



Mental Health Support

ROAM communities
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Annual Report 2005-06

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Toby Raeburn & Prati Budhathoki

Directors Message

The mentally ill homeless population is one of the most marginalized groups in our society. Healthcare, education and advocacy, as ever, are pivotal to the improvement of a system that is dealing with a complex and constantly changing issue. Mental disorders & homelessness, at their worst, bear implications of absolute loss – of home, of family, of dignity, of self-esteem, of mind, and perhaps most significantly, of hope.

This past year it has been my privilege to be involved in founding “ROAM communities” Australia’s newest mental health charity. In a short time “**ROAM**” has built a reputation as an organisation providing quality innovative care for this most vulnerable population.

Importantly ROAM’s work is based on the belief that:

a) People with mental disorders are capable of leading satisfying, productive lives and making meaningful contributions in their communities

b) There are significant amounts of untapped energy and goodwill in Australian communities surrounding people with mental disorders.

It is with great sincerity that I wish to thank all of the individuals and organisation’s that have assisted ROAM in it’s inaugural year of operations. Our generous supporters have been both individuals and businesses to numerous to mention.

To the students that have contributed from UNSW and University of Sydney, you guys have been terrific! Your energy, enthusiasm and encouragement make the future look bright!

An unheralded group operating behind the scenes over the past year has been the board of ROAM whose names are listed at the end of this report. To all of you, thank you deeply.

In particular I would like to personally thank my own family for their support over the past year. Thanks to them, as a supporter wrote on a card to me recently, “I know the difference that love can make.”

Best Wishes

Toby Raeburn
Director: ROAM Communities
Recovery through Ownership Action & Management
Mobile: 0407608066

Services

ROAM provides mental health support to people with mental disorders who have made or are making the transition from homelessness to their own home in the community. We have done this over the past year implementing our principals of:

Recovery – helping people find a way out of homelessness before they become entrenched in a self-perpetuating cycle; through

Ownership – empowering clients to acknowledge and accept responsibility for their own condition;

Action – linking clients to educational and vocational services within the community, including social support, transport, advocacy to health and welfare agencies, treatment management, household management, budgeting, personal hygiene, and assistance with daily living; and

Management – specifically tailoring programs to address clients' individual needs, within a stable-housing environment consisting of studio and one-bedroom apartments.

Youth

Sydney is a magnet for young people. It attracts youth from all over Australia who are running from all types of issues. The anonymity the city offers appeals to many young people, and the availability of services like food vans, drop-in centres, attracts young people who use these free services to survive. The inner city also attracts a very disturbed group of young people with highly complex health needs including familial abuse, drug and alcohol dependency, high risk taking behaviour, contact with the legal system, behavioural issues and lack of education and opportunities brought about because of early school leaving.

Recently ROAM's emphasis has been shifting towards preventative work with youth between the ages of 16-25. In providing support to our younger clients we work in close partnership with the Salvation Army. All of our young people are accommodated in studio apartments at "Francis Street" in Darlinghurst. Here ROAM's regular services are creatively supplemented by youth specific groups such as Arts, Craft, Martial Arts and BBQ nights.





Students

ROAM's student support model supplements professional staff with effectively facilitated University students whose work for ROAM is accredited as part of their coursework and spread out over the length of an entire year in order to facilitate much needed consistent relational support for clients.

The executive director of the Brain and Mind Research Institute at the University of Sydney, Ian Hickie, is full of praise for the ROAM student model he stated recently that: *“Most of our teaching focuses on acute emergency care, it doesn't really support the skills development for the professionals we need for the future [and] doesn't really reflect what we need in the community - this does.”*

The ROAM Model has been highlighted by the N.S.W. Department of Health as ideal for contributing to meeting the state's need for nurses who want to pursue mental health as a career.

Working with ROAM is not only involving students in responsible, important work but it is inspiring them to think seriously about pursuing a career in mental health nursing, comments from students this past year have included:

“ROAM has shed a positive light on working with mental health in the community, it's definitely made me think I would like to pursue a career in mental health nursing in the future”

Liz Fitzgerald (Final Year Nursing Student Sydney Uni)

“ROAM has been a positive experience, that has enriched my understanding of mental health in the community. It's definitely something I'm going recommend to other students.”

