

**Edition 30, April – June 2013**

## CEO's Message

**June 2013**

I've always envied polar bears and other animals that hibernate in winter. Switch off the lights at the end of autumn and wake up after a restful few months. No such luck here at Menslink though as we not only had the end of financial year (with all the necessary budgeting and accounting work required) but also a busy Term Two at high schools and colleges around Canberra.

For those who aren't aware, Menslink and the Canberra Raiders have been running our Silence is Deadly campaign for young guys in our secondary schools. The aim of this campaign is to get young guys to speak up – to their mates, their family, a youth worker or a counsellor – about their problems and not stay silent about it. After all, we all have hassles in our lives – even successful people like the Raiders – and that's nothing to be ashamed about. What we shouldn't do is bottle it all up inside and let small problems become big ones. So far, we've spoken to over four thousand young guys right across Canberra with a pretty good response so far.



Photo courtesy of Wanniasa P-10 School  
(from their Facebook page)

Since our last newsletter, we've continued to run our monthly Midweeker sessions in conjunction with Gryphons and Brumbies Rugby. Here we are trying to engage adults – blokes in particular – with similar messages. The Midweeker sessions run every four weeks on a Wednesday night and generally involve a high profile local man getting up and talking about his journey through life and things he thinks are important. We get around forty or fifty people each time and they're a great opportunity for men and women alike to come together and talk about the important things in life and especially issues facing young blokes in our society. The next one is on Wed July 24<sup>th</sup> and all are welcome!



Tim Kirk of Clonakilla Wines was our guest speaker for May



Scott Fardy from the Brumbies at the May Midweeker



Sandra Marie with Brumbies Peter Kimlin and Pat McCabe

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Martin Fisk at the June Midweeker, with Shane Horsburgh, (below)



Our counselling service has started seeing young guys inside and coming out of our prison system. Many of these young blokes need an extra hand to stay on the straight and narrow and Finn has been helping them wherever he can by helping them concentrate on their strengths and giving them tips on how to overcome the many challenges they face on a day to day basis. Of course, he still sees young guys for counselling sessions in schools and at our offices, with a short break before Term Three starts at the end of July.

The last few months have seen Menslink continue with our major renovations, thanks to landlord ACT Government. The old asbestos tiles have gone from the roof and the mud bath out our front door has been concreted over with new drainage. We now also have reverse cycle air-conditioning for the first time, which is a godsend for those cold frosty mornings when yours truly gets in at the crack of dawn.



June also saw another intake of mentors and mentees – good blokes all round and we're glad to have them on board. I'm sure they'll all enjoy their time together and at Menslink.



work in progress – new roof!

Finally, and with a great deal of sadness, we farewelled Garry in June, as he decided that eight great years were enough and that it was time to pull up stumps. Garry made a terrific contribution to the program during his time. My personal memory of Garry is that he always managed to make people feel welcome and special – he just had that special quality about him. Sad to see him go but I suspect we'll be seeing him back in some form of volunteer or other capacity in the program...maybe sooner than we think! In the meantime, Mac Clare, Cass and Harbs have been helping Ben out in the program, as he gets used to his new program manager role. Congratulations Ben on your promotion.



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Graham and Ben meanwhile were doing their best to cook up a storm atop Mt Ainslie using humble gas camping-stoves. It wasn't easy with limited light and a bit of a breeze to contend with but they managed to feed 25 hungry mouths nonetheless.

It was just about time to leave for our final destination when the strangest thing happened. None other than Ned Kelly, in full body-armour, appeared through the mist muttering something about losing his horse! Luckily Fergus had his camera on hand to capture the moment for the non-believers.

The drive up Black Mountain is windy and fairly spectacular at night, with Telstra Tower looming large. But this was soon forgotten when Garry nearly incited a riot by flipping the esky lid to reveal a pile of Cornetto's for dessert. And if people thought the appearance of Ned Kelly was to be the night's only surprise then they were wrong when Graham blasted out an impromptu bagpipe number, drawing a rousing applause from the lads.

Thanks to everyone who came along to the Misty Mountain Hop, especially the mentors who put more than a few clicks on the ole' odometers. Top night.



