Interview 2 Transcript 14.6.23

Speaker 1

I'm just going to record on my phone as well in case something should happen to it.

Speaker 1

Okay. So I'm aware that you're giving up a lot of your time today as well. So I'll try and keep it short. And okay, Now that I have pressed record, I just want to say, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview with me today for my honours project. I'm just clarifying that this meeting is being recorded. Do you consent?

Speaker 2

Yes

Speaker 1

Okay, let's get started. So first of all, can you tell me how you became involved in the animal therapy space?

Speaker 2

Yes. I wanted to do some charity work as I was getting towards early sixties, retiring and I looked at a few things, and I always thought my dog Reggie would be good with people. He’s fantastic with people, and I was at a dinner party chatting to a friend, who was a (…?) a friend, but I guess who told me about pet therapy and I thought that's exactly what I should be doing. So I took it up there and then, and it's very grassroots organization, very hands on.

Speaker 2

but it's been fantastic, you know. One of the best things I've ever done for sure.

Speaker 1

Oh, that's so lovely hear! And how long have you been doing that for

Speaker 2

5 years with Reggie. yeah, 5 years we're doing. Here he is.

Speaker 1

the same always at Paws?.

Speaker 2

Yeah, always for it. It's it's the best. Here he is

Speaker 1

Oh, hello beautiful boy, he's so sweet. He hasn’t got much white on him, is that normal?

Speaker 2

He's a Ruby King Charles Cavalier.

Speaker 1

Oh, I haven't seen one like that before.

Speaker 2

He's all red.

Speaker 1

He keeps disappearing into the background. But he's very, very beautiful. He clearly doesn't mind being thrown around.

Speaker 2

Okay, I'm still here.

Speaker 1

Yeah, you're still there. I can see you now, that's good. And what kind of training did you and Reggie to do?

Speaker 2

The process that Paws has is very professional. They get you for a day, they assess the dogs temperaments and socialization with other dogs, with other people. basic obedience, you know, sit, stay, that type of thing. Not that he does them very well. then they put you into situations with strangers such like. older people in the hospital bed to make sure he's comfortable with that and and things like that. So they also assess the handler myself for suitability for the work. I guess, being personable, and you know, reasonable sort of person helps. So that's the first day, and then they assess you and If you pass that assessment. you go out and visit with another team, you visit a facility. In my case it was an aged care facility, so I went along as an observer to watch a lady and her dog and how they interact with the the residential, aged care residents to get the hang of it, and then the next step a week later, someone came and watched me with Reggie. You know a real life situation to see how we went and make comments about what we're doing. And there's a range of protocols things, particularly in aged care. Making sure you know, you don’t trip or leave people's walking frames too far away or disconnected their oxygen mask. Make sure you, yeah, that sort of things. Make sure the dog doesn’t crush them. So there is an examination that we have to sort of pass, a a test which is put together by Sharon. Paws pet therapy is absolutely outstanding. If you get the chance to talk to her, she’s brilliant.

Speaker 1

I have met her, she's lovely and wonderful.

Speaker 2

She's really extremely competent. But so that was the process. And then they matched me up with the aged care facility at a time. I went for a few years, but I've been to many, many different types of facilities. And most recently, oh, you'll probably have questions about this, but over 5 years, I have been to most of the sorts of facilities that paws services.

Speaker 1

So how many like could you tell me about what you're doing at the moment?

Speaker 2

Okay, at the moment, So nothing in Western Sydney, at the Cumberland Hospital at Westmead complex there for several years, Covid interrupted. That was absolutely fantastic

