

*The Schizophrenia Fellowship of  
Queensland Inc.*

**2004 –2005  
ANNUAL REPORT**

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*The Schizophrenia Fellowship of South  
Queensland Inc.*

**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

President	Gavin Bird
Vice-President	Meta Ransome
Treasurer	David Poon
Secretary	Ken Meissner
Members	Michael Artlett Adrian Bowler Peter Gate Judy Leary Gayle Mann Peter Vidgen

**BRANCHES & SUB COMMITTEES**

Gold Coast Branch  
Federation Clubhouse  
Harmony Support Service  
Tekapo Accommodation Service  
Gold Coast Family Network  
Northside Branch  
Darling Downs and South Western Region  
Camp and Recreation  
Outer South Support Group  
Research

## *The Schizophrenia Fellowship of South Queensland Inc.*

### **OBJECTS**

The Fellowship is established to benefit those with schizophrenia and other serious mental illness and those who care for them, through the promotion, support and raising of funds for the following objects:-

- a) Spread a greater understanding of the special problems arising.
- b) Offer support, education and social opportunity.
- c) Actively promote the improvement of community care facilities of all kinds, including accommodation.
- d) Encourage research into causes and treatment.
- e) Promote their welfare through co-ordination of the efforts of volunteers and professionals.
- f) Seek the co-operation of employers willing to provide a chance of employment.
- g) Safeguard their civil and legal rights.
- h) Advocate for their needs and rights to all levels of Government and in the community.
- i) Facilitate the achievement of comprehensive and accessible systems of ongoing care and
- j) Encourage, support and implement activities aimed at rehabilitation.

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

Diplomacy and past practice suggest that Annual Reports should focus on achievements and beckoning goals. The AGM is traditionally an occasion for the President to thank all members for their loyal support throughout the past year, and to present a united front to the broader community and to funding agencies.

However, I would be less than honest if I glossed over tensions that exist within our ranks. For the past eighteen months, your Board has been working towards constitutional evolution to accommodate differences of focus among our members. The Fellowship began as a collective of carers and consumers who confronted prevailing stigma. Most core members wish to preserve the uniqueness of the Fellowship. They see a primary role of the Fellowship as mutual support, education, unfettered advocacy, and the expression of the perspective of those who have walked the floor at 2 am.

Over many years, the Fellowship has attracted others who want to contribute. We welcome their involvement. Some of these individuals perceive the role of the Fellowship to be primarily a funded provider of government services. Each group supports the whole breadth of Fellowship initiatives, but naturally the emphasis differs.

Other organizations such as Drug Arm have experienced similar evolutions. We have contemplated copying the initiative of a service delivery arm like Interlock to support branch initiatives.

As an alternative, some members propose a break-up of the organisation, in a manner that is against the wishes of the majority of our members. Normally, we would resolve these matters internally as we have dealt with other tensions throughout our history. However, on this occasion the proposal has been floated in the public domain with funding agencies and with others.

Such circumstances do not occur unless there is frustration and hurt and mistrust. My experience is that unless these feelings are acknowledged and addressed, they deteriorate into personal animosities. All our members joined with goodwill to make a difference in a field that is sadly neglected. There is so much to be done. Indeed, it would be surprising if there were not arguments about what should be

the priority and how that priority should be pursued.

I appeal to all members to exercise restraint and goodwill as we work through the issues that confront us. I am confident that if there is goodwill, the collective wisdom of our members will guide us through to a more effective future.

That future continues to hold all the hopes and visions of the founders of our organisation.

You will recall that last year we discussed our determination to replicate the success of our Gold Coast Branch. We welcomed representatives of Brisbane North Branch to their first AGM, and hosted visitors from Toowoomba who were contemplating a Darling Downs and South West Queensland Branch. Tonight we welcome representatives from that branch to their first AGM.

