



JOHN GHERARDI



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

2005 has been a strong year for the organisation with continued professional development opportunities for staff, review of internal operational procedures and guidelines, and strategic foci for the future mapped out.

Work has begun on three frameworks which will underpin and enhance all services across the organisation: Spirituality, Indigenous Engagement and Evaluation.

The organisation's financial performance has again been positive with a strong surplus contributing to the Company's ongoing financial strength and viability. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the contribution to this from the organisation's sole Op. Shop in Mt Hawthorn under the leadership of its nonagenarian manager Mrs Edna Stewart. The shop volunteers have excelled as they transform the generous donations of second hand goods from the public into a steady stream of income for the organisation and its works.

Ruah continues to support staff in their involvement at systemic levels beyond the immediate and direct interest of its services as a contribution to the development of social policy. Of notable significance this year has been the appointment of Executive Manager Sheryl Carmody to the Mental Health Advisory Committee advising Minister Neale Fong in the implementation of the Government's mental health strategy.

Under the leadership of Anna Paris, the performance of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee stepped up a notch with the elected representatives undertaking accredited training during the year and mapping out a plan for safety audits of all sites.

There has also been movement at the board level with the new appointments of Heather D'Antoine and Carole Jones DC as directors. The board continues to exercise its seat of authority in the organisation and critical discernment on matters of strategic significance in current operations and future possibilities.

The year was culminated with a celebratory dinner, symbolically on the 30th June, for all staff and directors. The occasion was one of celebration to honour the consistent and persistent effort of staff who have unquestionably held a strong sense of purpose and focus in their role.

There is an incredibly fertile soil within Ruah, its people and its culture. This ought to make its mission of redressing disadvantage and enhancing the human spirit possible in the lives of clients whose indomitable spirit is a great gift in the work.



OUR COVER

This year's cover symbolically maps out four cornerstones of this year's endeavours across the organisation. The key elements of *tradition, professionalism, innovation and commitment* capture the essence of what the year has been about, how the organisation does its business and the fundamental focus on better outcomes for the people we work with.

RUAH MOVES INTO EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

In 2005/06 Ruah will extend its range of programs into providing employment support for people living with mental illness. The agency, to be known as Ruah Workright, will become part of the mental health division of the organisation and complement the existing suite of psychosocial, rehabilitation and recovery approaches with a program that supports people find and maintain employment.

WORKRIGHT **RIGHTS** **RIGHTS** **RUAH WORKRIGHT**
WA Incorporated



During early 2005 Ruah was approached by Workright (WA) Inc. to consider a handover of its operations. Workright was a not-for-profit community based organisation established in 1992 specifically with the aim of providing job search and post-employment support in competitive open market employment for people living with mental illness. It was the sole specialist provider in the field at the time as now Ruah Workright will be.

Workright was a high performing disability open employment service provider. Its job placement rate exceeded the national average by several percentage points.

In May 2005, following the due diligence process, the Board of Directors of Ruah Community Services decided to accept the handover of Workright's operations, together with its residual assets and liabilities on wind-up, with the transfer to be effective from 1 July 2005.

Ruah Workright recently entered into what would have been Workright (WA) Inc's 2005/06 funding agreement from the Federal Department for Employment and Workplace Relations. During the forthcoming year the agency will work with approximately 417 people hopefully be able to support 250 people find employment. Offices will be located at Maylands, Joondalup, Rockingham, Fremantle and Armadale.

As the Federal Government pursues its Welfare-to-Work agenda, particularly as it applies to people living with disabilities, there will be enormous challenges facing this new Ruah agency. Notwithstanding the dilemmas involved, it is the reality that the majority of people who live with mental illness want to work that will be embraced by Ruah and its workers in supporting people achieve their employment goals.



RUAH WOMEN'S SUPPORT SERVICE

The Women's Support Service has supported women on their release from prison for seven years now. There are six staff overall delivering the various components of the service both in prison prior to release and out in the community where the core element of mobile psychosocial support is provided. The activities provided in prison include information and life skills groups that build and strengthen the women for their release. This prepares the way for the further work that is done with the women on release as they seek to get on with their lives.

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RUAH COMMUNITY SERVICES



TRADITION PROFESSIONALISM INNOVATION COMMITMENT

ANNUAL REPORT 2005



RUAH COMMUNITY SERVICES

*The NIDS team from left
Michelle, Michael (manager), Margaret, Nghia*



RUAH CENTRE

The Ruah Centre's frustration with the lack of accommodation for clients is bearing fruit. Rather than accepting there are no options for people with both drug/alcohol and mental health issues, NIDS (National Illicit Drug Strategy) project staff joined up with City Housing and opened an innovative new service.

