

TOE JAM—Newsletter of The Outdoor Experience - August 2008



Well it's been a several years since TOE Jam's last publication. For a significant part of TOE's 22 year history, TOE Jam has provided information and stories about what we do, and what young people gain from their respective outdoor experience. TOE is a program of Gateway, Jesuit Social Services. TOE uses adventure and remote bush experiences with young people as an alternative way of tackling difficult life circumstances. TOE is primarily funded by the Drug Treatment Unit of the Department of Human Services, the Colonial Foundation, and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development.

Adventurous journeys, combining the natural environment with challenging activities and group support are the mediums used within TOE programs. TOE has conducted more than 400 trips to remote areas within Victoria and NSW, involving over 2500 young people.

TOE and Gateway work with young people towards health, social connectedness and economic participation in the community. TOE develops programs with agencies for the special aims of their group (CAP Programs); and conducts 6-week Bush Adventure Therapy (CORE) programs to which individual young people can be referred.

Our 6 week Bush Adventure Therapy program is free of charge to participants. We offer 4 programs per year with one of these being for young women, and others either for young men or mixed gender. Our programs take place at our beautiful Bush Hut space in the Yarra Bend Park in Kew and in some of the most spectacular and remote places in Victoria.

What's on for the rest of 2008?

OCTOBER 2008

A 6 week Raft/Bushwalk program.

DECEMBER 2008

Young Women's Retreat.

INSIDE!

Travel tales

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Upcoming programs

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TRAVEL TALES: *An interview with Laila conducted by Linda Percival for The Age, published 12/04/08.*

Having returned from a 38 kilometre trek , carrying a 25 kilo pack along part of the Great South West Walk between Nelson and Portland, Laila is back at the Bush Hut reflecting on what she learnt along the way ...

How did you come to be here? I was tackling some life issues in Wodonga and heard about the TOE program from a community worker.

What was your first impression? As soon as I stepped in here, I really wanted to be here. I knew it would be great. This place was just beautiful...it reminded me of home. It was a comfortable feeling. I just loved the environment. It felt safe. To hear the birds and be so close to the Yarra...

What have you learnt here? I learnt heaps really. A sense of self and wellbeing. I have learnt a lot about myself and the strengths that I have.

Tell me about the walk. It was physically and mentally challenging. My legs and back, the weight of the pack. It gets hard. There are things that you learn out there, away from society. A lot of young kids need that. I'm so happy that I got to do it.

What will you take away from the experience? ...the sense of the challenge and how I learnt to survive with the minimal things we had. It will help me be mentally stronger in a lot of ways. I've been told a lot of positive things. It has helped me with relationships as well because the other girls had different skills and different issues. Talking to them, and seeing how they cope, was really helpful. I haven't had that many really good friends and these people are really trying to change. I was trying to change my life. You get a lot of strength from people...

How have you changed? Mentally, I've become stronger and more open, and I deal with issues differently. It opened my doors up in a lot of ways. I feel a lot better within myself. I've got a lot more ways to deal with things. I always used to be very emotional and didn't stick up for myself. This has helped me to feel strong.

How was the transition time back here? It was a great feeling to come back to the hut after our TOE adventure. Here you can have a real sense of belonging. I was looking forward to coming back here and having a couple of weeks. I didn't want to just cut it off. Looking back, the Bush Hut will always be a safe place.

Has completing the program been your greatest achievement? Yes, and I think it will help me with other achievements. I want to do outdoor work. I did rock climbing here. I went to see the caves...I've a lot of things in the past six weeks that I wanted to do. I want other kids to have the experience I've had. It will be something I'll take with me always.

MEET THE STAFF

Fiona Cameron TOE Coordinator

Fiona first came to TOE as a locum Wilderness Therapist and then gained the position as Coordinator in December 2005. Her background is in social work, and she spent many years working in Youth Justice and the AOD sector in Geelong and Melbourne. Fiona then spent a few of years in Far North Queensland working with Indigenous young people and families. Upon returning to Melbourne, Fiona gained employment with JSS. Fiona is a keen traveller and adventurer and she finds that her position at TOE marries her personal passions with professional interests. She thrives on the challenges that TOE presents to young people, staff and to herself.

David Weeks Outdoor Educator

For as long as he can remember Dave has loved combining the outdoors with adventurous experiences. No matter what season, be it summer or winter, Dave will be out there climbing, paddling or bushwalking. His time out there has developed a strong sense of connection with natural places which brings fun and fulfilment to his life. Dave's professional life has been about sharing his passion and love for the natural outdoor places with his peers and younger people. Dave came home in March 2004 from a 3 year trip travelling and adventuring in Canada to work at TOE. Whilst working at TOE is both challenging and demanding, he loves the work, the young people and the learning each and every new journey takes him on.

Terry Vella—Social Worker

Terry has journeyed from hospitality and administrative work, to assisting people with discrimination issues, to social work. Terry's previous job was at YSAS for 6 years involved in Outreach and management. For many years, Terry has been making his way out into the bush and enjoying being in remote areas. An opportunity to join the TOE team in mid 2007 was too good to be true! Terry enjoys introducing young people to the bush and assisting people in their own self discovery of skills, abilities and knowledge.

THE JSS BUSH HUT

The JSS Bush Hut is leased from Parks VIC and is an old renovated dwelling from the 1850's set in natural bushland. The JSS Bush Hut can be found 35 metres from Studley Park Road (opposite Walmer Street in Kew. (Melways Reference 2D G9). The Bush Hut can be hired/booked by community organisations or groups for meetings or running of programs subject to availability. Weeks 1 and 2, 5 and 6 of our Core program takes place at the Bush Hut. Bush Hut office phone is 98552633.