Last week we received written application from Rockhampton for the formation of a Central Queensland branch. Meanwhile, a determined core of members is gathering on the Sunshine Coast to explore the possibility of a branch there.

In May, we hosted a seminar for the training of twelve presenters for the Nationally accredited *Well Ways* program. These individuals came from Gold Coast, Darling Downs, Central Queensland, North Queensland and metropolitan environs. *Well Ways* remains the focus of our initiative to bring earlier education and support to people who are confronting mental disease for the first time.

Our Camp and Recreation program continues to attract national attention. Schizophrenia Awareness Week remains the focus for the artistic endeavours of more than three hundred of our members from the Tweed to Bundaberg. Our research initiatives break new ground, and our social club remains a saviour for scores of individuals who are not yet ready to benefit from the structure of Stepping Stone.

Your Board continues to diligently pursue the relocation of our premises from the existing constrained location that has served us so well, to more extensive facilities that will allow us to extend our services. As I write this a fortnight before our meeting, we remain hopeful that we can share something of those plans with you tonight.

Thank you for the honour of leading the Fellowship this past year. I count my blessings with wonderment and gratitude. Among those blessings, apart from my family, the greatest blessing has been the opportunity afforded by the Fellowship to confront the ogre of mental disease. That ogre has dogged my life, just as it has so many of you. May you take pride in our achievements, and comfort that you have done what you can to make a difference.

Sincerely,

Gavin J. Bird AM  
PRESIDENT

## **RESEARCH REPORT - 2005**

Fellowship members remain committed to research at a number of levels. At a primary level, we are committed to information and education about current understandings. This commitment is exemplified in the regular research features of our newsletters where complex notions are conveyed in simple terms that the general public can understand. During the past year we were also privileged to host presentations by Professor McGrath at Southport and at the Brisbane Institute.

In his presentations, Professor McGrath challenged the conventional notion that mental disease occurs with regular incidence throughout the World. He highlighted several variables including season of birth, urban / rural incidence, and male / female variation. However, the matter of most interest to many of our members was that he shifted camp on the contentious issue of marihuana, and declared it not only an antagonist for those suffering mental disease, but also an environmental precipitant to disease.

At a secondary level, the Sunflower Foundation is the engine that drives our research initiatives. It is like a magic pudding. Each time we take out a slice, it replenishes itself. Thank you to those generous donors who contribute. Your trust in us confirms our belief that our members, like us, believe that better understanding is essential if we are to change the reality that we encounter.

It is a privilege to act as custodians of the funds contributed by our members. We are proud to confirm that one hundred cents out of every dollar that the Foundation receives is passed directly to researchers. We regard it as our privilege to provide the where-with-all to direct those seed funds towards selected initiatives that do not meet the criteria for established government grants.

In February, Dr. Trish Nolan presented the results of a special study we commissioned from the University of Queensland. The study analysed the equity and accountability of Disability Services Queensland Funding. The findings were diverse but powerful. The study used various indices of the incidence of disease and the burden of disease. It illustrates that on a comparative basis, some disability groups receive up to 100 times the funding of other groups with comparable needs. Moreover, it confirms that of all the disability groups, the psychiatrically disabled are the most disadvantaged. This study will be of enormous help as we work to counteract the historical neglect that has been the lot of those who deal with mental disease.

This year the "Dr and Mrs F. Zaccari Research Scholarship" was awarded to Amanda Jones for a study entitled "Autoimmunity in Schizophrenia". This prestigious award extends research into immune abnormalities in people with schizophrenia including the presence of antibodies directed against neurotransmitter receptors. We thank the Zaccaris for their commitment to the cause of schizophrenia, and for their continuing generosity.

In terms of schizophrenia research, we live in exciting times and in an exciting locality. Please continue with us to dream your dreams and to dare to believe.

The Sunflower Foundation.

## **SOCIAL CLUB**

The Schizophrenia Fellowship Social Club enjoyed another successful year. Patronage remained steady and there were some new members.

