

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## An innovative take on mental health

Newcastle based community organisation Life Without Barriers has received the 2007 Australian Business Award for Innovation in recognition of their groundbreaking approach to mental health services.

Life Without Barriers is the only charity to have ever won an Australian Business Award, presented to industry leaders in categories ranging from product excellence to international trade.

The winning submission was partially based on a mental health program that involves Life Without Barriers employing individuals who have 'a lived experience' of mental illness on a traineeship in Community Services Work.

The Community Peer Worker Program utilises these trainees by sharing their knowledge in the induction of new staff, evaluation of mental health services and in de-stigmatising mental illness in the community.

Life Without Barriers Acting CEO Claire Robbs said the award reflected the importance of getting involved at a grass-roots level and listening to the needs of the community.

"By involving those who have 'a lived experience' of mental illness in our planning and service delivery, we are providing a more respectful, down-to-earth and less intimidating service that better meets the needs of the individual," she said.

Ms Robbs said one of the benefits of recruiting people who have experienced mental illness is that they are able to educate other staff and provide direction for management, creating a more understanding and empathetic workforce.

"The program has been a great success so far, with some of our trainees now undertaking further study for their Certificate IV," she said.

"We hope to be able to implement this program nationally so that all areas may benefit from this exciting and innovative program."

**For interviews or more information, contact:**

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