



'A Calm in the Sea of Addiction'



# odyssey NEWS



Gregg with the artwork he painted for Odyssey by the Bay

## Road to recovery - Gregg

**A troubled early life and health problems led Gregg to Odyssey House, where his passion for art - and for life - was reignited as he learnt to cope without drugs and overcome depression.**

I was only four years old when my family made the move from the Blue Mountains in New South Wales to Karratha in Western Australia. It was just my mum and dad, me and my sister so it was difficult moving and leaving all of our extended family; a lot of connections and relationships with our family were lost. When I started primary school in Karratha I was bullied for being the new kid. I was quite a little kid for my age and I would get into trouble for being in fights. Overall though, I had a very normal childhood. Karratha was in the country so I used to love fishing, exploring and riding motorbikes.

When I finished primary school we moved to Perth. I was pretty quiet and I think I was quite naïve when I started high school because we came from the country. I loved subjects such as visual arts, woodwork and metalwork that involved using my hands and being creative; it was something I would again find a passion for at Odyssey House, many years later. I was never into alcohol or drugs at high school; I may have drunk a few times if mum and dad were having a party, but I never did drugs back then. I left high school in Year 10 and took an array of manual jobs such as sheet metalwork and laboring. I loved doing this type of manual work, as I enjoyed working with my hands. The downside was that I

had dermatitis on my hands and the work I was doing was aggravating my dermatitis so severely that my hands would continually crack and bleed and it would be so painful. I got no relief during the day because I was constantly using my hands. I would need to have three to four weeks off from work at a time to try and heal my hands. I was using creams and lotions, but I also started 'self-medicating' with pot [cannabis], to help block out my pain. I was unfortunately then laid off from work. This was very de-motivating and I began to have many self worth issues. I was unemployed and hanging around a crowd from school who were also unemployed. That lifestyle with those people wasn't me. I had good morals, but I used to just lower

them to get friends, and I was constantly searching for friendship. I went through a cycle of finding work, then working for around ten weeks and then having to take time off because of my hands. This was a continuous cycle that made me feel depressed and so I continued to smoke pot. I was jealous of people who could work because I wanted to work so badly but couldn't because of my hands and the pain. This cycle continued for years. I also went through various relationships during my twenties and thirties. I married Annette and we had a daughter. In hindsight I can see we had a very toxic relationship with poor communication, and Annette was very controlling. We were always borrowing money from her parents as they were well off. I was still smoking pot and hanging around the wrong people. When our little girl was three, Annette and I broke up and they moved away. I didn't have any contact with my daughter again until she was 17. After my marriage breakdown and with my continuing work cycle, I was very depressed and still turned to drugs. I moved back with my parents in Perth and reconnected with a girl named Natalie, whom I had grown up with. I thought this was a good opportunity for both of us to settle down together but after Natalie fell pregnant she left and I had no contact from her; I was confused about the situation.

# What is the Odyssey House After Care Program?

After care is crucial to sustained recovery from substance misuse. Just as a hospital patient may require out-patient care to make a full recovery, people who are in recovery from drug and alcohol problems benefit from specialist after care services to maintain the gains made during rehabilitation and make a smooth transition from residential care or other treatment to leading productive lives in the community.

The Odyssey House After Care Program provides non-residential support to people who have undertaken rehabilitation through Odyssey House programs or elsewhere. The program centres on weekly support group meetings that have an educational focus and deal with issues of relapse prevention.

Using a holistic approach, the program assists clients to build recovery-based lifestyles. Topics in the initial eight-week course include relapse prevention skills, relationships, life skills such as managing finances and job-seeking, stress management, communication skills, conflict management and relaxation techniques.

Organised activities include a weekly arts and crafts group, cooking classes, library visits (the program also has its own modest library) and monthly recreational outings. Clients also attend a weekly individual counselling session to discuss their own personal relapse issues in more detail.

A separate "dual diagnosis" after care group is also available to assist the significant proportion of clients with a co-existing mental illness (i.e. in addition to their prior substance misuse disorder). A mental health worker liaises between the After Care Program and various community organisations to provide support services to clients.

The program recognises that slips and relapses can be a part of the recovery experience and aims to assist clients to manage these occurrences and to prevent a return to sustained misuse of alcohol or other drugs.

For further information on relapse prevention please contact After Care on 02 4628 8806.