## LinkUp

### Misty Mountain Hop

April's link-up saw something a little different; the combination of three mountain climbs with a meal awaiting us on each summit. OK "summit" might be glorifying it a little given that we never got above 900 metres - but it just sounds good (much like the Led Zeppelin reference in the title that I couldn't resist slipping in). And admittedly we drove up these "summits", but why walk when you can drive? It just makes sense.

Red Hill was the meeting point, and a most fancy entrée of chips & dips was devoured before we soaked in the view one more time and shot off in the direction of Mount Ainslie. But unfortunately not all of us made it. Poor ole Craig collected an even poorer ole Roo on his way and was forced to call it a night. Craig tells us the car survived but the roo wasn't so lucky.

### Yarrahorn 2013

A winner has been announced, and this year the Yarrahorn goes to.....Graeme Chyla.

The Yarrahorn is awarded, annually, to a Mentor who embodies the spirit of Menslink, a person who knows what it means to give of himself, with a sense of humour and fun.

Graeme is a most deserved recipient of the Yarrahorn. He has been involved with Menslink since 2003 when he signed on as a Mentor and was matched with a young man who could certainly attest to the outstanding qualities of Graeme. They formed a great bond and became great friends.

Graeme has also been the Head Chef at almost every Mentor Training weekend we've had, so he's been a kind of official welcomer to about 90% of our Mentors. And a great welcome it is. I know

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everyone that has tasted Graeme's creations has delighted in the quality of his cooking and has gone away from the training thinking "good food, good dude".

It should also be noted that Graeme hits 10 years of Menslinking in September this year. This, in itself, is quite an achievement.

The contribution Graeme has made to Menslink is massive, and it is a better place for his involvement. So, THANK YOU GRAEME, you truly are a Menslink Legend and we are proud to have you as a member of our community.



## Mentor Retreat 2013

Since the year dot the Annual Mentors Retreat has been held in chilly August. But this year we gave it a bit of a reboot by holding it in May. I know, I know, the traditionalists amongst us are probably tearing out their hair and saying "what the hell? Has the world changed? and north is south, and Spring Autumn????"

Well, we thought it was worth a go and I reckon it was a beauty.

Graham, Gaz and Ben got themselves out to Caloola Farm by about 2pm on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May so they could start cooking up a storm. We had 4 slow cookers, a ton of food, and a desire to bring everything together so that the Menslink Man could sit down to a hearty meal of slow cooked wonderment.

So, it was chop, chop, chop – sizzle, sizzle, sizzle – cook, cook, cook and by 3 O'clock we had the 4 slow cookers stewing up a storm with 2 cookers having a beef stew, 1 cooker a chicken stew, and 1 cooker a vegan stew. Yum, yum.

I gotta say – slow cooking in the cold weather is one of the great joys of life. Get everything prepared and on the cook and then just sit back, relax and smell the beautiful aroma of what you're about to eat. Perfect.

So, we chilled out and welcomed everyone as they arrived throughout the arvo. It was fantastic. People finishing their working week, driving down the highway to a farm house just far enough out of town to feel you're away from it all, and being welcomed with food. And when you're welcomed with food everything else just flows.



After we had our dinner and dessert our attention turned to – FIRE – of course. And when we stepped out of the farmhouse door, there was a huge fire, built by Harbs, just over yonder. So, off to the fire everyone toddled.

What a great time we had around that fire. Plenty of great conversation. Plenty of relaxing. Plenty of recharging the batteries. There's something special about a fire, and if it's a Harbs built fire you can be sure it has a magical quality. People slowly filtered off to bed around midnight.

The next morning we made a nice brekky and then sat around for a bit of a chin wag about Menslink and how each person's involvement has been. Nothing too heavy, just blokes sharing their Menslink Odyssey.

We wrapped everything up by about 10 on Saturday morning and headed back to town refreshed and ready to share the rest of our weekends with our loved ones. Beautiful.

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## LinkUp Raiders HQ

**A visit to Raiders HQ by the Menslink mentoring program teaches young men some valuable lessons about hard work and success.**

On a cold autumn evening in May, some twenty young teenage guys and their mentors made their way out to Raiders HQ for a tour of the facilities and to meet some of their idols. Raiders' Commercial Manager Jason Mathie was on hand with Charlotte Anneveld to give out Raiders' "showbags" to the Menslink crew, while players Shannon Boyd and Haydon Hodge welcomed everyone.