in the sense that the people there, the people are severely uh, the people in society have got the most disadvantage. Most of them are locked up. It's a secure facility and they have acute psychiatric illness, or because the police have put them there for crimes relating to or offences not necessarily convictions, but offenses where there’s a mental health issue. other people who are a schizophrenic and all kinds of problems. So it's a full gamut of mental health. And I felt that Probably that's worthwhile work, because a lot of these people have never held a dog, and they've been some people people that are using it. And often many of them have had very little love in their life, so to have a dog hugging them and licking them and and being affectionate is very powerful stuff for the person and it’s highly emotional for the staff, and the amount of time the staff start crying. I couldn't count on one hand, I mean 2 hands, and it's it's It's fairly draining for myself and and for the dog. After an hour and a half. It's it's pretty full on. So that was the best example of the most complex work. Yesterday I I visit on a regular basis a mental health facility at um, Coogee, The Sydney clinic, which is a private health clinic for addiction, plus mood disorder, which is, you know, anxiety, eating disorder, depression, anxiety. Again, everything except like acute psychiatric issues. And and that's fantastic. Because people go for 3 weeks rehab typically, and they’ve got group therapy. They have alcoholics anonymous and narcotics anonymous people, a and doctors and whatever.

Speaker 2

And it's very good for them, because it's really it's a different environment for them. So we got one with a dog to have 2 or 3 minutes with the dog, 5. That's sometimes more. Invariably someone says, This has made my day. In fact, I have heard that several times. Just Tuesday, yesterday of this of this week. And people say, Oh, can you leave him here, can I take him home? It's really good. So the benefits for the inmates is fantastic. Also, not residents. They call them consumers in these places, they don’t call them residents they don’t call them patients. Sometimes it's customers in the public sphere. They call them customers, but often they call people in a mental health rehab clinic consumers. The other one I do is local. It's local, I'm here. The other one I do is a residential aged care facility in Lane Cove, Carolyn Chisholm home. There are about 20 40 beds there, I suppose. Invariably, they’ve got a dementia ward which is secure, and then they have another ward which is still within the grounds, which the grounds are all secure, for obvious reasons, they can't let people get out. It's it's a form of, it's really, they are incarcerated, but the dementia (…?) it's quite interesting. They get a lot of benefit.

Speaker 2

that it was yesterday, today or tomorrow, frankly. And and you know we're like, they get a lot of benefit from cuddles with the dog and whatever it does, bring back some memories for them, and it's good for the staff. It's a bit of respite for the staff to have someone else there watching them, because I have to have staff close by all the time.

So that's a that's extremely beneficial. Other places. Last week I was at Macquarie University, where they had a student’s day. It was exam time, and they were going to ask for about 4 or 5 teams to come along and just sort of hang out the court yard and just let people pat the dogs and cuddle them and sit there and have a good time. That's pretty special. very tiring for the dogs, because the students get very enthusiastic about having dogs around, and particularly for students from offshore Indian Indian kids, for example, aren’t used to dogs. And in India that's not regard very favourably. So some students step back and don't want to engage. But look, 99.9% of people love the opportunity to just have a break. It takes their mind off things. So otherwise of visitors. University of Western Sydney Ive visited a lot of student days out there. I’ve been to university of New South Wales a couple of times. Places like emergency ambulance call out center in triple 0 where it's really high stress. They get emergency calls in and they deploy ambulances and having the dog there makes a big difference. In fact, they like to say (…?) like their own dog. So that's good ambulance services. The patient ambulance services look, so many corporates, legal firms. You name it. So it's been a fantastic journey for me and I've just recently become treasure of the of the charity which at 72. I'm not too sure of how good of an idea it was but I'm doing it.

Speaker 1

Oh, no, that's great congratulations

Speaker 2

I don’t know if it’s something to be congratulated for, someone’s got to do it. So Paws has been very good for me, the the family loves it. You know you ask more questions and I’ll fill in.

Speaker 1

I'm just amazed by how many amazing things you’ve done. a couple of things that you said I'm interested in. You said that the dogs get quite tired when a lot of people around like to tell me how you know that and what you would do in that situation.

Speaker 2

Ah, look it’s important that you have a break half way through during a visit. A visit can go for an hour to an hour and a half, typically, about an hour, sometimes it’s a bit less if there, for example at the clinic yesterday, students who were out and about doing things. Excuse me, doing things. So we got through in just under an hour, but it's it best to give the dogs to drink, so they get a break halfway through. But the level of animation decreases over time when he first gets there. in the morning, for example, before we go, like he has a shower, so he has a shampoo. Gets all cleaned up and sits in front of the heater and dries off

Speaker 1

Every time?

