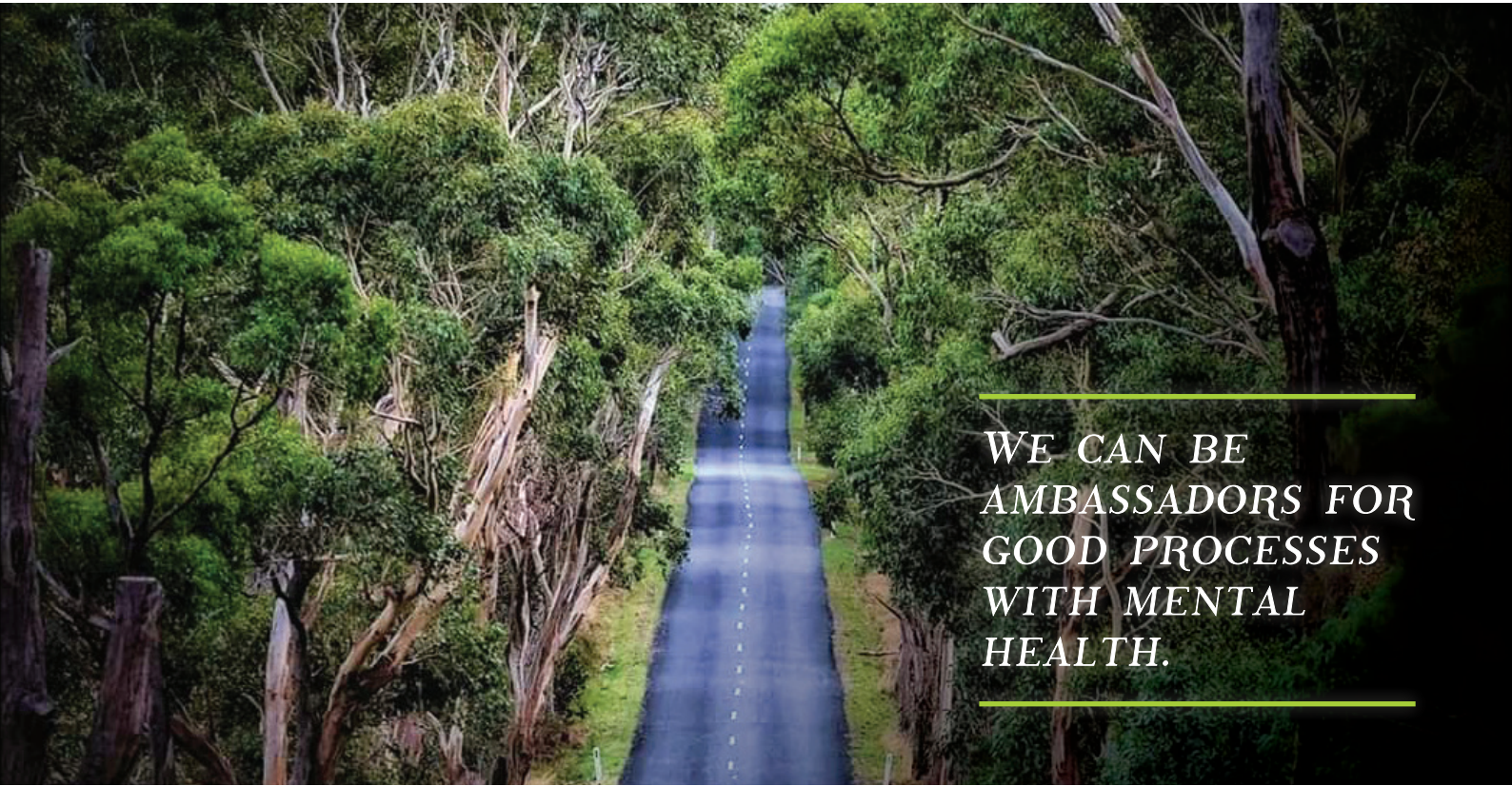


STANDING UP FOR CHANGE



*WE CAN BE
AMBASSADORS FOR
GOOD PROCESSES
WITH MENTAL
HEALTH.*

Creating communities and workplaces with positive mental wellbeing starts with strong leaders with a willingness to listen and stand up for change.

Latrobe City Council former Mayor, Councillor, Dan Clancey is always listening. His proudly wears his commitment to positive mental health and inclusiveness on his sleeve and encourages everyone to join him.

Dan is always conscious of looking through the eyes of others and working towards a more inclusive community. He does this by considering those who are often excluded and making sure their voices are heard and that they have access to council's community services.

“Local government touches every part of society. We deliver a wide range of services and need to ensure that we champion representation and advocacy for things that really matter to everyone in the community.”

This fundamental truth is why he believes councils have a responsibility to make sure they are meeting the needs of the community as widely as possible to make support accessible for everyone.

