

## | CASE STUDY

# RELATE, RELEARN, REBUILD: THE COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY PROGRAM AT FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

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Since 1992, the Community Re-entry Program (CRP) has operated out of Flinders University, and currently sits within the Disability and Inclusion Unit in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Established by Emeritus Professor Roger Rees, the CRP provides holistic community rehabilitation for adults with acquired brain injury.

Around 1 in 45 Australians have an acquired brain injury, which restricts their ability to participate in activities due to cognitive, physical or emotional challenges. The complex issues surrounding acquired brain injuries often result in individuals feeling socially isolated and experiencing difficulty re-engaging with their communities. Studies show that

people with acquired brain injuries embark on fewer outings, have fewer friends, are less likely to be employed, and do not experience leisure activities as often as they did prior to their injuries.

The only program of its kind in Australia, the CRP combines skill development workshops with social and recreational activities, along with an individual mentoring program that helps clients to develop and achieve their own personal rehabilitation goals. Creative Arts and Skills Development Workshops are held on campus, providing a familiar and consistent space for clients who may have difficulty adjusting to navigating new locations. As three quarters of Australians with acquired brain injury are under the age of 65, the university also serves as an opportunity for clients to interact with people in their own age bracket. Off campus, clients can get active in Movement and Wellbeing Workshops, or build friendships as part of the Heading Out social group, while being supported by the CRP's understanding and non-judgemental staff and volunteers.

The CRP provides an opportunity for Flinders University students studying in areas such as Psychology, Disability and Developmental Education, and Health Sciences to gain invaluable hands-on

experience and professional development by supervising undergraduate practicum placements. Students provide support during group workshops and activities, and the clients themselves are able to play a role in teaching the students how to work with people with impaired abilities. Thirty to forty students per year engage with the CRP during their required practicums, many of whom have stayed on after their placements have ended as volunteers, or having been offered casual staff roles.

Until July 1, 2018 the CRP was awarded block funding by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, which capped the number of participants at 40. As a registered NDIS provider, the CRP has now been able to facilitate further adults who were previously on the waiting list, and will continue to grow as clients are able to access their NDIS funding. The future looks bright for the CRP, which after 26 years has never lost sight of its aim to enhance the inclusion, participation and contribution of people with acquired brain injury in their community.

### Further information

[www.flinders.edu.au/engage/community/clinics/the-community-reentry-program](http://www.flinders.edu.au/engage/community/clinics/the-community-reentry-program)