The tradition of the day-to-day supervision of the Social Club by some

of its members acting as convenors is continuing. The convenors act as facilitators for the other members and their efforts are appreciated. One of the highlights of the Schizophrenia Fellowship Social Club last year was the monthly sausage sizzle held during summer. The Bar-B-Quees were held on a Thursday or a Saturday night at the beginning of each month. They were well attended and there were many helping hands to ensure their success.

Also popular were the two pool competitions held during the year. The first was the annual Roy Alvaro Pool Tournament held in August 2004. This was a singles competition, which was won by William Schofield. The tournament is being run in September in 2005 to avoid clashing with the RNA exhibition.

The inaugural Schizophrenia Fellowship of Queensland Doubles competition was held in March of this year. It was won by Martin Falcongreen and Stephen Symes. It is planned to make this an annual event.

The Social Club has its premises at 95 Arthur Street, Fortitude Valley and it is open from 10 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday and 4 pm to 8 pm on Thursday and Saturday nights. Tea, coffee and cordial are free to financial members.

Ted Crouch

## **CAMP & RECREATION COMMITTEE**

Five getaways have been successfully organised by the committee this year. These included:

- a trip to Coolumb, where participants went on the ropes courses and flying fox, tried their hand at Barramundi fishing and canoeing and finished with a turn at go-karting.
- the low impact breakaway to Tallebudgera, with people having time to stroll on the beach, go to the cinema or ten pin bowling and a tour on the Aquabus

- a four day art weekend, facilitated by Karleen, Linda and Leo, in the Nuringbah Valley. Some wonderful artwork was created, with participants having a wide variety of activities to enjoy, including creating a visual journal for the weekend, pottery, landscape drawing, papermaking and environmental installations. There was also time for bush walks and swimming.
- a smaller group of men went to Boonah and 'roughed it'. These men slept underneath the stars or in the cow shed, paddled in canoes on a dam, climbed a huge tree and even enjoyed a 'magic carpet ride'.
- Hervey Bay getaway – due to unfortunate weather this groups outing on a glass bottom boat had to be cancelled but there were trips to the cinema, ten pin bowling, fishing and water sports including a big banana ride.

Thank you to all the volunteer staff and committee members who through their hard work and commitment have allowed these breakaways to be held.

## **SCHIZOPHRENIA AWARENESS WEEK**

***'Beautiful & wonderful & sad & very very good'***

This is one of the comments from this year's Annual Schizophrenia Awareness Week Art Exhibition. There were over 9000 visitors to the exhibition throughout the week, which was once again held in King George Square.

Lady Mayoress, Lisa Newman, opened this wonderful event at a cocktail party. *The Ecclectics* entertained the many guests as they wandered through the marquee, looking at over 400 pieces of artwork.

Sincere thanks go to all the volunteers who helped to make this exhibition another success, especially those who struggled through severe storms including the hailstorm while we were taking the exhibition down.

## **CARER RETREATS**

In March, a group of carers were the guests of the Fellowship and Coolibah Family Support Service for a weekend at Sunrise Beach, on the Sunshine Coast.

It was a really wonderful weekend filled with dinner out at a nearby restaurant, pampering massages, relaxing by the pool, an afternoon nap and a game of golf for one carer.

Some comments from the carers:

'Yeh. Bring on the retreats. I said I would give it a go and if I didn't like it I would leave in one day. Well you know what happened, I didn't want to leave. I'd never been that pampered before in my life and I loved it.'

'We were able to have our own space but yet there was someone to talk to if we wanted and that person or persons had understanding of our problems.'

'So nice to have quality time together and the company of others who share and understand the losses experienced by mental illness.'

Thank you to the staff at Coolibah who worked so hard to make these retreats happen.

As this was the last of the existing funding we are unable to plan more retreats at present but hope that they can continue in the future.

