

# RAP Newsletter



February 2015, volume 11

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## Update from the RAP Director

Ian Shochet  
Professor of Clinical Psychology

Happy new year to you all!

Last year was a very busy and exciting year with regard to RAP developments and the development of related resilience interventions. In addition to our usual universal implementation of RAP we have continued to focus on promoting resilience with selective populations. We have had the wonderful privilege of doing work in partnership with Indigenous Communities in remote regions of New South Wales and have developed and evaluated an innovative resilience intervention for Indigenous Job Seekers (described in this newsletter). I have fallen in love with that part of the world and have been inspired by the people I have met. In 2014 we also had the wonderful opportunity to work with the world renowned Child Psychiatrist Dr David Brent from the University of Pittsburgh and his multidisciplinary team of professionals in his Services for Teens at Risk (STAR) program. Dr Brent was interested in utilising our RAP parent program to augment their existing treatment approach for teenagers with a history of self-harm. We are also continuing to work on updating our resources and a new look RAP Group Leaders Manual and Participant Workbook should be available very soon. We anticipate that 2015 will also be a very busy year as we continue to develop and evaluate our interventions.



The hallmark of our interventions remain our strength focus and it is pleasing to see the value of this approach even (or especially) when working with populations at greater risk. We look forward to hearing about any of your own RAP initiatives. We have learnt so much from the collective experience of RAP facilitators over the years.

Best Wishes

Ian Shochet  
Professor of Clinical Psychology  
Director  
Resourceful Adolescent Programs

**QUT**

# Introducing HORIZON – A resilience program for Indigenous job seekers

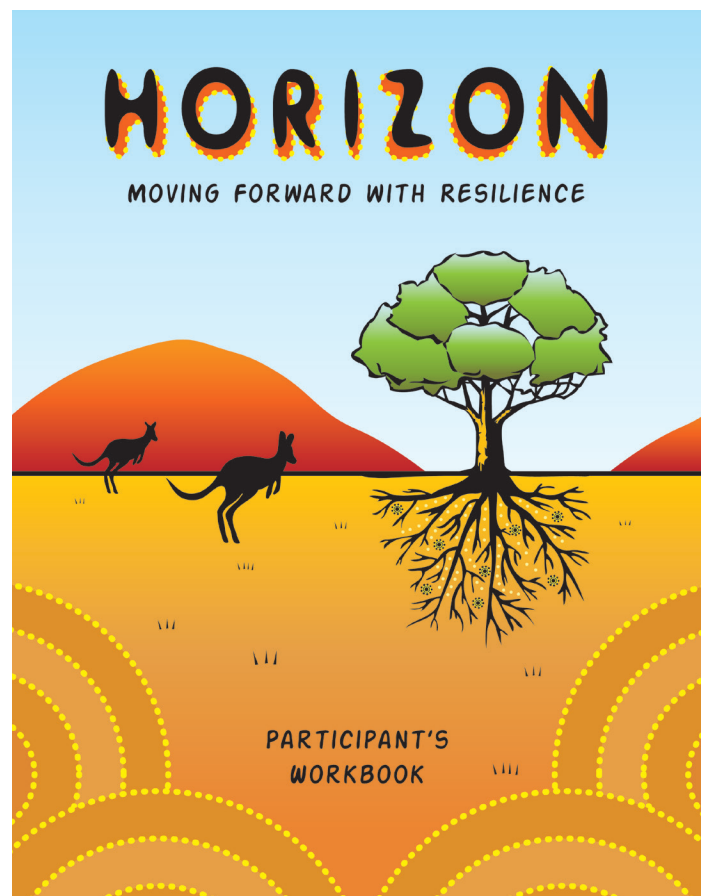
Let us introduce you to a recently developed resilience building program for Indigenous job seekers, HORIZON: Moving Forward with Resilience! Based on RAP-A and the Promoting Adult Resilience (PAR) program, this new intervention has been co-created by the QUT RAP team, Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC), and local community members in Western NSW.