Speaker 2

Every time every visit his going to be washed within 24 hours of going out and be thoroughly clean and breath fresh, and whatever they he's shampoo costs. Well, my, the dog shampoo is very expensive, so he gets the shampoo. The little vest comes out of the he's he's beside himself once he knows he's off, so he's in the car. and when he gets the highly animated and really wanting to talk to everybody and go here, go there, and so after an hour you can see the fatigue building up and coming out of the car. He's pretty much out of sleep, and then, later in the day, yesterday we went for a walk. But the energy levels get subdued So

Speaker 2

I'm conscious there is a level to how much a dog can do it. 2 weeks ago I was out Friday at the aged care, Monday at the clinic, and, this was last week, Tuesday at the University, and that was plenty. So after 3 outings in the four days, I think you know I'm I'm feeling I'm not doing him justice. I'm not being kind to him. So you always want to feel that you're not pushing him to to do something he doesn't want to do, or he's doing it out of love and loyalty as an act of love, but so very sensitive about that, and says that the charity the dog comes first every time. Yeah.

Speaker 1

And what about you yourself like you said before

Speaker 2

I I I I look forward to it. It's an outing, one likes to get Yeah, I I like to get out. I like to engage with people. I can see the benefit, I guess. it's been. It's it's just a very meaningful thing to do. And we, we're very strong, advocates anyone who does it. Some people do it and then stop it. It's just like once you get into it. It's it's It gets very much ingrained in your lifestyle, maybe a person. But so so I'm a very big advocate of it. fundraising and supporting it. Okay, I came from a corporate career. I was self-employed, had my own business for 25 odd years as a financier. Yeah. that was good. But it was all consuming 7 days a week, you know, 365 days a year. I didn't do much else, you know, dare I say I was successful, so it took a lot out of me, and this is a complete change from anything I've ever done, and I really enjoy it.

Speaker 1

That's amazing. And it seems like you are so so busy.

Speaker 2

Not busy, I've got appointments and things but not busy. a lot of community work, plus the Paws work. And my wife's a local counselor. So I tend to do a lot of the which I thoroughly enjoy doing things around the house, you know, washing, ironing and cooking lots of stuff we're going to enjoy after a life of not being home. It was not being so. Yeah, it could be. That's great. Oh, wow! That very interesting! let me see with

Speaker 1

this is just a question that you brought up before. You've said that you've worked in a lot of different areas. But do you choose those yourself, or is that something that's, how do you choose?

Speaker 2

It’s offered, it's like we've got something like 90 facilities waiting to get teams of dogs to go to them. We don't have enough people. We’ve only got about 90 people at the moment we're visiting about 60 facilities, and we could handle, there’s demand for about another 90 facilities give or take. So they put an offer out there to the experienced people, would you like to do this. Would you like to do that? And you could say yes or no when they when you first start off, it's a bit more scientific that they try and match you up something that's going to set you and set the dog not too far from where you live. Not too challenging, like. I don't do stuff with with primary school kids. Not that I don’t like primary school kids. I got grandkids, but there are some people a better suited to, you know, reading classes and having the dog in a classroom environment. So I prefer to go with people, I think, mainly mental health because they are the ones who really get a lot of benefit from it.

Speaker 1

Yeah, wow, it seems like, yeah, that's very interesting

Speaker 2

Look, you know, we some funny, not funny ones, but different, was like it was a a weekend at a play school, but Narrabeen sports camp there have been. Yeah. Well, they do weekend camps for disadvantaged kids. We had a a day out there with a group of tourette's kids for age teenagers from that I guess. I 14 to maybe 30, but most of them around the late teams, early twenties. And you know what Tourrettes is the the ticking. And it was really good, really beneficial. And we had another one there on a weekend with kids who in wheelchairs and that was pretty special as well. So That's what Paws covers, you know, and Paws charges a fee for us to go out, and that’s how they get some money in. But Sharon, there’s many things when people can't afford it. For example, up in the mountains, when they had that bad car accident up in the school crossing. I forget the suburb it was. It was up in the up in the Southern Highlands in the car. Yeah, I think it mowed down a whole bunch of kids. Well, the school reached out to Sharon, and she got 5 or 6 teams of people down there to just be at the school gate when kids came to school appearance to ease the pain, and we don't charge for that sort of thing. And this is, I didn't know it's just a bit too far away, a sort of 2 hour drive. But this thing in the hunter Valley, this tragedy on the weekend, which none of us could believe it happened. Already, we've reached out to some of the other Dog Associations, saying, If you want some support with teams to come up to be with, people will be there, and I expect that will happen at some point in time. I think some people take that. I think I remember people taking dogs for a funeral once I might be wrong there, but that it's where people are sort of distressed. And it's of just takes just changes people's moods instantly.