## **RNA CLOAKROOM PROJECT**

This is a labour intensive project – allowing around 80 members with a mental illness and 28 or so carers and corporate volunteers an opportunity to serve the 'EKKA-going public' in a mighty way.

Volunteering in the Cloakroom is the highlight of the year for many, many people including myself.

Where else can you take leave from your regular employment – put in

meetings., where Darling Downs Branch activities are presented.

Geoff, Johanna and Michael Burge were invited to attend a workshop at the PA Hospital recently to help develop an internet web site for Carers of the mentally ill. The day was interesting with the group of 21 outlining a carer definition and the initiation of priorities for important information to be placed on the web page for carer access.

The Darling Downs Branch has made a number of contacts with other groups with a view to form partnerships, in particular ARAFMI, Toowoomba Club House, The Shed Group, Toowoomba District Mental Health Service – SAFE Program/ Carer and Consumer Reference Group, Toowoomba Drug and Alcohol Support Group, CAG, Community Care Link Centre and Carers Queensland.

We look forward to seeing the branch progress to being financially viable and sustainable in the near future.

Challenges for the future include; bridging the gap between carer/ consumer and treating and allied health specialist relationships, voice to get appropriate services/ resources where it is needed in the community, establishing a place that Schizophrenia Fellowship Darling Downs can call home, a Help/Administration Resource Centre for the Darling Downs South Western Region and appropriate long term accommodation for members and temporary accommodation for member carers, from within the region, whilst in Toowoomba.

Thanks go to all those who take the time to be involved and attend in the branch activities, without them the branch would have no support or future.

Geoff Brabrook & Jeanette Marsh  
Chair Co-chair

long hours and work harder yet have your life so enriched.

To witness the joy and camaraderie is an unforgettable experience.

To volunteer at the EKKA cloakroom has been described by many as 'a time away from their mental illness; a time of equal opportunity; a time when each volunteer has a chance to do something meaningful (a bit of hard yakka at times); a time when the focus is on what a person can do to the best of their own ability (some people surprise even themselves at what they are capable of); a time to re-connect with old friendships and make some new ones; a time when self-esteem rises 10 fold'.

Handshakes and hugs and friendly conversations and plenty of laughter is commonplace in this busy environment. 2004 saw a record sale of striped bags – 2500. We stored a lesser number of articles yet the fundraising result was greater.

Judy Leary  
Co-ordinator

## **OUTER SOUTH SUPPORT GROUP**

The outer South Group has had a challenging year. We have moved to the Sunnybank Community Hall in Lister Street Sunnybank. Our group is now meeting on the third Saturday in each month at 2.00 pm. New members are always welcome.

This year we were successful in obtaining funding, through a submission to Disability Services Queensland, to host three 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?' These dinners are to assist in raising the awareness of schizophrenia. The first dinner was held in April followed by one in July with the third being in October during Mental Health Week.

Dr John Davies was the guest speaker at the first dinner. This dinner was enjoyable and most of all we hoped we have helped to educate others about this illness. Consumers from Stepping Stone Clubhouse provided the preparation, service for food & drinks as well

as cleaning up after the dinner. They can be thanked for an excellent effort.

Our aim for the forthcoming year is to raise some funds to be able to create lifestyle packages for consumers. These packages will consist of food parcels or personal items for everyday use etc. Planning is still under way and any donations are welcome.

I would like to thank my group for their friendship and support over the past year. A special thank you also to Northside Branch and others for attending the dinner.

Gayle Mann

## **GOLD COAST BRANCH**

### *PRESIDENT'S REPORT*

We have come to the end of the first year in which I have been fortuitous enough to have been the President of the Gold Coast Branch of the Schizophrenia Fellowship of Queensland. I believe I have survived this year with the help of two factors.

Firstly, there has been the other members of the Gold Coast management committee. They are essentially a diverse group of people, some of whom have had no previous connection with mental health. Despite this, they have embraced the challenge and questioned all of our issues in a manner which can only be good for the ongoing quest of improving the services for the people on the Gold Coast who have a serious mental illness and their carers.