MPREC is the peak provider of services to Indigenous communities in Western NSW, from Victoria to the Queensland border. They approached QUT after recognising a need in their region to help Indigenous job seekers become more resilient and develop skills to overcome barriers to employment. A partnership was formed that included significant and ongoing community consultation. This was crucial in making sure the final product was both culturally appropriate and able to meet the real life needs of participants.

HORIZON consists of six 2.5 hour sessions, spread over three consecutive days. It is fully manualised, and includes a Group Leaders Manual, Participant Workbook and facilitator training program. Each group is led by two facilitators – with at least one of these being Indigenous. HORIZON's key aims are to:

1. strengthen psychological resilience,
2. improve mental wellbeing, and
3. develop skills to overcome employment barriers.

HORIZON was first implemented in Bourke and Goodooga, two Aboriginal communities in Western NSW. Feedback from participants and facilitators has been very encouraging. An evaluation shows that HORIZON is culturally acceptable, relevant and of interest to the intended audience.



Participants have reported benefits including enhanced wellbeing and mental health, expanded coping resources, and improved knowledge, confidence, and attitudes towards seeking work.

Since this time, MPREC has also run HORIZON across other communities in their region and further dissemination is planned for the future. Watch this space!



# RAP-P in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania USA



In 2013, Dr Jane Pineda and Professor Mark Dadds published some fascinating research they carried out on RAP-P with the parents of adolescents experiencing self-harm and/or suicidality. Compared to a group only given routine care, parents who received RAP-P reported a significant reduction in their adolescents' suicidal behaviour, depression, and hopelessness; as well as an improvement in family functioning. Parents noted that the resilience building approach of RAP-P was very helpful in getting them "unstuck" and allowed them to engage in positive problem solving. They said they would strongly recommend RAP-P to other families.

Dr David Brent, eminent psychiatrist and the co-founder and director of Services for Teens at Risk (STAR) at the University of Pittsburgh, became interested in this innovative research about RAP-P and how it could be used in his own setting. We then had the wonderful opportunity of being invited over to Pennsylvania USA to run some RAP-P training at the University of Pittsburgh's Western Psychiatric Institute (WPI) and for Professor Shochet to give an address about building adolescent resilience at their annual conference.

A two-day training event was attended by staff from the WPI and from the University of Texas. It covered basic RAP-P training as well as more in-depth training about implementing RAP-P with the parents of teenagers who are experiencing self-harm or suicidality. Feedback from the group indicated they really appreciated the strength focus of RAP-P, which can often be absent when working with individuals with mental health issues.