Speaker 1

Yeah, wow, that's that's really beautiful, that they're doing that.

Speaker 2

yeah. So it's it's a very integrated sort of charity.

Speaker 1

Yeah, that's amazing. And you are a volunteer yourself?

Speaker 2

Yeah, we’re all volunteers. Everyone's a volunteer Sharon. There's a small administration, and they they get paid as office staff. But effectively, it's the equivalent of 2 full time people are running 90 teams. The leverage is is very good, the leverage of the the benefit. I think we worked out. We do 140,000 different interactions with people each year. So it's pretty pretty good. That's just on the existing level of activity.

Speaker 1

Wow, well, hopefully, you know, hopefully, we can get more people doing it. And we can contribute to you know why we want to know? Because you're the person that's there and your dog the person doing it. So we need to make sure you all.

Speaker 2

And yeah, we were doing a lot of work on that at the moment to get more volunteers. Covid. A lot of people. We we sort of stopped, over covid for obvious reasons. Well, pretty much stopped. There were some One on one visits to homes, believe it or not. But A lot of volunteers didn't come back. We got used to a different way of life, and they haven't returned in the same volume. So we we're flying our way back from, you know, having 150 on volunteers to to get back up to that sort of number again.

Speaker 1

Wow! Well, good luck. And I know that you are someone who will advocate for that. So very good. okay. So my next question is about culture. So culture can be defined as the beliefs, values, and social behaviours of a group of people. I'm trying to learn more about the culture of Paws organization.

Speaker 2

Oh, the the culture of Paws is it's it's selfless, really. It's it's giving time, time for other people's benefit of the other day, and it's a it's a common thing right throughout everybody. Sharon, who runs it. It's amazing person she won't tell you her story, but it's quite unique. She grew up, not knowing her father. She's had her house burnt down. She's a cancer survivor. And her husband’s had cancer. And then she's had everything thrown at her, and she bounces back and is the most resilient person that's just doing a fantastic job. And she she puts a self way beyond the call of duty.

Speaker 2

It gets her down sometimes. But a remarkable person. The culture is permeating though, the organisation, yeah.

Speaker 1

that's beautiful that's really lovely. I didn't know that about her, but I was lucky enough to meet her, and I'm sure I will again.

Speaker 2

Yeah. She’s fantastic yeah, very strong woman. And there are some young people involved belive it or not. There are some people who the age group of the volunteers apart from old buggers. A lot of women are working full time who might have an hour or so. You know, it takes about the actual visits an hour, and then you've got to get ready, drive there and come home, so it probably it could be 3 h of time a week or 2 and a half hours. So, but there are a younger people who are doing it. and a lot of people do it for their own benefit as much as they patients benefit. You know it' be good for them as well.

Speaker 1

So why do you do it?

Speaker 2

Why, oh, it's very good, it’s outstanding for my mental health. It's also outstanding, because it's makes such a valuable contribution. You know. It's just gives you a buzz. I mean, I feel good just talking about it, and then that would be the actions that you had.

Speaker 1

Okay, I'm so sorry about that. Excuse me.