Secondly, there is the administrative staff of the Branch. We are blessed with these people who go well beyond their job descriptions in their day-to-day work. This is not to belittle in any way the performance of the staff of the services, whom I believe our consumers would attest to them going the extra yards. It would seem the entire staff take the job very personally & maintain a level of enthusiasm I find difficult to comprehend.

All this has meant that the Branch has run very smoothly over the past year. We have continued to streamline and hopefully improve the existing services and activities for which we are very proud. I guess our major

Fellowship were considered as one of the main priorities for the new branch over the next six months.

In February 2005 another General Meeting was held to commence the direction of formalisation of the branch. The Branch was named the 'Schizophrenia Fellowship of Queensland, Darling Downs and South Western Region Branch'.

Since forming this branch we have continued to hold meetings on a monthly basis. These meetings were changed to become get togethers. Notices were put in the Community Billboard section of the local paper a week prior to the event. The meeting attendees have gradually grown over the period. Get togethers have provided light refreshments and opportunities for guest speakers and general support for both Carers and Consumers.

The branch has developed flyers with group get together diaries/meeting times and contact details. Also display material has been developed to be used at recent displays in Grand Central Shopping Centre and Toowoomba City Council Library. Darling Downs Branch has been involved in Schizophrenia Awareness Week with a display on Friday 20 May 2005 in Grand Central Shopping Centre. Myers provided a display TV for showing the video of the Beautiful Mind with Russell Crowe. This display was in partnership with Toowoomba Club House, ARAFMI and Toowoomba District Mental Health Services.

Recently a SF Darling Downs and ARAFMI placed a display in the Toowoomba Library. Free Schizophrenia Fellowship material was left on display for interested persons to take. The display was successful with many items being taken.

Geoff has represented Schizophrenia Fellowship at the DSQ forums, Queensland Health Review Forum, and a meeting with the Director of Toowoomba District Mental Health Services. Outcome from the last item --was for a regular meeting with the Non-Government Organisations to better meet the needs of the consumer/ carer.

Johanna Brabrook attends quarterly Toowoomba District Mental Health Services Consumer and Carer reference Group

detailed architectural plans outlining our proposal.

I wish to thank all members of the North Side Branch and everyone who has been involved with the North Side Branch for their support and companionship throughout this year.

Michael Artlett  
President

## **DARLING DOWNS AND SOUTH WESTERN REGION BRANCH**

Since the second meeting on the 14 July 2004 the Schizophrenia Fellowship Qld, Darling Downs and South Western Region has achieve many milestones. This briefing paper will outline some of those activities and achievements.

Michael Burge has been instrumental in organising meetings to gain interest in forming a Darling Downs group. His achievements were realised with having Gavin Bird attend and deliver a message about the history and future direction of the Schizophrenia Fellowship at a meeting attended by 34 interested people on the evening 14 July 2004. This over whelming support gave rise to planning for future meetings.

Geoff and Johanna Brabrook members of the Darling Downs Branch were invited as observers to a future direction workshop in Brisbane.

A public meeting was called for the 1 December 2004 to further the formalisation of the fellowship into an active branch of the fellowship. 32 with 9 apologies attended this public meeting. Gavin Bird and Wayne Clarke (SF Brisbane) attended as Guest Speakers for the event. Geoff Brabrook was elected as Chair and Jeanette Marsh as co-chair. Geoff gave an outline of how he saw the structure for the formation of the Darling Downs South Western Branch and its primary focus. Geoff's view was to have sufficient management committee members to duplicate the chair and main office bearers to ensure the future of the branch. Partnerships with other community groups that could benefit from/ or be of benefit to the Schizophrenia

new project is the "Sense of Self" group which will be an ongoing activity of considerable help to our consumers and members. The remainder of our existing and proposed services and activities were outlined in the last newsletter. We would very much welcome any input that anyone may have on these issues.