### Odyssey House guidelines for avoiding/managing relapse

1. Deal with the underlying reasons you became dependent.
2. Identify your triggers and develop strategies to avoid or manage them.
3. Learn and practise skills to manage negative emotional states and deal with life's ups and downs without resorting to old habits.
4. Build or repair networks of supportive loved ones and friends and avoid people likely to be unsupportive or detrimental to your recovery.
5. Be productive such as working in paid employment, volunteering, community activities, studying, caring for family/children.
6. Participate in healthy recreational and leisure activities; avoid isolation.
7. Access community services and seek professional help if necessary, such as counselling, a regular support group or an online self-help service.
8. Recognise and celebrate your milestones and gains.

## Odyssey House Art Fundraiser



Talented artists from all over Australia are donating amazing pieces of artwork to Odyssey House all with the common theme of 'Family', with each artist donating a one-off piece expressing themselves on what family means to them. Each beautiful piece of art will be auctioned off individually online to raise funds for Odyssey, and will also be on display during National Drug Action Week (16-22 June).

The driving force behind the organisation of the Odyssey House Art Project is Queensland artist Tracie Worth, who has been working tirelessly arranging all the artists to be part of this fundraising initiative. Tracie has been able to secure artworks from well known artists such as Wayne Clements, an Archibald Prize winner who has also won the Sir John Sulman Prize and the Dobell Prize for Drawing (Wayne's painting is pictured).

All money raised from the online auction will be donated to the Odyssey House

Parents' and Children's Program. This unique program enables parents who are receiving treatment for drug and alcohol dependence to live with their dependent children in self-contained cottages on the grounds of Odyssey House. The key long-term goal of the program is to break the generational cycle of drug misuse and its attendant behaviours by helping clients overcoming personal issues underlying their drug problems, and developing and nurturing family relationships to help children and parents to realise their full potential.

If you would like to bid on some of the remarkable artwork, please visit [www.aidarena.com](http://www.aidarena.com) and follow the link to Odyssey House.

If you would like further information on the artworks or the Art Project please call 02 8307 8838 or email [jessica@odysseyhouse.com.au](mailto:jessica@odysseyhouse.com.au).

Please donate online  
[www.odysseyhouse.com.au](http://www.odysseyhouse.com.au)

**YES! I would like to help Odyssey House assist residents to live a drug free life.**

Please find enclosed my donation of: (please circle)

**\$50**      **\$100**      **\$500**      or  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my cheque / money order made payable to the Odyssey House McGrath Foundation or charge my credit card.

**Visa**      **Mastercard**      **Amex**      **Diners Club**

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: (Dr/ Mr/ Mrs/ Ms/ Miss): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Facsimile: \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month to be deducted from my Credit Card until revoked in writing by me or Odyssey House.**

DONATIONS OVER \$2.00 ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

For more information on Odyssey House, visit [www.odysseyhouse.com.au](http://www.odysseyhouse.com.au)  
Phone: (02) 9820 9999  
Fax: (02) 9820 1796



Please return this coupon and your donation to:  
**Odyssey House McGrath Foundation,  
PO Box 459, Campbelltown, NSW, 2560.**

### ODYSSEY Recognition

Support that Odyssey House has recently received from the following donors is greatly appreciated.

■ R Albert AO	■ Liangrove Fdn
■ Aust Youth & Health Fdn	■ M O'Connor
■ C Bishop	■ A Page
■ R Brierley	■ R Waters
■ C Jephcott	■ H Waters
■ R Keldoulis	■ E Wills
■ King & Wood Mallesons	

Odyssey House is dedicated to giving people something addictions like drugs, alcohol & gambling never can: a future.

## Cont from Page 1...Road to Recovery - Gregg

In my early 30's I began to spiral more out of control and decided the best option was to leave Perth and head for Sydney to assist a girl I had known since I was very young; I thought she was the love of my life. She ended up becoming pregnant with my child but during this time I wasn't taking my medication and continued to smoke pot. We didn't stay together and she moved away while I continued my downward spiral, feeling more alienated and isolated.

I was still in that cycle of using pot, being around the wrong people and having a lot of bad influences around me, which got me into a lot of trouble with the law. It's difficult to remember this time as events are fuzzy and I had a drug induced psychosis. My actions led me to prison under the Mental Health Act.

I felt so isolated in prison and hated being locked up, but I was well behaved and started taking my medication. I was in the medical section of the maximum security prison and in somewhat of a limbo as I was unable to take the normal pathway to rehabilitation, which I desperately wanted. Thankfully, the tribunal determined that I was able to go to Odyssey House to seek treatment for my drug dependence and mental illness.