Speaker 2

I can tell you a brief story which happened recently at the Sydney clinic when we're just finishing, we were leaving. And there was a a young person, I guess I'd say, like late teens. who was just being admitted, and she was beside herself. She's wailing, not just crying, or sobbing, you know, when people wail with grief. It's sort of that. It's a different element of of crying. She's wailing, and her mother was there, speaking to someone or face timing her. So it's like idea. And I she was there for a mood disorder, so I I don't know but she didn't want to be there, and she was really very confused, but. I was just leaving with Reggie, and there were 2 admission staff trying to settle them down. There was a a clinical nurse who had come down. I they just got the doctor down as well as her mother, but in all there were about 7 people surrounding this poor bloody girl that was just beside herself. you know. That's just what I said do you like dogs. She said yes. anyway, within 5 minutes of just sitting down and talking to her, picking the dog up, cuddling it. stroking it, all all the tears, all the wailing she’d settled down, and there was a doctor that I know was there to give a tablet to her to settle them down. That's what they do when they get to. And they they stabilize their needs. And yet all those people couldn't do a thing. It was little 7 kg, dog with a few smiles, and cuddles that pacified this person. It was the most amazing thing.

Speaker 1

So I don't. I'm not surprised at all. I think that's incredible. I mean.

Speaker 2

it's that's typical. Those sorts of things are not uncommon, you know. The other thing about is that You meet people that you would never meet or interact with. So it's give me a much broader perspective on my life and

Speaker 2

disadvantage that I would. It would have had having a privileged you know privileged, very privileged life. You just don't get to meet people who either been in jail to be chronic. I've seen some people who have self abuse with the scars all the way down there arm where they have slashed themselves.

I mean up at the psychiatric clinic, and they they they interact with the dog, and they feel better. And from my point of view, it's just so, you know, there's so many people out there that can benefit from this. And so with, well.

Speaker 1

I agree, I agree, and don't worry. I will definitely be doing this at some point. When I finished my, I can't believe the the passion that that you will have makes me very excited. So it's beautiful. Okay, I'm gonna ask some questions about Reggie. Now we've spoken about him a little bit. What's your perception of the experiences of for him?

Speaker 2

I I think. Look that dogs just unconditional love. very rarely has He been hurt. Sometimes I think he probably might yelp if they pick him up in incorrectly. The dog I think he's he's a job with, and I know he just loves it. You know it just just. It's beside himself with with excitement. And just they are very social dogs King Charles Cavaliers. They were bred to be lap dogs, so bred to be course dogs in the Middle Ages the middle centuries for the court court, with and have on their lap, and to pat and be affectionate. So that's what he does that that's his thing.

Speaker 2

And he's very popular wherever we go. So he, he never doesn't want to do it when the time when it when it gets older. And arthritic and it's hard work. That's when it'll it'll stop.

Speaker 1

Yeah, that's when you okay. So did you choose him because of his? because of what you said the history.

Speaker 2

No, He was a rescue dog. We have another cavalier as well as another one round here somewhere. We had 5 cavaliers in the family at one stage, but no he was a rescue dog, Reggie. So we went out, and we had a daughter in law working at a as a the dog shelter in Kogra, (Cat and dog something I think it is?) And anyway, she was working and Reggie came in, and he was totally amanciated, and a woman who had him hadn't been able to look after him, and be able to feed him. And he was skinny as all hell. So she said, What you know, how about this? And I said, Yeah.

Speaker 2

I was in 2 minds about it, getting a second dog, because I didn't want the first dog to be put out. But anyway, it's been fantastic. Yeah.

Speaker 1

But it. Was this the right breed? So?

Speaker 2

Oh, it's true that I have no intention of. I haven't even thought about Pet Therapy when we got him, that came down the track. Came a couple of years down the track.

Speaker 1

Is there a reason why your other dog is not appropriate?

Speaker 2

Yeah, not as outgoing. Not as comfortable having people pick him up and cuddling him. And he’s a bit more redescent. Not all dogs can do it, that’s for sure. Some dogs are anxious, they can’t do it.

Speaker 1

that's very interesting. Yes, I don't think my dogs are very suitable, either.

Speaker 2

Well some kelpies can be really good at it. Smart dogs, a husky is pretty independent dog. I don't know how they would go.

Speaker 1

He’s very emotional, the husky. But It's a bit like you, said Independent. He'll do what he wants, not what you want so, good and bad things about the both.