It works on the principle that people need to be housed to become stable rather than be stable before they can be housed. The service extends the casework of the existing NIDS project and enables clients to achieve things that their chaotic lives and complex issues had kept beyond their reach.

Banned from hostels, deemed unsuitable for specialist accommodation, clients are now budgeting, taking up literacy classes, keeping appointments, cutting drug use and stabilizing their medication.

*Ruah's New O.H. & S Committee from left
Tia, Anna, Deb, Sean and Karen*



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

Health, safety, and well-being of employees and clients were endorsed as a key organisational priority in December 2004 with the establishment of the Ruah Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committee.

The six-strong committee covers the Ruah Refuge, Ruah Centre, and North and South mobile teams, along with two employer representatives.

Committee members have already completed nationally accredited training, and have clarified the committee roles and functions in relationship to Ruah Community Services. They are now conducting a health and safety audit of all services within the organisation which will be used to develop an organisational OHS framework. Ongoing tasks of the committee will be ensuring Ruah worksites undertake regular safety audits to achieve consistent OH&S standards; and implementing systems to reduce workplace hazards and incidences to increase worker and client safety.

RUAH REFUGE

After making the transition to a 24-hour access facility last year, the Ruah Refuge is now expanding into the provision of offsite, medium-term accommodation. One property has been purchased and two more will be constructed, providing opportunities for women and children to live independently, with support from the refuge. A Recreation Program was also established this year, aimed at reducing social isolation and improving self-esteem and community access for women. The Refuge has recently undergone a facelift, paid for by a community grant from the National Australia Bank and a generous anonymous donation.

In addition new partnerships have been formed - the Alannah and Madeline Foundation has provided new bikes, prams, cots and other essential items for children at the refuge, and made a significant contribution towards funding the successful kids' camp. Relationships Australia has joined Refuge workers in the provision of on-site group programs for women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

URBAN NETWORK

Urban Network, Ruah's grassroots social and community-linking program, is now six years old.

Established initially with a grant from Lotterywest, then continued in partnership with St John of God Health Care, Urban Network has proven to be a valued resource for people living with mental health concerns ... here are just a few quotes from some of the many participant's over the past year...



"The thing is, if it wasn't for Urban Network, I wouldn't be sitting here, I'd be dead because I would have ended I long ago."

"I'm doing TAFE now, and I wouldn't have been able to do that if it hadn't been for Urban Network"

"I absolutely love seeing people come out of their shell and start to be themselves again."

An evaluation conducted this year highlighted the program's strengths as a peer support network, a skill-building opportunity and an empowering social environment for people with mental health concerns. The Network demonstrates particular effectiveness in counteracting the isolation that is so often experienced by people during and after periods of mental illness or distress.

Participants in the evaluation reported high levels of satisfaction with the program and significant positive change in their life– from physical health to social connections to self-confidence. Comments from program participants, volunteers and visiting facilitators reflected a deep appreciation for the work of Urban Network staff, while also revealing that day-to-day running of the program is being increasingly taken on by participants. Several excellent courses were run on-site during the year, with high attendance.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the support and invaluable assistance of St John of God Healthcare Inc. Since we began Urban Network, SJOGHC has contributed over \$400,000 to Urban Network. While this partnership will end this year, from all of us at Ruah, Urban Network and on behalf of all the participants we'd like to say **"thanks for helping and great working with you"**.

CARBON NEUTRAL

In May this year Ruah made a commitment to address the effect of greenhouse gases emitted caused by our fifty-nine fleet vehicles. Through the Carbon Neutral Program run by Men of the Trees, the organization bought 2000 trees – the number calculated as necessary to offset our carbon emissions. Many of these trees were planted by Ruah staff, friends and family during the organisation's inaugural planting day.

Twenty-four people participated in the planting held at the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL), where Carbon Neutral assists in revegetation on the banks of the Canning River. The riparian zone species will help to slow the inflow of nutrients into the river.

