



# BPD COMMUNITY

Volume 1, Issue 8

August 2016

The quarterly newsletter of  
BPD Community Victoria Ltd.



## STOP PRESS

To join our email list, email:  
[barb@bpdcommunity.com.au](mailto:barb@bpdcommunity.com.au)

BPD Awareness Week will have its own website. Brought to you with the combined efforts of NEA.BPD (Aust), Spectrum, the BPD Foundation, Air Project (NSW) and your own BPD Community, it is another step forward.

Our Celebration in October is in recognition of BPD Awareness Week (see back page).

## So much is happening!

It seems every time we turn around there is a reason to celebrate.

This issue reports on our recent Info Night, a Family Affair, dedicated to Carer initiatives. Inside you can read about the latest Guiding Principles for carers.

Recently in Melbourne, we were pleased to see Prof Alan Fruzzetti who was training clinical staff in DBT. He also travelled to Sydney to train another group of Family Connections leaders. This opportunity was brought to us by NEA.BPD (Aust).

Some more good news is the development of a website to co-ordinating the

efforts of the various organisations in Australia with a view to promote BPD Awareness Week in the first week of October. Be prepared to hear more of this in the weeks ahead.

BPD Awareness Week is the week we hold our annual 'Celebration' we celebrate the journey of recovery of one of our own, this year Joanne Switzerloot will be speaking to us. We also look back over the year and celebrate the work and achievements of BPD Community. There is a lot to be happy about.

What is the strength of BPD Community you ask? It's you! In order to replace stigma and discrimination

with hope and optimism, we need the solid foundations of an informed community. Providing you with opportunities to participate and be involved is a priority. We work at developing creative ways to bring up to date and accessible information to you. We also are developing ways to increase your participation in our BPD Community. If you have any thoughts or feedback on this that you would like to offer, please contact us.

BPD Community has been officially legal for over a year now. In October we are having our first Annual General Meeting and nominations are called for the Board. If you would like to consider joining the Board, please email [barb@bpdcommunity.com.au](mailto:barb@bpdcommunity.com.au) with an expression of interest.

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## GPs on the frontline

With changes in how our mental health system works in the air, the role of the GP is becoming increasingly important.

A GP can assess whether you have a mental illness and prepare a mental health plan or refer you to a psychiatrist who can make a psychiatric assessment and a management plan.

Now, we are not accustomed to asking what our mental health care plan is...and of course it helps to know what we are asking about.

In Victoria a mental health care plan is suggested for anyone who has a mental illness that lasts for more than six months and needs the care of three or more health professionals for example, a GP, a

psychologist, a Personal Helper or Mentor (PHaMs worker).

Your GP can prepare a mental health care plan with you and your family. This gives you a greater sense of control over your recovery and if you have your partner, spouse or parent with you, you can enlist their support also. Visit:

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/mental-health-care-plans](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/mental-health-care-plans)



Helen Robinett



It was a moving presentation, the audience listened intently.

## A mother's story

Helen Robinett spoke movingly of how BPD had affected her family at BPD Community's last Info Night.

A single mum, Helen can look back and see those early years of childhood as times of instability for her daughter. As Helen said, 'no-one gave me a manual, there were no books, nothing.' The lack of supports for new mothers, a struggling marriage and financial insecurity were contributory factors for an unhappy family.

Doing the best she could in those circumstances was not enough, love was not enough. With a daughter vulnerable to developing

BPD, a family environment that is child centred is required. An emotionally validating home is essential: a home with clear values-based limits where everyone can feel secure is required.

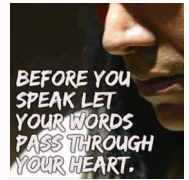
'I did the best I could and it was not enough. I know that now,' Helen explained. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but would it have been possible to do it differently? Probably not without the supports required.

It takes a village to raise a child it is often remarked and we all nod our heads wisely. And yet when we encounter hardship, we are

told to toughen up, we are encouraged to get over it and move on. We are so often left alone to struggle on the best we can. While Helen's wonderful parents were there for her and her daughter, it was not enough.