How do I get involved with TOE?

If you are under 26 years of age and are interested in checking out a TOE program, come to one of our **Information Sessions** that we have 3 weeks before every program. The information session is a great opportunity to see where the Bush Hut is in the Yarra Bend Park, meet the staff, hear about our upcoming program, and view photographs of past programs. We also have a past participant who provides information about their first hand experience. We welcome anyone to give us a call and ask questions about our program and we welcome anyone who would like to arrange a visit.



If you are a support worker who has young people who may be interested in a TOE program, give us a call even if it is just for an informal chat about what we do and how the program may benefit. Also, consider attending an **Information Session** even if you don't have a young person interested. Consider attending a **graduation celebration** (last day of a TOE program) to see what young people get from the program. Or, **get TOE to come and talk to your staff** about our 6 week program or about how **we can provide you client group with an outdoor experience.**

Young Women's Retreat: 27th November — 5th December 2008

TOE will be facilitating a week's trip specifically for young women who have been struggling with alcohol and/or substance misuse issues. The program will be staffed by two TOE female staff and a female psychologist. The aim is to experience the healing benefits of being in nature. The group will journey to the Victorian coastline, where we will set up a base camp, and spend our time exploring. Group work, individual counselling, creative facilitation and physical activity will be combined to provide this unique experience for young women. There is no cost to participants.

Individual assessment interviews will be conducted during the week of 17th November 2008. More information will be available closer to the time, but please note the dates and begin thinking about referrals. For all enquiries regarding this program, please contact Fiona Cameron on 0427 034 544

Program Schedule for SPRING Journey

A mixed gender SPRING Journey that will incorporate rafting and/or bushwalking.

Important dates **Information Session: Tuesday 16th September 1-2 pm ****Interviews from 18th September to 1st October*****Group Selection: Thursday 2nd October**

Week 1—Program orientation

Monday 6th - 10th October, 10.00-3.30,

Includes Goal setting interviews with support workers and TOE

Week 2—Trip Preparation

Monday 13th - 17th October, 10.00-3.30

Weeks 3 & 4—Wilderness Journey

Monday 20th - 30th October

support workers farewell and welcome us back

Week 5—What did we learn?

Monday 3rd-7th November, 10.00-3.30

(Debrief Interviews with Support Worker and TOE Staff)

Week 6— Where to from here?

Monday 10th-Thursday 13th November, 10.00-3.30

Graduation Friday 14th November 11.00-1.00



CAP. Over the past 22 years, TOE has collaboratively facilitated adventure based programs with a number of agencies. If you would like to consider a tailor made program for your group of clients, contact Fiona Cameron at TOE on 9855 2633. Below are some of the agencies that TOE has collaborated with:

Broadmeadows Youth Projects	Vic Country Youth Service
Winlaton Youth Training Centre	Oakleigh Youth Resource Centre
Langi Kal Kal Youth Training Centre	Horsham Secondary College
Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre	LEAP (various)
Odyssey House	Yarriambiack Shire Council
St Luke's (Bendigo)	Connexions
Lismore House / Barwon Youth Support Unit (Geelong Advertiser)	Bendigo Juvenile Justice Unit
BAYSA / WILD (Geelong)	Eastern Juvenile Justice Unit
Bendigo Collective	Loddon/Mallee Juvenile Justice Unit
Bairnsdale Community Health Centre	Oznam House
Task Force	Indigenous Land Corporation (Cooper Pedy)
Killara House	Maroondah CAMHS
Brosnan Centre	YWCA
Grassmere Youth Services	Anglicare
Grassmere / Victorian Police	Peaceful Warrior (Anglicare)
Fusion Youth Housing	YSAS
Ballarat Children's Homes	Youth for Christ
Turana Youth Training Centre	DHS Disability Services (Ballarat)
Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre	Worowa Aboriginal College
Parkville Youth Residential Centre	EPPIC
Churchill Community Health Centre	Whittlesea Township Youth Program
WRADD (Warrnambool)	Banyule Community Health Service
Community Corrections	Greensborough JPET/Victorian Police
North West Youth Services	Shire of Hepburn Youth Program
Boronia Technical College	Youth Futures (Mission Australia)
Kendall St Community Centre	STEP Program (Mildura)
Try Youth Hostel	Mallee Family Care (Mildura)
Office of Corrections (Aboriginal Cultural Camp)	TAFE College (Mildura)
Lilydale High School	Brotherhood of St Laurence
Melbourne City Mission	Moreland City Council Youth Services
Westernport Youth Support Unit	XLR8 Mentoring – JSS
Chadstone Community Health Centre	Communities Together – JSS
Drug Services Victoria	Gateway – JSS
South Port Youth Service	Big Brothers, Big Sisters
S.W.E.A.T. (Ballarat)	Baywest Youth Transitional Housing
Crossroads	Berry Street
Eastern Teaching Unit	Maya Spiritual and Healing Centre
Student Development Centre	College for Koori Education (Thornbury)
Wiseman Youth Services	Castlemaine Community Health Centre (CHIRP)
	Dandenong REVAL program (YSAS)
	SHARC

CAP Programs can be half days, full days or multiple days/overnights. Activities include, canoeing, rafting, river sledding, bushwalks, caving, rock climbing, cross-country skiing or staff team building activities.