

To Whom It May Concern:

29th March, 2010

The following letter is in support of the A.O.D. Consumer Network Peer Support Group at Nathan House, Manurewa and the facilitator, Project Manager Mike Hamblin.

As an active member of the above Peer Support Group at Nathan House for the last seven months, and from a Peer counselor viewpoint, I would like to outline some very 'workable' aspects of our group in furthering effective recovery from alcohol/ drug use.

Our group accepts harm reduction to abstinence as recovery models, while providing plenty of input regarding lifestyle changes- several members are attending training programmes, ('Train the Trainers', W.R.A.P.), one has returned to University, one has become fully employed as a Peer Support Worker, I just completed the D.B.T.'Managing Mood' course (along with four other Peer Group members), held at C.A.D.S South and I have come from zero motivation to nearing a return to my teaching career.

There is social support as in the larger Network Meetings with a shared lunch; the contagious enthusiasm: 'I can do that too'; good role-model individuals within the group; non-judgmental (Mike monitors this) feedback/ suggestions by peers, and/ or follow-up referrals to agencies for specific assistance by Mike. It seems constructive alternatives have reduced repeat offending for some, and promoted progress maintaining sobriety while functioning in society, for all of those attending regularly. There has been a sense of anticipation of up-coming events, such as a presentation on the Review of the 'Misuse of Drugs Act'; the first and soon, the next Waka day with our Pacific Rep., James, and a planned camping trip. Other specific skills based trainings, such as with Abacus, will offer more opportunity to meet others and equip us for employment.

Project Manager Mike Hamblin, as our facilitator, provides invaluable resource material as relevant to our Peer group's needs – often as short 'Educational' summaries on patterns of Recovery/ Addiction, or Relapse Prevention, info. regarding some medication do's and don'ts; reminders of services available at C.A.D.S; peers adding to his knowledge on Herbal remedies and where best to go. Mike Hamblin's clinician experience leads him, I believe, to ask pertinent questions of attendees, that help highlight avenues they could pursue next: sometimes it may be a re-assessment by their doctor, or moving out of a flat where using/ unhelpful behaviour continues- suggestions are made by the group and summarized by Mike in closing.

Mike allows us opportunity to learn co-facilitation of our Peer group in turn, while ensuring 'quality control' if you like, which has been necessary: the group cannot be properly run by peers alone, as situations have arisen that require clear boundaries, which almost all of us are still learning and group rules maintained outside our group too, for example, keeping confidentiality.

Mike Hamblin is also able to, and has, attended as Support person in a Court appearance with members; he has provided assistance with appropriate letter writing in certain matters, and he's a re-course when we have a complaint- there's a trust in him, that he will manage the matter in a confidential, professional manner, and consult with us on any course of action first- which he has done.

Due to the considerable workload disseminating info. by e-mail/ hardcopy, liaising with the Mental Health branch of our Network (relevant to a third of our core group to some degree), travel between Northern/ Southern offices, plus contact with Pacific fellows, James and our Maori Representative, it does indeed take dynamism to also meet the co- ordination, facilitation, (as primarily motivational in style, but also instructional) requirements, plus being a role model and dependable, which it seems, Mike fulfills very well.

My personal thanks for the experience of participating in this group.

Sincerely Yours,

Liesel P