Speaker 2

Well you’ve got a busy, busy life? Would you have to exercise those a lot.

Speaker 1

Oh, yes, every day, twice a day. Iand lots of ball throwing for the kelpy. The husky wants walks, and the Kelpie wants a ball, so we give him a bit, both. okay, so

Speaker 1

okay, so We've kind of spoken about this a little bit. how does Paws pet therapy ensure inclusive and safe practices for the dogs involved.

Speaker 2

yeah, mainly through the initial training and people being sufficiently mature. And if they dogs not enjoy it, you just you wouldn't do it. I I don't think anyone can put their dog through it. usually unless we get the odd, usually that might be to do to do with dogs? Health? particularly on most recent things that have to be vaccinated for what to look out for. We don't get many reminders, of course, Sharon is pretty closely with with as many of us as she can. I think. we have functions, social functions one or 2 a year get together. So cool volunteers, your Christmas sort of function, and other ones volunteers, days and things like that. But you know, if she's stretched. She she's stretched, she's got a lot of work to do to match people up, because sometimes the facility will cancel like with an outbreak of covid, you can’t come or this flu. You can't afford the volunteer. A couple of weeks ago I had a cold fix, my grandkids and I couldn't. I couldn't go for 2 weeks, so she's busy juggling all the the timetable so that that that limits how much sort of what do you call it? Not support works. You can do for volunteers. Mainly. It's it's from yourself, you, you you you wouldn't keep doing it unless you thought it was worthwhile, and you wouldn't put your dog through it unless you thought it was worthwhile. so it's really it is self governing to a large degree, I suspect, would be a reasonable way to put it

Speaker 1

So. But so what's in it for, Reggie? What do you think that?

Speaker 2

Oh, well, it's it's an outing. You get to see a lot of different people. Interesting people. And the other thing that struck me. The dog is so non-judgemental. It was out at. It's just incredible. Out at Cumberland there was a a a girl. I I can't tell you how large she was, but this was obesity and she had all kinds of mental health problems and diabetic problems. But I mean, I I'm huge it just a a young person, and with mental health problems as well. And I got a shock when I first saw her I was actually shocked. And I I when she’s sitting down her stomach was almost touching the floor. I mean it was. It was really not a well person, and really it it was actually upsetting to see someone in that state. Doesn't, doesn’t worry the dog. Hes over there onto the lap, cuddling her, giving her licks and being nice. That tells you a lot about how people perceive other people, anyway. First visit after I kept going back and saw this girl half a dozen set times, and the physical appearance in the end didn't matter. You know, it was just that's who she was. So that's all there was was to it. First up, it was a real shock. I'll never forget it, anyway. Yeah, okay, today, Reggie, what was the question, how does he?

Speaker 1

What's in it for him? You've answered it very well.

Speaker 2

He gets pats , he gets pats. You’re not allowed to feed him, people would love to feed him. I don’t give him treats either. some people train their dogs to do the tricks, so when they take them out and therapy the dog, can, you know, stand up and dance and roll over. But we don't do any of that. It's just sort of for just just interaction.

Speaker 1

That's great. just going through my questions to see if there's anything else I have me, if I can. You've answered a lot of my questions without me even asking them. So just seeing if theres anything else that I want to ask specifically. any other really question would be regarding like, how does Reg, you know when he's working or not working or like how do you? How does he have a good? Tell me about his life balance in his work versus his.

Speaker 2

Yeah, he's like, well, it's only once a week for an hour, and he looks forward to it. There’s no question about that, because in the morning as soon as he says he has a shower or gets shampooed, he know’s something's happening. And then, when he sees the little vest thing that goes on him. He! He! He gets all excited, and he's off to the car. He's barking. We got a seatbelt thing that we put on the harness, and he goes in the back. he knows he's off somewhere, so He's well, well and truly tuned into it by that point in time, and then when he gets there, he just can't wait to get inside. You know, it's it's it's amazing.

Speaker 1

Does he like having a bath?

Speaker 2

You know. Yeah. Doesn't doesn't struggle at all, just stands there, and has the shower he's good. He's and his brother makes a nice warm shower. so it's no, they they're very comfortable with it.