Emma Quirks (Final Year Nursing Student Sydney Uni)

“Working with ROAM has opened my eyes to a deeply concerning and every increasing medical and social problem that exists in my own backyard. As a medical student studying in the eastern suburbs I was greatly affected by a world so contrasting and polar to my own yet experienced by those in our very midst. As a part of ROAM I am learning something new everyday, while hopefully playing a part in helping others on the road to recovery and a different life.”

Li-Anne Lim (4th year medical student UNSW)

Finances

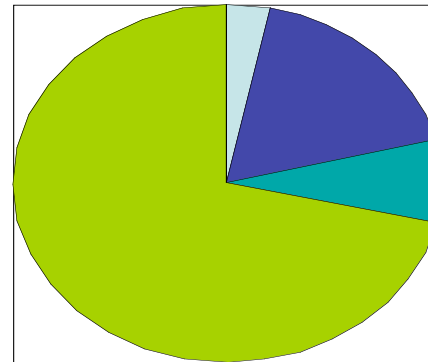
As is evident from the charts opposite, in the past year ROAM has relied heavily on the voluntary efforts of a committed group of professional volunteers and students. Thanks to the kind financial support of our friends and community partners we finish the year with a positive bank balance of \$17,598.

Apart from in-kind donations in the past year we received \$6,318 in cash donations from family and friends. Our inaugural trivia night and first ever fundraiser raised \$2,860. ROAM already has a history of mutually beneficial partnerships with the University of Sydney, University of NSW, the Salvation Army and the Ted Noffs Foundation. Income from partnerships over the past year was \$14,720.

Our expenditure for the past year has been primarily directed towards our primary task of directly providing mental health support. Other expenses have included incorporation costs, office equipment, staff training, client recreation, client furniture and set up.

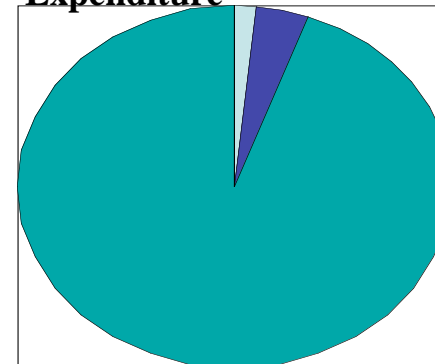
The year ahead holds the challenge of increasing the quality and quantity of mental health services that we can provide to the community. Over the next six months we will seek to make the transition to an organisation able to employ paid staff as we seek to increase the mental health services that we can provide to the community.

Income



- Fundraising
- Partnerships
- Donations
- Inkind Professional Support

Expenditure



- Staff Wage/Training
- Direct Client Support
- Inkind Professional Support

The ROAM Communities Board

- Mr Joseph Hallit B.Pharm MPS ; Pharmacist, Woolloomooloo Pharmacy
- Dr Suzanne Mckenzie; Senior Lecturer General Practice, School of Community Medicine, UNSW
- Mr Stephen Van Vorst Senior ; Lecturer, Mental Health Nursing Director of Studies,University of Technology, Sydney
- Ms Angela Garvey; Professional Officer NSW Nurses' Association
- Mr Toby Raeburn; Nurse Manager Matthew Talbot Hostel, Conjoint Lecturer UNSW
- Rev. John Smulo; Senior Pastor, Lifesong Church, California, USA
- Mr James Southern; Registered Nurse Specialist, Salvation Army; Foster House
- Mr Simon Barry; Senior Caseworker, LINKS Youthworks, Marylands, NSW.
- Mr Chris Yates; Manager, Personal Superannuation, ING

Donations

Choosing to support ROAM Communities provides you with a unique opportunity to include people with mental health disorders at risk of homelessness at the heart of your giving this year. Ian W Webster, AO, Physician and Emeritus Professor of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales states, **“ROAM Communities is run by health professionals that have particular familiarity with the real life situations of the people it serves. Such familiarity and wholistic approach make it well placed to really make a difference in the lives of people with mental illness who are homeless. I commend it to you as a valuable organisation worthy of support.”**

If you would like to assist us in the provision of these important services you can make a tax-deductible donation. Donations can be made by cheque or automatic payment using the details below –

PO Address

ROAM Communities, PO Box 93, Potts Point, Sydney, NSW, 1335.

Account Details

Bank: Commonwealth Bank

Account Name- ROAM COMMUNITIES

BSB – 062005

Account Number - 10577375