

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2016



A little over one year ago Lotus Place moved into its new Stones Corner premises. Although it took a little while to get used to the change, over the past 12 months people have connected, crafted and celebrated together in their new space, creating new memories.

People have joined in with Tuesday peer get-togethers, pamper sessions, hair cuts, guest speakers, card-making, art group, Bollywood dancing, leather craft, drama group, BBQs, music and singing, and creative writing. People have also enjoyed chatting and catching up, helping each other out, working together, consultation and feedback sessions, Peace Leadership Training and much more, as well as individual planned support.



Christmas Season

Dealing with Stress

The Christmas season is upon us! We hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday. We understand that this time of year may bring up sadness & trauma for some, so we have included suggestions and tools to reduce stress during Christmas.

Beating Christmas stress and anxiety

The Christmas season is meant to be a time of joy, but for many people it can be a time of stress, anxiety, disappointment or loneliness. Christmas comes with high expectations of perfect, happy families enjoying luxurious celebrations and gifts, but not all of us

are able to live up to these ideals. Some people experience feelings of isolation, financial pressures, or increased family conflict that can make this a very stressful time of year. However, there are steps you can take to help manage stress and anxiety during the festive period.

Here are some ideas for getting through...

Taking care of money worries

Identify what's causing you financial stress. Buying gifts and attending social events can be expensive. Plan ways to reduce spending. For example, you could suggest to your family and friends that you only buy gifts for children, or organise a 'Secret Santa' among the adults. Set a budget and stick to it. Find low cost ways to have fun. Don't let money cut you off from your family and friends. If you can't afford expensive restaurant meals or cocktail catch-ups, organise a BBQ in the park or a party at home where everyone brings a plate of food to share.

Dealing with family tension

Just because you're related doesn't mean your family members will all get along. Family and relationship problems may contribute to Christmas anxiety.

If this is something you experience set realistic expectations for yourself. Christmas might not be the fabulous family reunion you hoped for. Plan how you will manage any feelings of anxiety or depression that may arise. Anticipate misunderstandings and try to be tolerant and patient. You can't make everyone happy. Try to have a positive focus; tune out bad or inappropriate behaviour and tune in good



behaviour. Try to forget family problems that have arisen during the year and play the peacemaker for just one day. Avoid known triggers. If your family has a history of arguing over a certain topic, don't bring it up.

Managing loneliness

There are ways to overcome loneliness if you find yourself isolated or grieving a loved one over the Christmas period.

Connect with friends and family. Even if you're separated by distance, the magic of technology makes it easier to stay in touch with loved ones online or by phone.

Volunteer. Why not lend a hand to a local shelter over Christmas? There are lots of charities who need help. You'll connect with people and feel good about making a positive contribution.

Attend community events. Find out what's on locally and get involved. Whether it's Christmas carols or local markets, getting out and about can help relieve loneliness.

Make plans for Christmas Day. It is a busy time of year, so plan with family or friends in advance to avoid feeling stressed making plans on the day.





Creative Writing Group *Rewriting the stories of our lives.*



We had a great time at the creative writing course . The teachers were Edwina, a writer and yoga teacher, and Karen, a jazz singer and songwriter. They were both really grateful for the assistance of Helen, an ex-teacher. Spelling and grammar was not important. What was important was finding our voice and reclaiming and reframing our stories. Our writing skills improved just by getting lots of practice.

We rediscovered our imaginations and used them to see our pasts and futures from different perspectives. Instead of retelling the same stories that our mind likes to replay in our head, we discovered ways to find different endings to those stories, transform ourselves from victims to survivors, and be the heroes of our lives.

We wrote love letters to ourselves, wrote about what it would be like in the head of someone who'd wronged us, thought about people who'd inspired us, and wrote about them like they were characters in a book. We began to think of ourselves as potential characters in books and started to believe that we could change the way we thought about that character their challenges.

As the famous writer Salman Rushdie once said *"Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, power to retell it, to rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts."* We want to have power and to be heard. Our voices are valuable. Our stories are worth telling. We deserve to be listened to.

So we started to rewrite our lives with ourselves as superheroes, saving the world, stopping wars, bringing peace and harmony to the planet, one child at a time. We even wrote about ourselves as animals. Sherryl decided it would be wonderful to be one of the queen's corgis, cuddled, spoilt and listened to; Bryan was a lion, the king of the jungle; Mel was a green tree frog, her special totem.

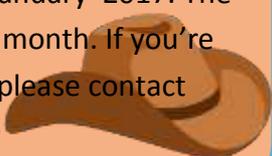
Even though the members of the group had known each other a long time, they discovered new aspects of each other they'd not known before, and supported each other as they shared stories, listening with respect and applauding the courage it took to put those stories onto paper.

We all had a really great time and felt sad that it was over so quickly, just when we were getting started!




The **Gold Coast** group held its last day for the year on Tuesday 13 December. The group will recommence on Tuesday 24 January 2017 – doors will open between 10am-2pm at the Southport Community Centre.

The Gympie group had their last meet up for the year on Monday 12 December. They will recommence on Monday 9 January 2017. The Gympie group meets once a month. If you're interested in attending this, please contact Lotus Place on 07 3347 8500



For further information, please call Lotus Place on 07 3347 8500.



