

Can-do attitude keeps Junction doors open

Community-driven mental health service marks milestone



SANDRA MORELLO

Head of Community
at TBN

A PSYCHAL Abundant Garden-based community organisation working to improve mental health wellbeing will celebrate its 10th birthday this week.

The South East Junction has been at the forefront of delivering low cost and effective community services across the region.

While it has been a matter of funding struggles, the organisation has kept its doors open thanks to a dedicated base of volunteers.

The service now has more than 300 people on its books who

receive a range of services, which include the Mental Health and Wellbeing Group in Millmerran as well as a Clinic and Clinic in Pinaloa.

South East Junction coordinator Bel Jones said the service's survival was thanks to the commitment of its volunteers.

"We are very proud the service will celebrate 10 years," Ms Jones told The Fraser Coast.

"The power of the Junction is that we fill gaps in services and we can respond to the needs identified in the community.

"Our core goal is improving mental wellbeing in our community. If we identify a need, we can respond quickly."

These services have included personal depression and substance abuse workshops as well as mental health first aid training.

The Junction began as a Country Health SA Community Mental Health Initiative in partnership with several councils, carers, non-government organisations and community agencies in 2009.

While funding for the service was over in late 2011, the Junction has continued to evolve.

"The goal of The Junction is to

provide a range of services, experiences and opportunities to support people experiencing mental health issues in achieving from mental illness to improve mental well-being," Ms Jones said.

She said the service also organised activities for the general public.

"At The Junction we encourage participants in our activities, in the groups as well as in the community, to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour and to take an active role in the day-to-day operation of the centre," the dedicated service volunteer said.

"We do this by providing a safe and supportive environment, which fosters attitudes of independence, self-worth, confidence and self-esteem through the

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BELE JONES
SOUTH EAST JUNCTION

activities we organise."

The Junction is a low cost, accessible service providing targeted programs as well as a safe environment for learning and developing friendships with like-minded people.

"As we are a non-government and not funded service we rely on local, state and federal funds and donations to support our activities and the management of the centre," Ms Jones said.

The Junction prioritised by providing the wider community to proactively raise awareness of the evidence and to promote a knowledge and an acceptance of people with mental health issues or mental illness.

The Junction is now on the opposite body and The Pinaloa Mental Health

Support Group was started at the request of some members of the Pinaloa community.

"And numbers are still increasing for the activities undertaken in the Junction in all three locations," the service's coordinator said.

"There was more financial support from councils, Bendigo Bank, service clubs and individuals."

"We registered as a charitable organisation and in April 2014 we were registered as a donor gift recipient."

Despite the challenges, Ms Jones said The Junction offers a good mix of activities to the people living with mental health issues as well as to the wider community to improve mental well-being.

"For the general public we repeated advance care directive workshops and continued to offer mental health first aid courses," she said.

The service has also welcomed the growing trend of businesses and companies - such as forestry, engineering, transport companies - participating in mental health first aid courses.

"This is a huge change in their approach to mental health issues and one we would like to honour with the continuation of courses," Ms Jones said.

"The same companies have asked us for support with substance use problems and critical incident debriefing and we would like to assist them with these requests."

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The Junction has also been working with Headspace, which has been a "good partnership".

1990 on South East and Limestone Coast Wellbeing Community also operates under the Junction's banner.

Country Health Council Limestone Coast provide a building in Ferns Street for the service's headquarters.

An anniversary celebration will be held at City Hall on Thursday from 10am.



SPROUTING BETTER MENTAL HEALTH The Centre for a Healthy Mind, Limestone Coast, has been in the area of 15 bushfire-affected areas, which includes health workers and long-term care.