Odyssey House was like a breath of fresh air! I really appreciated not being behind bars and was so grateful for the hope that Odyssey had to offer. Odyssey House is like no other place I have been to in its

continued support for dealing with drug and mental health problems - the program assists with improving communication skills, identifying triggers and developing coping strategies. I have learnt so much during my time at Odyssey House including how to cope without drugs in my life; I feel more comfortable with who I am.

I felt part of a community at Odyssey, I connected with other people and addressed the real issues in my life. I started communicating with my children with help from Odyssey's Parents in Contact program. My passion for art was also reignited during art therapy at Odyssey. This was a way to express myself and show my creativity and rediscover something I had enjoyed my whole life. While at Odyssey I even painted an artwork for a major fundraising event - Odyssey by the Bay - with the artwork being auctioned off to raise money for Odyssey House.

As I sat at a café the other day and had a coffee I realised how great life without drugs is: I am free, I can do what I like, I have friends, a house, a computer, a car, I can drive and all the support that I need is at Odyssey.... It's such a great feeling! This never would have happened if I hadn't gone to Odyssey. I can't thank them enough. I have now been clean and sober for four-and-a-half years and couldn't be happier!



### A message from the Chairman



Doug Snedden

The coming federal election will clearly be hard fought. One benefit of the lengthy campaign is to concentrate community attention on issues that are of significant concern. At the last election, increased funding for mental health was identified as a high priority. Both the government and the opposition responded with a commitment for increased funding, and Odyssey House was a beneficiary.

Harm minimisation programs are expedient and are an important part of a comprehensive community program. Withdrawal and long term rehabilitation services like ours provide the best outcomes for individuals dependent on alcohol and other drugs. It is important that drug and alcohol services and adequate funding are seen (and heard) to be a priority in the electorate. It is an important conversation that needs to occur between the community, those in office, and those seeking to be elected.

In the meantime, reviews of funding for drug and alcohol services continue at both federal and state government levels. The expectation is that overall funding will not be reduced, but that it will be allocated to organisations that demonstrate a proven track record and outcomes. The opportunity will exist for non-government organisations to offer services currently provided by government where better value can be demonstrated.

Odyssey House has a track record of providing quality outcomes and we are confident of continued government support; however, we need to continue to diversify our sources of incomes and collaborate with other providers to deliver services. Demand for our services remained strong in 2012 and 2013 promises to be no less challenging. Our fundraising and friend-raising activities continue apace, with upcoming events including our annual Ladies Luncheon in May and our Art Auction, which finishes in June.

While traditional fundraising methods continue to be an important source of income, there are many opportunities for individuals and groups to support Odyssey House through fundraising. Sporting events, feats of endurance and other creative initiatives raise millions of dollars for worthy causes. Remember, Odyssey House's fundraising team can support you to support us.

Doug Snedden  
Chairman



Celebrity Chef, Lyndey Milan



Michelle (Odyssey House) and  
Celebrity Chef, Maggie Beer



Sandy (Odyssey House) and Poh's Kitchen  
Presenter, Poh Ling Yeow



Kate (Odyssey House) and  
Celebrity Chef, Adam Liaw



Oz Harvest CEO, Ronni Kahn



Kate (Odyssey House) and Celebrity Chef,  
Dominique Rizzo

# CEO Cook Off

Odyssey House staff and residents enjoyed an inspirational evening of good food, celebration and competition at the 2nd OzHarvest/Qantas CEO CookOff held in Sydney's Cathedral Square on 11 February. The event raised awareness about homelessness and food insecurity, as well as funds for OzHarvest, The Big Issue and

One80TC and featured 30 top chefs including Neil Perry, Maggie Beer, Pete Evans and Miguel Maestre, along with Australia's corporate elite. Founded through the passion and vision of CEO Ronni Kahn, OzHarvest collects food that would otherwise be discarded and distributes it free-of-charge to organisations such as

Odyssey House. Their support saves us tens of thousands of dollars every year by providing our residents with a variety of high quality food every day. We were honoured to participate in the event and - as the photos show - it was a special experience for all our staff and residents.

## Heart Club 500

Odyssey House has created the new Heart Club 500, an exclusive group limited to 500 individuals or corporations that each year donate:

\$500 (Silver), \$1000 (Gold) or Over \$5000 (Platinum).