Helen today is a different woman and a different mother. She attributes the skills she learnt in Family Connections to showing her a different way. She found the BPD Community and the people of that community to provide the support that is so helpful.

Today Helen is committed to giving back to develop that sense of community that supports recovery. And she is better able to now support her daughter in her own journey of recovery.



## Why parents panic...

One of the hardest things for any parent to experience is to stand by powerless to help their child when they are hurt.

When you first bring home your baby, every little snuffle is a potential cause for concern. Over time parents gain experience and can relax more. However, the hypervigilance that comes worrying about a self harming adolescent is not

something that is easy to manage. For many first confronted with this, it is a totally new development. The panic that a parent first feels is overwhelming, the fear is extreme.

When a 'child' reaches adulthood, the parent is usually sitting on the sidelines. Watching and worrying about how to best support their adult child.

Participation in BPD Community is one way of reducing that sense of powerlessness. The Carer's Group which meets monthly in Sth Melb is both a support group and a psychoeducation group. It is a safe place to learn how to address our own sense of powerlessness.



## What is a carer?

A carer is a technical term used by government to describe any person who supports a loved one who has an ongoing illness.

"When I first heard that word, carer—it felt strange to be called that," said Helen Robinett, "but hey, if it makes it easier for them, why not?"

To be called a carer of an adult working and living interstate would be hard to understand if you didn't know about BPD.

The financial strain on some families with a loved one with BPD can create even more problems. "I had to remortgage my home to pay for treatments," Helen admitted.

For partners, spouses, siblings and children of those with BPD, the challenges may differ but the impact is no less distressing.

So, if it means we are called carers so we can access programs and services that can help us and our loved ones, then why not?

*"...anyone who supports a person who has an ongoing illness."*

# Working behind the scenes

There are many people working behind the scenes, beavering away building a better world. We hear about policy development and wonder perhaps what it really means. Perhaps the easiest way to understand a policy is to know what it means to us on the ground.

Carers are accustomed to being excluded from the treatment process. Respecting the privacy of the person being treated is often given as the reason for this.

When a loved one has a serious, chronic illness that is potentially life threatening, such as cancer, the next of kin is encouraged to be included in the discussions. They are encouraged

to support their loved one and resources are made available to help them.

Very few people do not want their next of kin involved, their wishes are respected.

With BPD however, next of kin are often deliberately shut out. The reasons why this is so may be varied, but underlying them is the stigma and discrimination that accompanies this disorder.

At the last BPD Community Info Night, Klavdia Vainshtein from Mind (Aust) addressed a keen audience of carers about the work she has been doing behind the scenes to try to address this situation.

In 2010 the Federal Dept of Health published the Implementation Guidelines for Non Government Community Sector and they defined how Consumer and Carer Participation should look. In 2013 and again 2014, the National Mental Health Commission produced two reports recommending the development and implementation of a practical guide for the inclusion of families and support people.

Klavdia has been working away, taking these recommendations to develop policies, then develop resources and strategies to implement these policies. 'A Practical Guide to Working with People with a Mental Illness' is such a re-



source. The booklet outlines 6 Standards in Practice and offers strategies to those working in the field to support the implementation of these standards.

At the Info Night, Klavdia discussed with the audience some of the challenges involved in implementing the standards. Simply because something is written down, doesn't mean it can happen easily. Moreover, breaking down the stereotypes and myths surrounding families of those with BPD doesn't happen overnight. But change is in the air.

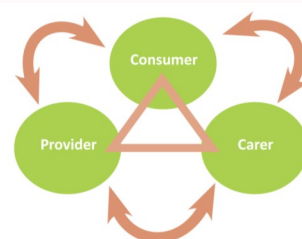
## The 6 Standards

What if we could all work together, the person with lived experience, their family and the therapist? We all have the same desire and goal, why not work together?

Yes, it is easier said than done but the 6 standards below, are a guide to a new way of working.