Each month Menslink takes the young guys in the mentoring program out to an event – it might be fun, educational, challenging or all three – with activities ranging from flying foxes, Lazerzone, movie and pizza nights, surfing, kayaking and sailing. The visit to Raiders HQ was no exception.

Menslink Program Manager Ben Triglone said the evening really gave the young guys an insight into what it was like being a professional player and provided some valuable life lessons to both sporting and non-sporting guys alike.

"The Raiders talked about how much hard work was involved to get to the top of their game and the really tough selection criteria to make it into the NRL squad," he said. "We learnt that talent will only get you so far in life – you've got to combine it with hard work and commitment if you want to succeed."

"The other lesson the young guys learned from the Raiders was the need for a backup plan in life. Even the best players have injuries that can sometimes cut short a promising career. We all need to make sure we've got some extra training or life skills to get us through those tough times."

As the Menslink crew toured the Raiders gym, the young guys weren't just impressed by the amazing size of the weights the players can lift, or the individual records plastered around the walls. They also learned how the Raiders coaches set down team targets for every game they play; encouraging the players to focus on improving the small things each time to make them better and better. Again, a pretty valuable lesson for young blokes learning how to set goals and break them down into something achievable that they can focus on.

After the tour, the young guys and their mentors settled down for a

game of touch footy under lights on the oval. Despite recovering from injury, Haydon Hodge joined in and showed the boys just how football should be played.

This event is just another small example of how Menslink and the Raiders are getting together to help young blokes in our community. The Menslink mentoring program is now in its tenth year of providing volunteer adult mates and role models for young guys who might be a bit socially isolated or just need another positive adult bloke in their life. A couple of players have put up their hand to see how they can help out the next generation of young guys.

The Raiders are also involved in Menslink's Silence is Deadly campaign which encourages young guys at school to speak to their mates and talk to a counsellor if they are having hassles in their lives. Both NRL and Under 20s players have been fantastic in talking about their own problems in life and how important it is to talk to mates, family and professional people to get through life's hassles. More info is available at [www.silenceisdeadly.com.au](http://www.silenceisdeadly.com.au) (Play Magazine article copied with permission)

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And here's a link to an interview Marty did for the Raiders News about our visit.

<http://www.raiders.com.au/news-display/raiders/75499>



We were lucky to get clear skies although it still got pretty chilly out there as the sun went down. Marty had a guest spot at half time to tell the crowd a bit about what we do. We all got to watch the game which, thankfully, was won by the Raiders, and a few volunteers continued to collect donations as the crowd left the stadium.



We managed to raise over \$3000 – a fantastic effort! A big thank you to everyone who came and helped out, and to Rob Regent for coordinating the volunteers and ensuring that things ran smoothly on the night.



## Raiders vs Panthers Game Day Charity

On June 15<sup>th</sup> we were the game day charity for the Raiders vs Panthers game at Canberra Stadium. 20 odd volunteers braved the cold, handing out thundersticks and Menslink info cards in return for donations. Our volunteers were joined by the Raiderettes, who chatted with fans, posed for photos and took donations. They even started dancing at one of the gates, which really got people's attention!

Staging Connections kindly set up giant screens at each gate, where we had the Silence is Deadly video on a continuous loop.



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## LinkUp

### Movie Night

“I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?”

The young and once-were-young filed into the (now air-conditioned) Menslink auditorium for the viewing of a 1980's classic “Stand By Me”. For the trivia buffs among us, it's the adaption of a Stephen King book titled “The Body”.

Stand By Me tells the tale of Gordie Lachance, a writer who looks back on his preteen days when he and three close friends went on their own adventure to find the body of a kid their age who was missing and presumed dead. The stakes are upped when the bad kids in town are closely tailing, making it a race to see who'll recover the body first.

This flick packs a lot of memorable moments into its 89 minutes. For starters, there's the vomit-inducing pie-eating contest and profound conversation about Walt Disney characters. And who could forget the genital-hunting leaches and dogs the boys encountered?

So numerous were the memorable moments that you could be forgiven for forgetting what the point of the boys' expedition was. But at the end of the day finding the dead body wasn't all that important. Because the greatest experiences in life come from the journey, not the destination (sigh).