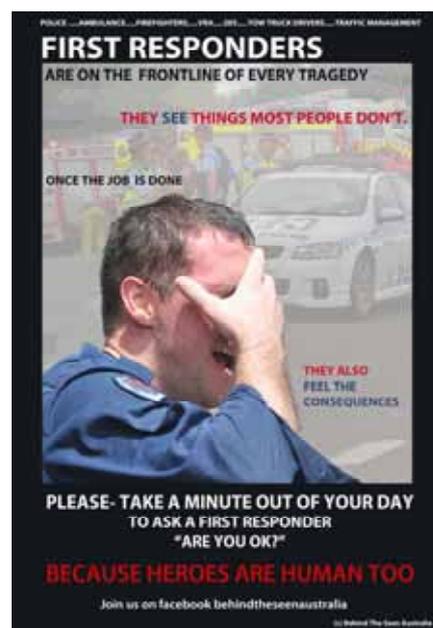
At the end of the package you may undertake a learning assessment in order to get a confirmation of completion for continuing professional development recognition. ACWA and AASW endorsed 10 hours. For this short course and more resources for professionals, check out <http://au.professionals.reachout.com>

## MENTAL HEALTH FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Iris Foundation in partnership with San Remo Neighbourhood Centre have supported a project called 'Behind The Seen' with many of their Central Coast sessions since the inception of the program in 2013.

Behind The Seen is a series of preventative mental health strategies specifically designed to improve resilience, recovery and localized support networks for emergency services personnel and their families. As a pro-active, preventative approach the program complements and adds value to current critical incident support systems within emergency services organisations. Behind The Seen's focus on "down to earth" mental health facts, effects of stress on the individual AND family, and simple ways to develop personal support networks prior to any traumatic incident, forms the basis of a *community* of support in addition to organisational support systems.

With over 40 sessions presented to first responders and their families and more than 500 participants, the program has been presented across NSW and in WA including 2 presentations at the 2014 WA Fire and Emergency Services Conference, Behind The Seen recently organised an innovative event that brought together speakers from police, ambulance and firefighting backgrounds to discuss the mental health of first responders and their families. From The Frontline was held on the Central Coast and the event was attended by a mix of first responders and those in the helping professions interested in gaining insight into the unique stresses experienced. For more information or to book a session for your organisation, email [info@behindtheseenaustralia.com](mailto:info@behindtheseenaustralia.com) or visit [facebook.com/behindtheseenaustralia](https://facebook.com/behindtheseenaustralia) or their website [www.behindtheseen.com.au](http://www.behindtheseen.com.au)



**Pictured left:** From The Frontline, an inaugural event organised by Behind The Seen featured guest speakers from various emergency and community services including Paul Horner (author of Jack Knife), Vivien Thomson (author of Ashes Of The Firefighters), Jeff Garland (author of Split Second) Benjamin Gilmour (author and filmmaker Paramedico) Renier Greef (psychologist and author of Driving Your Life), Kate Carragher (AFOM), June Anderson (Lifeline Hunter Central Coast) and Jillian Hogan (The Epicentre) Feedback of the day was overwhelmingly positive and the organisers are currently looking at taking the event interstate. Sponsors included Central Queensland University, Doyalson-Wyee RSL and the Iris Foundation.

**Also pictured** David Harris presenting Bev Baldwin and Dawn Hooper from The Iris Foundation and Jillian Hogan (The Epicentre) with a "Backline Award", in recognition of their outstanding efforts in supporting the wellbeing of emergency services personnel in NSW.

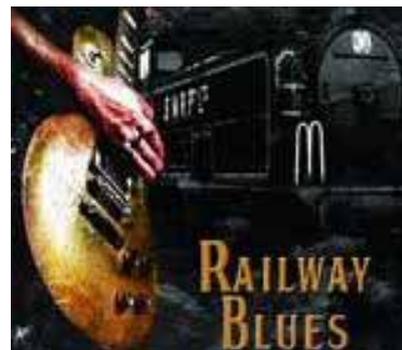
**WIN a copy of  
ASHES OF THE FIREFIGHTERS  
by Vivien Thomson**

All you have to do is email us so that we have your name on our data base for newsletters. One person will be drawn from the names received and sent a copy of Ashes Of the Firefighters.

Email [admin@irisfoundation.org.au](mailto:admin@irisfoundation.org.au) with "first responders" in the subject line and include the following details: Your name, email address, phone number and postal address

**LOOKING BACK**

Every newsletter issue we'll show you some photos from the past so that you can have a quick glance back at some of the interesting events or projects that the Iris Foundation has been involved with in years gone by. The photos below take us back to 2008, when The Iris Foundation gathered a large number of musicians to play at Richmond Vale Railways in order to raise suicide prevention awareness and raise funds for the Iris Foundation. As well as playing on the stages, the musicians performed on the short train rides available at the historic railways venue. A highlight of the event was that a number of the musicians felt so strongly about the cause that they donated their songs and their time to both the event and a CD that was compiled especially for the day.



**NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE**



Mark your calendar and plan to join your colleagues for the 2015 National Suicide Prevention Conference 26-29 July in Hobart Tasmania.

This is the premier, multidisciplinary, educational event in the suicide

prevention sector. The theme this year is 'Changing Systems, Changing Lives - The Intersection of Research, Policy, Practice and Lived Experience'. Plenary panels this year feature international suicide prevention experts Professor Heidi Hjelmeland, Professor Rory O'Connor and Dr DeQuincy Lezine. Presenting in conjunction with our international guests will be some of Australia's leading suicidologists.

For more information about the conference, visit <http://suicidepreventionaust.org>



**THANK YOU TO ALL PAST AND CURRENT SPONSORS**

The Iris Foundation could not do its work without the generosity of sponsors and is extremely grateful for their support.

Is your business interested in supporting suicide prevention strategies on the Central Coast? If so, please contact us for a sponsorship pack or for more information: [admin@irisfoundation.org.au](mailto:admin@irisfoundation.org.au) or phone: 0429 921 149

**CAN YOU HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

*All donations of \$2 and more are tax deductible*

Cheques: payable to 'Iris Foundation'

Direct deposit: Iris Foundation; Bendigo Bank Wyong

BSB: 633 000 Acct: 145738068

**DO YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT?**

If you would like to contribute an article to this newsletter, please email [admin@irisfoundation.org.au](mailto:admin@irisfoundation.org.au)  
The deadline for the next newsletter is 15th June 2015.



*Save The Date! (more information next issue)*  
**BAREFOOT BOWLS IRIS FUNDRAISER**  
**NOVEMBER 6th 2015**