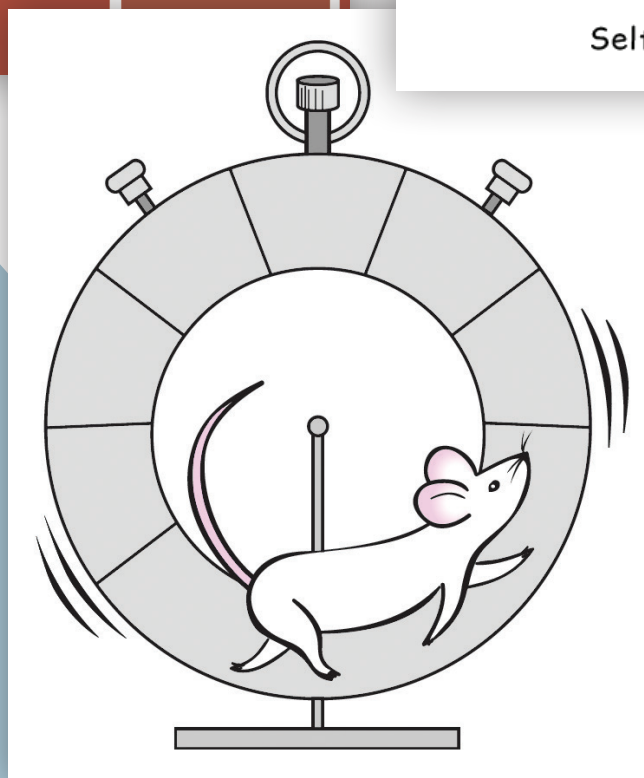
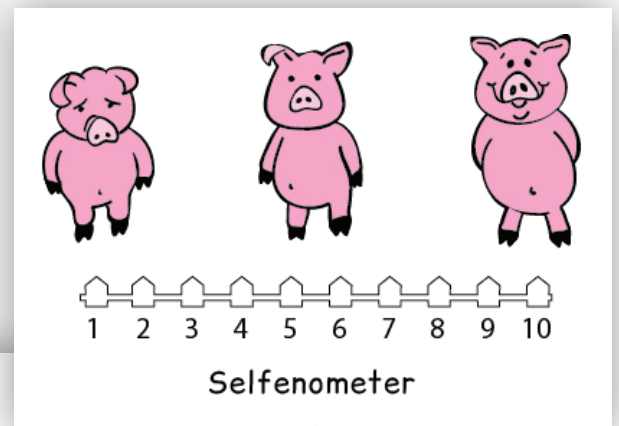
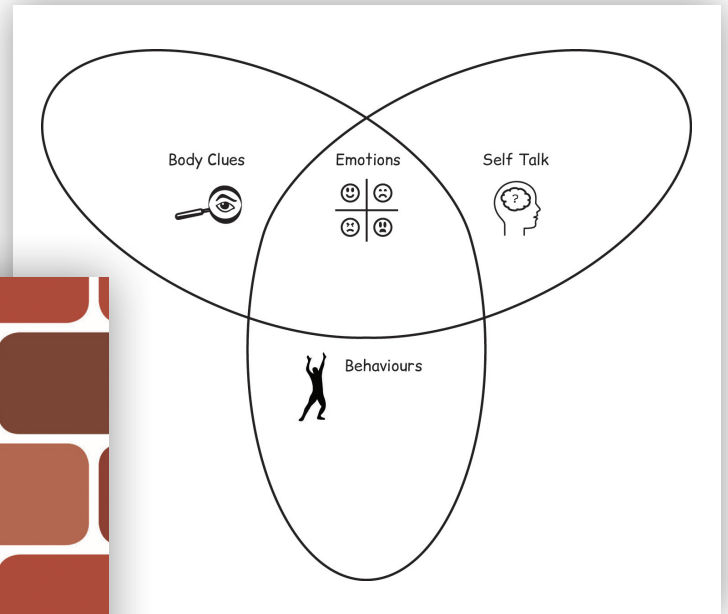
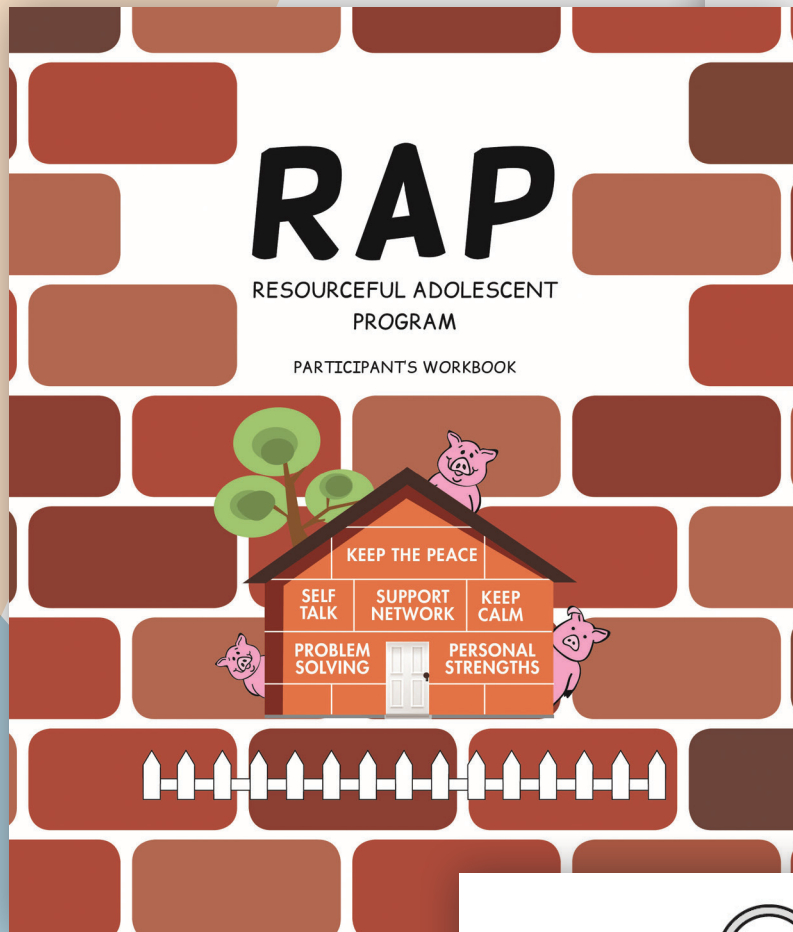
They reported that both the program itself, as well as the Group Leaders Manual, seemed very user-friendly, and commented that the program includes some excellent exercises for parents. The group were confident and looking forward to implementing the program with their unique population.