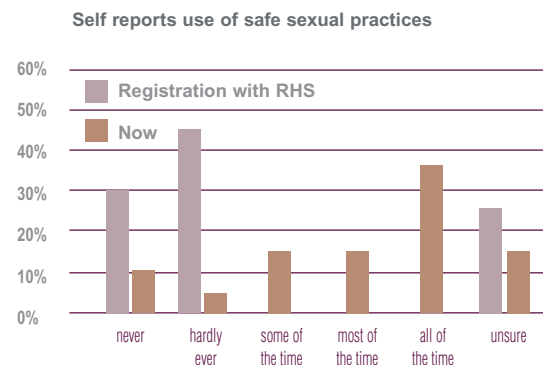
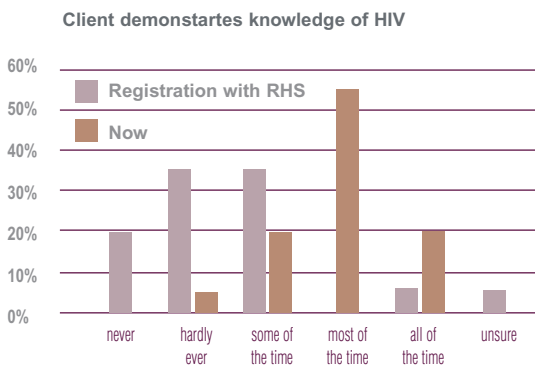


Carbon Neutral
A Men of the Trees Program

RUAH HEALTH SUPPORT

Ruah Health Support, now completing its second year of operation, continues to provide an effective service to the people with HIV/AIDS experiencing chaotic lifestyles. A semi-independent evaluation conducted this year revealed some encouraging trends. Between the time of registration with the service and the time of the evaluation, clients' knowledge of HIV and safety with HIV increased. The client body decreased their use of drugs and alcohol and increased their use of harm reduction strategies with regard to drug and alcohol use. Clients also became more likely to consistently take their medications, more able to talk about their sexual health with RHS workers and safer in their sexual practices. RHS workers were able to engage more with clients' friends, family and associates after a period of time working with a client.

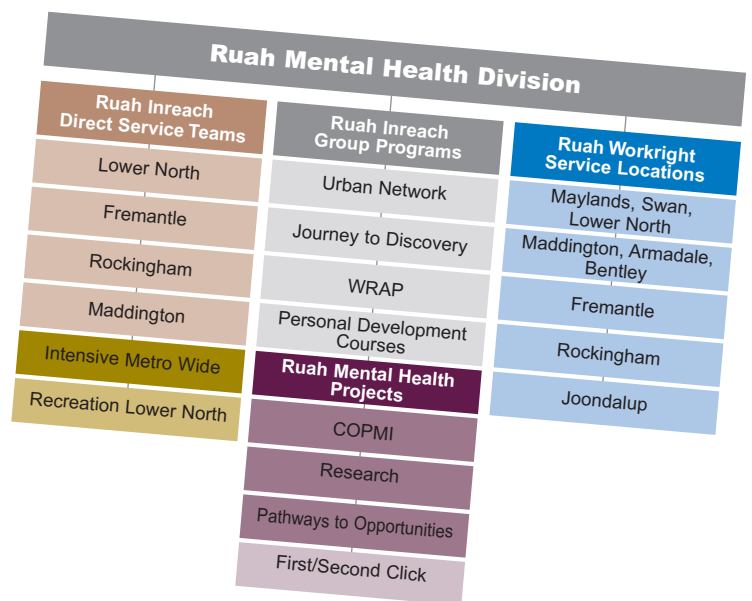
"They (Ruah) help me heaps with transportation, keeping me motivated, furniture and lots of good advice about life in general and the biggest thing is knowing they are there if I need them" (Client Interview).



EXPANSION OF RUAH MENTAL HEALTH DIVISION

Ruah's Mental Health Division continues to diversify with Group programs, Sector Development Projects and Ruah Workright Employment Service adding to the richness and broadening the scope of the organisation's work in this field.

There are now over 50 staff in the Mental Health Division which constitutes almost half of Ruah Community Services' workforce.



RUAH TENANCY SUPPORT

This is a homeless prevention strategy where the objective is to work with households in the private rental market whose tenancies have become vulnerable. Given that rents increased by 12 – 15% in 2004/05 the pressure on renting households has been particularly severe highlighting the value of the service.



The service completed work with 107 households during the year of which, 69% (74 households) with the support provided, were able to stabilise their tenancy and remain in their home. Another 15 households were able to leave their housing on a positive note and thereby not excluded from other rental options, thus avoiding homelessness.

The team works with approximately 45 households on an ongoing basis.