As we are all aware there are huge problems in the management of mental health on the Gold Coast. However this is not a unique problem. I attended a conference last week where it became quite obvious that the big dollars in every state were spent in the capital cities and really only in the big powerful institutions within these cities. The remainder of the country is in the same perilous state as the Gold Coast. Mental Health seems to be always the poor cousin in a health system which is grossly under-funded. We are however, at a time when government is under considerable pressure. In Queensland the current government may well fall under the health sword and the recent by-elections are testament to this.

Senator Allison is heading an enquiry into mental health on a Federal front in which we should all become involved. So with Mental Health as a hot political potato, we as a group should not ignore any chance to turn this into an opportunity to pursue improvements in mental health.

Hopefully we can expect some continuing gains but probably not without agitation.

Dr Peter Vidgen  
President, Gold Coast

## **AREA MANAGER'S REPORT**

On reflection of this report I note how much we have grown over the past 12 months and how successful we have been as a recipient of various grants.

Growth is an important factor, not for the sake of being in a position to say that we've grown but more from the perspective that we are doing more than ever before. This means that we have undertaken to respond to the needs of the Gold Coast community in offering

more of the services and activities they have been highlighted as a priority.

Growth in our sector can be difficult with the ever present struggle for funding, however I see this as a challenge for us to be extremely innovative, and this is only possible when we have a management committee and staff who are willing to think outside the square. I am extremely proud to be working with a committee and staff who in the past year, have demonstrated a willingness to embrace diversity and implement new approaches in operations. We have worked well as a team, having contributed to the services to the very best of our ability and can take pride in what we have achieved during the past year.

The growth that I refer to is the two new additional services, the **Sense of Self Program** and the **Break-Away Project**. As well as these new services our Consumers and Carer activities have increased by 300% over the past 12 months.

Our successful application for Innovative Funding has provided us with the opportunity to offer the **Sense of Self Program**. This program was developed and offered by our Harmony Support Service in the late 1990's. It ran successfully for 2 years, however it ceased due to lack of available funding. The purpose of the 'Sense of Self' Program is to encourage and empower participants to rediscover who they are whilst developing a strong sense of self. One of the greatest challenges for people diagnosed with a mental illness and their carers, can be their loss of identity. That is, the person they were prior to the diagnosis. The program aims to rekindle their interests, dreams and aspirations by combining attitude and support in building relationships. People will be able to recapture their dreams and regain a valued social role in the community. It will also aim to maximise the quality of life for both consumers and carers and will provide an avenue for consumers to normalize their lives which will also benefit the carer.

Late in 2004 we applied through AUSEINET to commence a project called **Break-Away** which was an initiative of a group of young people whose parent has a mental illness. We were successful in securing 6 months of funding and thus the project was born. As the end of the funding became imminent, we applied for another 2 years

## NORTHSIDE BRANCH

It has been a positive year for the North Side Branch of Schizophrenia Fellowship of Queensland Inc. The focus of our branch this year has largely been on fellowship and education.

Our major project for this year was started from a proposal put forward by Dawn Joyce, a card project featuring the artwork of people with a serious mental illness. Three artists each contributed two pieces of artwork to be copied and reproduced on blank cards. Card packs were produced with twelve cards and envelopes featuring six individual artworks with an acknowledgement for each artist. Over half of the cards printed have been sold and the costs of printing recovered.

Neil Barringham from a "A Place To Belong" and Duncan McLean from the Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research were guest speakers this year. In addition to our guest speakers other guests have also attended our meetings: Mathew Hocking Registrar Royal Brisbane Hospital; Di Muirhead Care Coordinator Mental Health Service Prince Charles Hospital; Geoff Brabrook Toowoomba; Neil Roberts MP State Member for Nudgee; and Karleen Gwinner Artist in Residence Nundah House.