# New RAP-A Manuals and Participant Workbooks

We are madly busy getting a new fresh RAP-A ready for later this year. So watch this space – we anticipate the new workbooks and the Group Leader Manual will be ready by April 2015.

Here is a sneak peak at some of our new drawings...



# RAP-A at QUT Health Clinics

Kristy Spencer, Julia Gigante,  
Amy Kate Isaacs

As provisional psychologists completing our postgraduate studies in educational and developmental psychology here at QUT, we have recently had the opportunity to run RAP-A in QUT Health Clinics. We began with 10 local teenagers who had been identified by either their parents or school Guidance Officer as likely to benefit from a strength-based resilience-building program. A number of the students knew each other previously (they were referred from the same school) while others were meeting the group for the first time.

The 11 RAP-A sessions were paired together to create six, two-hour sessions that were held weekly, one weekday after school. We included a 'food break' in the middle of each session, which allowed more informal discussion between the facilitators

and participants, and between the participants themselves. This format also meant that during the final two-hour session there was plenty of spare time after completing Session 11's content. This provided a chance to do some of the optional activities that were skipped in earlier sessions, for example, more fun 'getting to know you' activities and relaxation techniques. It also allowed time for an overview of the entire program, and as we reviewed each week's material we did a fun activity fitting with that week's topic.

As facilitators, presenting RAP was both fun and challenging. The camaraderie and trust between each of the facilitators helped us find creative ways to overcome any difficulties. Each of us was the main facilitator for two sessions; divvied up by the scientific method of pulling week numbers out of a hat. The other two facilitators were co-facilitators,

and played an important role in assisting whole group and smaller group discussions, helping the group generate ideas, and keeping participants on task (and laughing at bad jokes made by the main facilitator!). We created PowerPoint presentations for each session that included main ideas, questions for the group to consider, ideas for discussions, and funny memes. See below for some examples. These presentations helped the smooth running of each activity, and also helped keep the group members engaged.

Overall, we can each say we thoroughly enjoyed facilitating the RAP-A group at the QUT Psychology and Counselling clinic! We have all learnt a lot about the program, implementing group programs more generally, and about working with adolescents.

## Examples from Powerpoint presentations:

**Sometimes our different perspectives can lead to arguments!**

lolsotrue: #518

My mom says it's her house, but when it's time to clean, it magically becomes my house too.

