



Recovery from addiction is well worth the celebration

Attracting many more people than was originally anticipated, Recovery Academy Australia (RAA) is celebrating the outstanding success of its first public event *The Bridge To Recovery Walk* which joined together almost four hundred people who are in recovery or working towards recovery from addictive behaviour, as well as their many friends, family and other supporters.

On Sunday 15 April, under a clear blue sky, the group made the symbolic journey from Federation Square, Melbourne along the Yarra River in a bid to challenge the stigma and stereotypes that surround people who are or were previously dependent on alcohol and other drugs.

Pledges of support came from all over the community, with much of the resources and supplies needed for the event including the food for the BBQ, the banners, balloons and RAA t-shirts donated and/or designed by local businesses and supporters.

After group photos and speeches made by RAA spokespeople David Best and Heather Pickard about the importance of recovery as a social movement and how joining together to raise awareness gives people in recovery a face and voice, the walk commenced at around 11.30am.

Stopping for a lunchbreak at one of Melbourne's iconic landmarks, the Morell Bridge, the walkers enjoyed a BBQ lunch cooked by young people in residential rehabilitation.



The return walk to Federation Square, a round trip of 5kms, was completed by 1pm.

Recovery Academy Australia is still relatively new, having first formed in October 2011. In response to an ad hoc invitation list, 18 people gathered at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug

Centre for the first meeting of what would go on to become RAA, and the group was formally incorporated as an association in late March 2012.

Facilitated by David Best and Heather Pickard, the aim of the group is to promote and celebrate the spirit and principles of recovery from addictive behaviour, primarily alcohol and other drug use, and ultimately improve the wellbeing and outcomes for all people with addiction problems.

Recovery Academy Australia has now met a total of six times and membership has grown to over 100 people, with an average of 20-30 people attending monthly meetings at Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC).



The only “qualifications” required by group members are energy, enthusiasm and a commitment to the principles and concept of recovery, which remain difficult to define, however membership remains open to anyone and the group maintains: “You’re in recovery if you say you are”.

Given the success of this year’s *Bridge To Recovery Walk*, it will no doubt become an annual fixture on RAA’s calendar of events. Other upcoming awareness-raising activities include a recovery awareness training weekend and the formation of a 12-week recovery module for university degrees in nursing and social work.

A website for RAA is currently under development. For more information about the group and when it meets, please contact Anna Guthrie on annag@turningpoint.org.au.