NATIONAL APOLOGY ART ACTIVITY

Sharing time with each other on the Anniversary of the National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants provides an opportunity for friendship and support. People continue to face a range of complex issues including physical and mental illness, homelessness, substance abuse, educational barriers, and family relationship difficulties as a result of their experiences in out-of-home care.

For the National Apology this year there were art

activities held at Stones Corner and the Gold Coast.

During the art activity everyone got to be playful and creative while decorating a jigsaw piece in their own way using collage and pens, along with the empowering words they chose. There was a lot of chatting and laughing as people worked on their piece and shared ideas. The result was amazing, each piece created was unique and when put together linked in with the others to make up a bigger picture of a lotus flower. The final image is being made into placemats.

connection



friendship



Gold Coast Community Drop in Day

enthusiastic



courage

strength



survivor



stability



compassion



respect



Lotus Place Stones Corner



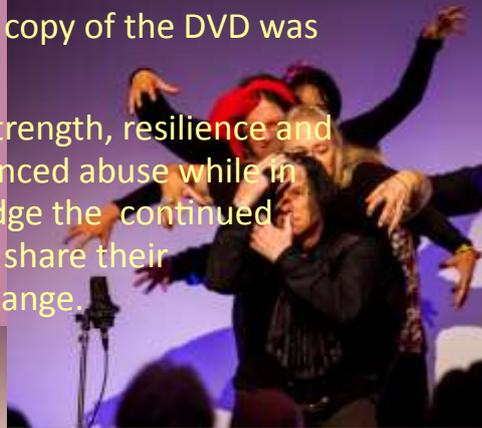
NATIONAL APOLOGY CONCERT

songs of justice

We celebrated this year's National Apology with a community concert. The line up rocked our socks off with the immense talent and heart of the performers showing off their skills in music, vocals, dance, theatre, and poetry. Many of the performers were members of our community.

During the concert we also launched the music video for "Have You Forgotten Me?" (a copy of the DVD was sent out in the post).

Each year we acknowledge the strength, resilience and courage of all those who experienced abuse while in institutional care. We acknowledge the continued advocacy and courage it takes to share their experiences in order to create change.





LOTUS PLACE ACTIVITIES PROGRAM CONSULTATION DAY



Do you want to have input into what group activities are planned for the Lotus community in Brisbane this year? As part of our Annual Program Planning, Lotus Place is holding the Activities Planning Day on Tuesday 7th February. All Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the Brisbane area are invited to come along and contribute ideas.

(The usual peer lunch will not be on that day)

Each year Lotus provides a rich program of activities in the space at Stones Corner. The Activities Program is a valued part of the services Lotus Place provides. Research shows that creative expression and social interaction are vital to mental and physical wellbeing. Having an active and creative life makes it easier to face adversity, and participation in group activities can influence many positive outcomes.

We invite you to **Voice Your Choice** about what you are interested in, and tell us what group activities you would like to participate in this year. This is your chance to help shape the activities program, to have more input into the space, and to be heard.

So come along with your ideas about what you would like to see happening at Lotus Place. What would you like to try or learn? What things do you enjoy? What do you think would be helpful or beneficial?

Please RSVP by 31st January if you are attending.

Empower Arts is a peer run group, Forgotten Australians empowering and supporting Forgotten Australians. The group meets regularly at Lotus Place. If you would like to find out more or be involved **please contact Colleen via Lotus Place.**

Their 2017 calendar is now for sale! See Colleen to purchase your copy for only \$10!



Weekly Activities

**part of the Hive Activities Program*

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p>*Animal Engagement 1.30 – 3.30pm</p> <p>Lotus Place Closed at 3pm</p> | <p>Lotus Place Peer Lunch & Activities</p> <p>*Darts 1.30 – 3.30pm</p> <p>* Community Meal 6pm (Monthly)</p> | <p>*Fishing 9:30am – 3.30pm</p> <p>Lotus Place Closed until 12noon</p> <p>*Culture Club 1.30pm – 3.30pm (Monthly)</p> | <p>*Campbell's Club 9.30am to 11.30am</p> <p>*Swimming 2pm – 3pm</p> | <p>*West End Community House Art Group 9.30am– 11.30am</p> <p>*Music Rehearsal 1.30 – 3.30pm</p> |



Up and Coming Activities & Event

| Day Time Date | Detail |
|--|---|
| Public Holidays | Lotus Place will be closed the Christmas & Boxing Day public holidays on 26th & 27th January. Lotus Place will also be closed for New Years and Australia Day public holidays, January 2nd & 26th. |
| Every Tuesday | Peer get together Luncheon at Lotus Place Catch up and enjoy a meal and get together |
| Starting back late January 2017 | Mindful Movement Session 9.30am to 10.30am This can be beneficial and relaxing, improve wellness for people who struggle with depression, anxiety and / or post-traumatic stress disorder. |
| Starting back late January 2017 | Lotus Art Group meet up 1pm to 3pm Come along to develop your artistic skills or to just play around with the materials – you don't need to be an artist. |
| Tuesday 7 February 2017 | Lotus Place Annual Activities Program Consultation Day Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in Brisbane area are invited to come along and contribute their ideas. Please RSVP by 31 st January . Our usual peer lunch will not be on that day. |



CHRISTMAS FAMILY FUND DAY IN THE PARK



Merry Christmas
from all the Staff
at Lotus Place