Our first social event for the year was our Christmas party held at John & Sally Halse's place at Mt Glorious. Dawn Pearce proposed that after the successful Christmas Party further social events should be held. Dawn then offered her place as the first venue. We had a very successful barbeque at Dawn's place in March; this was then followed by a barbeque at Nudgee Beach in May; and our most recent event was a barbeque held at Bullocky's Rest on the edge of the North Pine Dam.

Long term housing for people with a serious mental illness has been a major focus of our group for the year. Members have attended meetings with the Brisbane Housing Company and the following members of parliament both state and federal: Wayne Swan federal member for Lilley; and state members Neil Roberts, member for Nudgee, Rob Schwarten Minister for Public Works Housing and Racing, Gordon Nuttall former Minister for Health. Vicki Musgrave has made a significant contribution to this project providing us with

**SCHIZOPHRENIA AWARENESS WEEK MAY 2005** was celebrated with the annual **Community Breakfast** at the Southport Yacht Club. Over 130 guests enjoyed a delicious breakfast whilst listening to Professor John McGrath who shared with the group, the latest findings in the research of Schizophrenia. Professor McGrath is the Director of two research streams - Epidemiology, Developmental Neurobiology at the Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research. As a renowned international speaker the guests were spellbound by his knowledge and charm throughout the presentation. The Breakfast also gave the Fellowship the opportunity to introduce its services to the community and it was a truly inspiring morning. During Awareness Week, Information Display Boards and brochures were placed in Municipal Libraries throughout the Gold Coast.

**GOLD COAST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** members have worked hard to facilitate improvements and provide future direction for the Gold Coast Branch. As volunteers, their continuing dedication is gratefully acknowledged and sincerely appreciated. This year our President, Dr Peter Vidgen who is well known for his work in mental health has been a pillar of strength for the Branch, demonstrated by his wisdom and common sense approach to growth and improvement whilst utilising open communication and an optimistic outlook toward the future of the Gold Coast Services. The Management Committee has my utmost respect for their unremitting efforts to meet the needs of current and prospective service users. They are a group of professional and perceptive individuals who manage to work together in a collaborative and fundamentally unified manner. It is and will continue to be a pleasure to work with them.

**THE GOLD COAST EMPLOYEES** are a highly skilled, dedicated and self disciplined team of people who manage to "just do it". This may sound cliché, however during the course of my working life I have managed to work with many people who just "don't do it". Therefore, I commend and acknowledge their individual expertise and professionalism. I thank them for the stability they have brought to the people we serve.

Warm Regards

Carol Birrell  
Area Manager, Gold Coast

of funding through The Foundation for Young Australians and were successful. Whilst some teenagers are able to cope with the challenges of living with a parent with mental illness, other young people may feel isolated and emotionally vulnerable. In response to these needs, the group of young people decided to develop a peer support program, **Break-Away**. The program operates on a strength based approach and aims to provide opportunities for young people to:

- Take timeout from their caring role
- Build supportive friendships
- Develop their strengths and leadership skills
- Promote a positive self-image and wellness
- Share their knowledge, experiences and coping strategies with their peers.

Both Break-Away and Sense of Self are run in partnership with the staff of the Integrated Mental Health Service.

Also in late 2004 we had the privilege to present a paper at the **THEMHS Conference** held at the Convention Centre on the Gold Coast. The paper was presented by myself and Bronwen Mullett and was titled **Harvesting the Hope – Developing the Link between Mental Wellbeing, Employment and Training**. We demonstrated that meaningful employment and training is shown to be a critical factor in clinical improvement, improved social functioning and reduction of symptoms for people living with a mental illness. The presentation was based on the Community Jobs Plan Project that we had offered during 2004 with the fundamental principle of the program being that the participants would discover their unique strengths, talents and abilities and harvest hope for their future.