Heart Club 500 members help Odyssey House continue its work of saving and improving lives of people dependent on alcohol and other drugs. By providing professional support in a therapeutic community model using evidence-based interventions, Odyssey House's goals are to:

- Support our clients to overcome their dependencies
- Empower them to address the causes of their drug problems
- Assist them to develop a capacity for self-help, and
- Enable them to live within, and contribute to, the community.

In short, Odyssey House is dedicated to giving people something addictions never can: A future.



In addition to knowing your contributions make a tangible difference to many people's lives, being a member of the Heart Club 500 has other benefits:

- All Members of 'Heart Club 500' will have their name engraved on a memorial pathway
- Eligible for an exclusive member thankyou gift
- Invitations to member-only events
- Gold and Platinum members will have access to VIP event tickets.
- Platinum members also have the opportunity to join special activities at our treatment facilities and experience firsthand how their contribution helps.
- All donations are tax deductible

### Join now

To be an exclusive member of this group simply call the Heart Club 500 support team on 02 8307 8838 or email [sandy@odysseyhouse.com.au](mailto:sandy@odysseyhouse.com.au) for further details.

## Odyssey House Ladies Luncheon



Guest speaker, Belinda Hutchinson

The annual Odyssey House Ladies Luncheon is an opportunity for women to network, discuss issues and ultimately inspire and learn from each other's life stories and journeys, while supporting our cause.

This year's luncheon will be held at the popular Sydney venue The Ivy on Thursday 23 May. It will bring together more than 150 women in business to hear special guest speaker Belinda Hutchinson, one of Australia's most sought-after female directors.

Ms Hutchinson has made a significant impact on the corporate world as the chair of QBE Insurance Group, and her extensive experience serving on boards ranging from Telstra to Coles Myer and Energy Australia has her rated as one of Australia's top 25 most powerful bosses.

The Odyssey Ladies Luncheon aims to raise critical funds for the Parents' & Children's Program at Odyssey House. Although the Parents' and Children's Program accepts men and women (singles and couples), most

clients are young women who often enter Odyssey House for the sake of their families as well as themselves. Most Odyssey House clients started misusing alcohol or other drugs as young teenagers and more than half experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse in childhood. For many, their own experience of being parented has not prepared them to be effective parents themselves, and the hardest part of recovery may be facing up to the effects drug or alcohol use has had on their children. In the safe, caring environment of Odyssey House they not only overcome their drug dependence, but also learn essential parenting skills that enable them to be a better parent and foster their children's educational, emotional and physical development and their wellbeing in the long term.

This exciting event has many sponsorship opportunities for companies and individuals. If you would like to purchase tickets or find out more about this event, please call 8307 8838.

### A message from the Chief Executive Officer



James A. Pitts

The beginning of each new year brings with it the promise of challenges, achievements and success. These are intertwined, of course, with the normal ups and downs of delivering services to a challenging and complex client group. A significant and increasing 'down' we have noted over the years is the deteriorating health profile of clients entering Odyssey House.

We now see a greater degree of mental health problems co-occurring with dependence on licit and illicit drugs. In our 2012 annual report we noted this had increased by 33 per cent over 12 months, with 56 per cent of Odyssey House clients now diagnosed with conditions such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, personality disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder. This compares with 42 per cent in 2011 and 10 per cent in 1999. Effectively assisting these clients will be one of our biggest challenges this year.

We achieved much in 2012 and look forward to continuing in that vein. We maintained our accreditation status after an interim review by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards in August. We secured continued funding from the federal Department of Health and Ageing for our Withdrawal Unit; our Parents' and Children's Program; and our JANUS Program (co-occurring disorders) for a further 3 years. Odyssey House has also been a consistent commentator in all media platforms on alcohol and other drug issues, including on a semi-regular basis on Channel 7's 'Sunrise' and 'Morning' programs.

We hope to complete renovations to our main treatment facility at Eagle Vale to establish a Medical General Practice Clinic, enabling us to provide enhanced medical services to clients. Our second major capital project is the construction of a new Medically Assisted Withdrawal Unit on the grounds of our Assessment and Referral Centre; we have sought funding support from the federal government's Regional Australia Fund.

It's a new year with new challenges and renewed energy on our part. As always, 'The harder we work, the luckier we get!'

James A Pitts, MA  
Chief Executive Officer