Living in regional Victoria provides a unique perspective of the world, but not the only one. While his eight fellow councillors celebrate diversity, he admits that they currently do not represent their whole community in their backgrounds and experiences. This is something he would like to see change over time.

“We need to constantly adjust our lens to be inclusive. We have to assume there are people who are not always included – and then ensure they’re not slipping through the cracks.”

The council he is part of achieves this through advisory committees ranging from consulting with their Youth Council, Aboriginal Communities, refugees, the arts and leisure sector, LGBTQ+ community and several other committees. This ensures everyone can have a voice and that councils are not just making decisions in isolation and based on their own experiences.

“Standing up for change is something we can all do. We view everything through a wider frame to make sure no one gets left behind. We can do this through consultation and always holding ourselves accountable to more than just our own areas of interest.”

Being heard in your community is a two-way street. Dan invites everyone to speak up and point out where they see improvements are needed and to even step up and run for council. He is always listening.

“I think that local councillors should do more of taking on board what other people are saying to them. If people think that we aren’t being inclusive enough and we’re not showing representation – we need to know. Then we can initiate conversations, run more ideas through more people to show higher representation. I would encourage people to say to us, as councillors, if we are not representing them very well. I’d be really open to people saying: “Have you ever thought about, have you ever looked at it from this angle, or through the eyes of this group of people?”

“STANDING UP FOR CHANGE IS SOMETHING WE CAN ALL DO.”

Mental health advocacy and inclusiveness are equally important within council where Lifeline is currently running a program on early prevention strategies in the workplace.

“We can be ambassadors for good processes with mental health. We employ over 1,000 people at Latrobe City Council and Lifeline is having anonymous conversations with staff to be able to provide information around what they can do to support each other, to speak up and talk about things. If everyone is trained with a mental health kit and they know what trigger points may be seen within their team or work area, we can make a better workplace, which makes a better community.”

He thinks it’s a good thing that we now have conversations about mental health in the same way that we talk about physical health – yet is concerned about the lingering stigma within the dialogue.



“When we talk about mental health, there is often an assumption it means bad mental health. We want to promote the importance of good mental health which is bigger than just yourself, but it’s all about self.

As bystanders we can help each other, so if you see people who are struggling, being available, present and accepting is the key.”

Growing up in Bendigo, Dan moved to Gippsland in 1997 while working with a TV network. His plan was to stay for one year, but he met the woman who would become his wife and decided to make Gippsland his home, establishing his own media communications and arts company.

Dan has produced a lot of theatre over the years and recalls a highlight of his creative career as being able to tell powerful stories that resonate with people.

In 2016 he successfully ran for local government on the back of his work as a community organiser within the arts sector where he advocated for and secured funding for a new theatre from State and Federal Government.

Dan loves the regional setting he lives and works in, along with Gippsland's urban vibe which offers cafés, restaurants, great coffee, good health services and education opportunities.

#storiesstrong

Dan's key messages:

Community connection matters. Communities are made up of people who help each other. That's what makes community and that's what makes up where we live. It's the way we help each other and the way we connect.

Promote the importance of good mental health which is bigger than just yourself, but it's all about self. As bystanders we can help each other, so if you see people who are struggling, being available, present and accepting is the key.

Speak to your local councillor. Let them know what they can do to support you and your community.

Standing up for change is something we can all do. View everything through a wider frame to make sure no one gets left behind.

WHO TO CONTACT

Lifeline 13 11 14

Beyond Blue www.beyondblue.org.au

Headspace www.headspace.org.au

MensLine Call 1300 78 99 78
www.mensline.org.au/

Switchboard Victoria [LGBTIQ peer support] 1800 184 527

Emergency 000

WORKPLACE RESOURCES

Black Dog Institute workplace mental health and wellbeing programs and services
www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

QPR Australia
www.qprinstituteaustralia.com.au/

VLGA Rainbow Resource for Victorian Councils
www.vlga.org.au/resources/vlga-rainbow-resource-victorian-councils

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: Please note that the information provided in this article is for general information only. It is NOT intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice from qualified practitioners. If you have concerns regarding your mental health please seek professional advice.

This article is part of the #storiesstrong suicide prevention campaign which highlights a series of twenty articles developed by a diverse range of people with lived experience of suicide and experts in the field.

Stories Are Strong is an initiative of the **Place-Based Suicide Prevention Trials** project which is jointly funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and Gippsland PHN.

For more information visit www.gphn.org.au



An Australian Government Initiative



Gippsland PHN acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners of country throughout Victoria and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and their elders past and present. We also recognise, respect and affirm the central role played in our work by people with lived experience, their families and/or carers. Gippsland PHN is committed to providing inclusive services and work environments where people of all backgrounds, sexualities, genders, cultures, spiritual beliefs, age, bodies and abilities are valued, supported and celebrated.