**What do parents get stressed or worried about?**



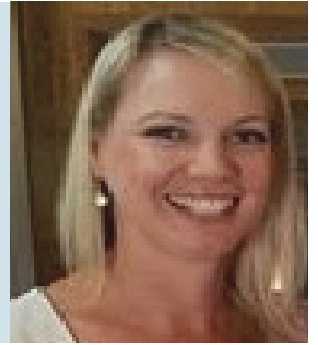
**The 3 Little Pigs story...**



# Farewells and welcomes

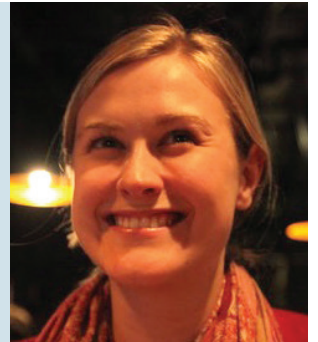
## Kyran Hynes

It is with a lot of sadness that we said goodbye to our wonderful RAP assistant, Kyran Hynes. Kyran was with us for eight years and did a marvellous job of looking after all our RAP clients, and the RAP team. Luckily Kyran has taken up another job at QUT, so we can still catch up for the odd coffee or lunch!



## Sara Berndt

Sara is our new RAP assistant. Welcome, Sara! Sara comes to RAP with a background in psychology, and we look forward to her ongoing contribution to the RAP team.



## New RAP-A trainer

## Coral Smith

We have added another RAP-A trainer to our team – Coral Smith!

Coral is a registered psychologist and has been working with the RAP programs for the past four years. She is passionate about adolescent mental health and brings this passion to RAP. Welcome to the team, Coral!



# Profile of a RAP trainer

Lorraine first became involved with the RAP programs whilst working as a Teacher and School Counsellor in international schools in Europe in 2001. Lorraine observed that school counsellors were often 'reacting' to young people's social and emotional health rather than promoting wellbeing and resilience in their organisations. There was a plethora of programs available for schools but very few had an evidence base like RAP and could be delivered to an entire year group. Lorraine got in touch with Professor Ian Shochet and Astrid Wurfl and became trained in RAP. She then started implementing it with her teaching colleagues at The International School of Amsterdam where it quickly became a major component of the Year 7 program and the focus of the Year 7 camp. Lorraine encourages teachers to support the language of the program in their classes such as "risky versus resourceful thinking", "taking your thoughts to court" and "which brick might help with this problem?".

Lorraine presented numerous conference presentations and workshops in Europe to help establish the RAP program in Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Hungary, and Poland etc.

Back in Sydney, Lorraine is still a passionate RAP promoter and continues to support schools to develop school wellbeing models which focus on prevention, promotion of resilience, school connectedness and particularly loves RAP as it also gives teachers some language and tools to use to support young people's mental health and includes programs for parents and the wider school. Lorraine has trained staff from many schools across NSW to be confident RAP facilitators.



Lorraine is a registered psychologist, counsellor and teacher. She has postgraduate qualifications in education and health psychology. She is currently completing a PhD with QUT under the supervision of Professor Ian Shochet and Associate Professor Jane Shakespeare-Finch looking into workplace wellbeing for teachers. Her research is hoping to help us learn more about the impacts on teachers of providing care and support to adolescents and how schools and training bodies can promote wellbeing for teachers.

# Training dates for 2015

Brisbane : **9 and 10 March**

Sydney: **2 and 3 March**

Download a registration form or email  
[rap@qut.edu.au](mailto:rap@qut.edu.au)

Our **training calendar** is updated regularly as new events are scheduled, so remember to check in from time to time.

Anyone interested in organising a training event should contact Astrid at [rap@qut.edu.au](mailto:rap@qut.edu.au)



## RAP office team

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**Remember – we always look forward to hearing from you!**



Newsletter compiled by Astrid Wurfl