Speaker 1

and you told me about some of the You know the rewarding and good experiences. Have you tell me about any challenges that you've had in your role?

Speaker 2

oh sometimes people can be a bit too enthusiastic. mental health. People want to grab them and hold them too much. And sometimes older people, but to me that people haven't got the physical coordination to hold the dog, and I want to grab them too much. But that's just something. You sort of help manage things like that.

Speaker 1

what about for you. Have you had any challenges or any really good experiences with the.

Speaker 2

there was a person last week, It was really funny in aged care, she said ‘oh, shit! There is that bloody dog again! I wish it'd fuck off.’ It was as funny hellas it was so funny that you know it was a demented lady, and you have some funny things like one guy who I first met had been admitted to dementia ward what he was younger younger than much younger than me, only be in his fifties. And you can strike early. Actually, it's it's it's quite interesting. And it can strike If someone's had a disease, one girl had multiple sclerosis, I think, in a way she became demented and passed away. The one goes. His name was don, he said. Good day Speaker 2. My name's Don. I don't know whether it's yesterday today or tomorrow, and that was the only stage in the dementia. So. You have a laugh about that, but it's pretty serious stuff. The aged care side of things, because most people don't want to go, there. their relatives. And that's the saddest thing I found really seeing somebody, gets admitted, and if you go back and back, I had one mental health facility at the time that I mentioned, and you see someone get admitted, and each week the daughter would come along, relative would come along to visit them, but that gradually fades away. They they don't like the if they may pass away, and you know, 3 or 6 months time is a little unusual to say that some people live there for a long time. They get thoroughly institutionalized. They've gone there for different reasons, and it was good to form relationships with people. I look forward to you coming and have a bit of a chat. but Still, they're not places that people choose to go to, and that's for sure.

Speaker 1

And does that affect you? Seeing people in that like that, or

Speaker 2

Look it’s not enriching, it sort of gives you insight. When people start talking bout aged care problems. I've been to far more aged care and probably not in opposite of the population, just by virtue, maybe a dozen or 15 places around Sydney in the last few years. But most people don't go and visit these places unless they are a professional or they. They are a patient, and the average person in the street’s got no idea what they actually like. So They might visit a relative occasionally, but they don't understand. The staff are fantastic by the state.Most of them, I see. So they get paid well enough and the sector struggles. But as you're aware, that's big address currently through this inquiry that the ministers announced last week. So from my point it it it's just it's just insightful. Staff appreciate it. The staff really a big part of it, too. They get a lot of benefit out of it as well.

Speaker 1

Yeah. And when you and when you're saying a patient or a consumer. can you tell me about some of the interactions that you have? Are you talking to them? Are you?

Speaker 2

Yeah, introduce, say, say, someone's a bedridden, for example. Reggie small enough, I think to get up on the on the bed. It's so. I'll help you up, and I'll say to you “Would you like the dog up on your bed? they say, “Oh, yes, please” He's up there. It's easier for me to to sit on the chair beside them, or sometimes on on the side. Sometimes il say can I sit on the end of your bed? they'll often sit in a chair. So Reggie He's always on the lead. He’s never off the lead. So that's that's the important thing. so he'll jump up and like they're so preoccupied with the dog, most of them all remember the dog, perhaps one week to the next. They won't remember my name. And they will remember the dog's name that's happened a lot. But so they’ll pat him and say “oh isn’t he beautiful” and I’ll say ‘yeah, like he's been doing for 5 years, and he's nice and playing, and he's a good dog. And basically there's, you know, about 10 things that you can say. He's got a brother at home, and whatever.And sometimes people start talking about their life story. And that's always quite interesting to hear where they’ve come from. You always ask, did you have dogs? And you know most of them will have had dogs, and and that's the thing they go to. Aged care and that’s the thing they cant take their dogs. for some people that pain is enormous, and that's that case in private mental health, people can't take their dogs so for them to have a dog coming in, even though it's not their own dog is pretty important for them.

Speaker 1

Oh, wow, yeah, I really feel for them. I can imagine being away from my dogs without, you know.