**Partnership Standard 1:** Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact, or as soon as possible thereafter.

**Partnership Standard 2:** Staff are carer aware and trained in carer engagement strategies.



**Partnership Standard 3:** Policy and protocols regarding confidentiality and sharing of information are in place.

**Partnership Standard 4:** Defined staff positions are allocated for carers in all service settings.

**Partnership Standard 5:** A carer introduction to the service and staff is available, with a relevant range of information across the care settings.

**Partnership Standard 6:** A range of carer support services is available.

## What can be done ?

Information is power only if it can be used to good effect. The information we have about improving the participation of carers in the mental health system, can be used wisely to improve treatment for people with BPD.

BPD Community is committed to this and this means that all members of our community be informed and working with the same goal to reduce stigma and discrimination and replace it with the hope and optimism of treatment and recovery.

Imagine a time when a person is diagnosed with BPD in the same way that we are able to be diagnosed with cancer. Imagine the sympathetic support that is available, the treatment options that are easily accessible. That is our measure for how it should be.

It is through a combined effort we can change how BPD is considered in the world of mental health and subsequently in the world in general. As an individual we can learn and understand

more about BPD and the mental health system and we can take that knowledge and understanding into our interactions with others. It is however when our voices are joined together that we can create an impact.

How is this done? BPD Community exists to make this happen, join with us and: participate in our activities; add your voice through our Facebook page; send an email and give us feedback, suggestions; consider joining the Board; and donate to our innovative cause with time or money.



<https://www.facebook.com/BPDcommunityvic/>





# The October Information Night

## BPD Celebration!



Woohoo! It's that time of the year again, time to celebrate and there is such a lot to be so proud of, it's time to brag a little.

This year we have a nationally co-ordinated BPD Awareness Week with a dedicated webpage. Please visit the page and join with others across the country to call for change. Send an email or two off to our politicians, be a part of a wider voice for action. The web page will show you how.

Our own BPD Community has been quietly kicking goals, we will bring you up to date with all our own achievements from throughout the year. Meet your newly elected Board of Directors, let them know what you think needs to be done and why.

Come along and join the party!

## Recovery Yay!

To recover from BPD is a wonderful thing. Our Info Night in October is a celebration for all who have achieved recovery over the last year.

Joanne Switzerloot has been in recovery now for quite a while and she is going to share with us her story. Joanne was a wife and mother living a life of internal chaos; she and those who loved her never thought there was a chance of recovery. It was only when she met others like her that Joanne began to see that change was possible.

The change that leads to recovery is not easy and it was thwarted by her mind feeling more comfortable in chaos...that had become her norm. It took years, but Joanne has turned her life around, she made a heroic effort and will share that journey with us in October.

**TITLE:** "Celebration"

**PRESENTED BY:** Barb Mullen, Joanne Switzerloot and Zeke Ox

**TIME:**

7pm

**DATE:**

Thurs, 6 October 2016

**PLACE:**

The Theatrette  
Sth Melb Town Hall  
Sth Melbourne

Please RSVP to:

barb@bpdcommunity.com.au

## Who's hot?



Zeke has the voice of a choirboy grown into a man but don't be fooled. He is much more than that.

A WADA graduate of 2000, specialising in Musical Theatre, Zeke has had a varied acting career, including Musical Theatre, Theatre as well as Film and Television.

He is an internationally acclaimed musician with groups Full Scale, Mammal and now Superheist. It is when performing in these bands that Zeke feels at home with his edgy, political music. He commands a considerable cult following of loyal fans.

As we know, this work can be intermittent and Zeke is proud to acknowledge the support of his partner, he is a family man and a father.

Zeke Ox is a fan of BPD Community and we are privileged to hear him again this year.

Motivated by a strong commitment to community and a staunch advocate for the disadvantaged, it is natural that Zeke feels at home with our BPD Community.

He knows though that heavy rock and Nu Metal music is not quite right for our Celebration Night, so we can expect some of that pure and sweet tenor voice of his. If we are lucky we will get a bit of rap too which was an amazing experience last year and won the audience over completely.