**THE INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE** has responded to member, client and community needs with the growth in resources provided through our office in Olive Street. During the past year our Intake Officer has received in excess of 5,000 enquiries either in person or by phone, offering mental health information, referrals to our service and other mental health organisation's throughout the Gold Coast.

**HARMONY SUPPORT SERVICE** currently has eleven Support

Workers who provide lifestyle support to people who are living independently within the community. Harmony aims to increase the independence and quality of life of its clients through individualised support and working collaboratively with clients to establish achievable goals. Joint funding from Queensland Health and Disability Services Queensland enables Harmony to currently support fifty-nine clients. Harmony Support Service works closely with Gold Coast Integrated Mental Health Services to enable a holistic approach for client support. Although a number of Harmony clients have successfully exited the service during the past year, many continue to be actively involved in the Fellowship's social and group activities.

**TEKAPO ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT SERVICE** provides supported accommodation for people with a mental illness. The Gold Coast Community Housing Association Inc. through the Community Rent Scheme provides housing for the Tekapo Service which currently accommodates 13 residents. Individualised lifestyle support is provided for residents to assist with their daily living skills development. Tekapo provides a sense of community within the community, which encourages the formation of friendships within the service. The ultimate goal is for residents to be able to move into the independent accommodation of their choice in the community. During the past year a number of residents who have formed friendships have moved out into shared accommodation together which is one of the regular progressions when leaving Tekapo. Residents leaving Tekapo also have access to continuing lifestyle support through the Harmony Support Service if required and the opportunity to participate in other activities offered by the Branch.

**THE FEDERATION CLUBHOUSE** celebrated its 3rd Birthday in March this year – a wonderful achievement for the Fellowship on the Gold Coast. The Clubhouse currently has over 225 members and conducts fortnightly tours for potential members. The Clubhouse supports an Employment Program which offers transitional employment with local businesses. Future plans for the Clubhouse include the completion of stage two of the building by enclosing the downstairs area. We have established a private garden setting during the past 12 months and gratefully appreciate Bunnings, Harbourside for their donation of a Gazebo and the paint for the fence. The average daily attendance at the Clubhouse is

approximately 30 members.

**CARER SERVICES** provided by the Fellowship have continued throughout the past year with the generous assistance of our Volunteers who are themselves carers. Bill and Jan Reid have continued to facilitate the Eianora Carer Support Group meetings every month as well as organising social Evening Teas for carers and families. Kay Buchanan and Mercedes La Mond have facilitated the Southport Carer Support Group. Both groups have maintained a steady attendance as well as welcoming a considerable number of new families. The Fellowship offers its heartfelt thanks to Bill, Jan, Kay and Mercedes for their continued dedication and effort. We also extend our appreciation to all those other carers who have helped out in any capacity throughout the year. The Fellowship has also hosted two Carer Workshops in conjunction with ARAFMI Queensland Inc. Both were well attended and covered topics including Coping Skills for Carers and Advocacy for Carers. During the past year the Fellowship has continued to foster and develop partnerships with other carer organisations including The Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre, ARAFMI Queensland Inc and The Carer Resource Centre in order to assist carers to access the widest possible range of services. We particularly thank the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre for providing the funding for us to offer three very successful carer respite outings during the past year.

#### **CARER AND CONSUMER ACTIVITIES**

In addition to the services, the Gold Coast offers on average more than 20 consumer and/or carer activities every month. These activities are prioritised in accordance with the needs identified by members, clients and the community.

During **MENTAL HEALTH WEEK in OCTOBER 2004** the annual **Vigil of Light** was offered as a Sunday service through St Peters Anglican Church, Southport and was well attended by individuals and families remembering those lost to suicide and mental illness. Also as part of Mental Health Week, the Fellowship held our annual **Hare and Tortoise Fun Day** at Broadbeach, which was supported by over 160 people. More than 35 participants came from Brisbane to join in the fun filled festivities. This event is run in partnership with PCYC and the 2005 event is currently being planned.