Speaker 2

Yeah, ours Come with us on holidays, and they never go to a kennel, and I've got 3 kids, they all share looking after them. But so they part of the family. So how many of these interviews are you doing?

Speaker 1

You are my second. I'm looking to do 5 I've only had one other person interested at the moment, but they aren't currently, There dog is currently having a bit of a break. So just waiting to see what happens from here to do, because it's only doing an honours project. Not a Ph. D, so I've only got a certain amount of time to do it. So it's just a kind of small project. And yeah, so I'm looking to do 5 interviews and 5 observations. Oh, okay, well, if you want an observation happy to do that, that's I think I did actually get an email. So you mentioned 2 of the places that I had had a contact from? I'm not quite sure Well, that actually is the that the rest of that was the end of my questions. sorry we can talk about the observation in a moment. But do you have any other? Do you have any questions for me?

Speaker 2

Yeah, ho do you propose to use your apart from getting it all as I was award of honours and be able to make more money as a occupational therapist. Well, I've had a diversional therapy like mental health at Cumberland I had people who were diversional therapists as opposed to occupational therapists, which is slightly different. I guess it's not as hardly qualified. But this particular.

Speaker 1

That was another option for me.

Speaker 2

Yeah, was it? Yeah. Well, the the 2 have to be very closely aligned because I have occupational therapies in in the mental health area. So where do you hope to work, Speaker 1, and what do you hope to do?

Speaker 1

So now that I've been doing this definitely, I'm so much more interested in this area. unfortunately, as I said before, my dogs aren't really. I don't think that they would be appropriate for this kind of work, but Sharonn has invited me to come and do a training day, if that's something that I interested in. But first of all, so I'll be finished at the end of the year, and I would like to work with adults. I like working with people, elderly people and mental health similar to you. I currently work at a rehab hospital at the moment, and we have hospitals as well. But let's yeah, we've got a lot more. so mainly I work with stroke patients amputee and people with like a different, that spinal cord injuries things like that and disability support work as well at the moment. So I definitely prefer working with adults. I really love working with that also. Yeah, I really enjoy it. So I don't really. I don't really know. I'm just really excited to be in it. I think it's really for me. And I it's going to be a really amazing rewarding job.

Speaker 2

So it's it's demanding, you know, mostly demanding stuff, particularly when you're dealing with people who have been severely disadvantaged. You know it's

Speaker 1

I'm an OT assistant at the moment. So I've been working in a hospital for the last 6 years. in working in. So I you know. Obviously I'm not at it yet, but I kind of understand what I'm getting myself into a little bit, and I'm really excited, like some like, same as you like. I can't believe that that's something I get paid for. I love my job so much. So I'm really excited to be in it. But this has really opened up my eyes, and like some of the stories that I've heard, and the passion that I hear in the people that I interviewed is just really beautiful, and I'm so passionate about this.

Speaker 2

Let's not even if we take your kelpie. We take a dog along just to see what happens. You'd find it very insightful. And you know you could also askthe question.

Speaker 1

Shes only one. So I just got to cut her nails, and she should be a bit better. Well, yeah, that's exactly right. Yeah. Yeah. Shes just a bit too excited. They both are, yeah. Do you have any other questions for me or anything else?

Speaker 2

I think it's fantastic work that you do. You know, it's a real calling, and the pet therapy is is very big at the States. I have a interesting story. A friend of mine is very, very wealthy. I touched him up for a large sum of money, but his his sister in the States did through it in a hospital in California, so he could identify with it immediately. And you know, 40% of all Australian households have a dog. So most people resonate with this, I’m on a fundraising campaign at the moment. So, looking at, you got a dog. You like dogs. This is the good they can do, would you like to support us. So I don't think it's a hard sell, but you know it's a the 60,000 on charities in Australia, and they're all willing. Anyway, talk to Sharon if you want an Observation. Happy for that. But you know it's good.

Speaker 1

Well, I did have a email here that I'm just wanted to touch base with you on, if you don't mind. I got an email from. Let's just quickly find it. Where are you? Regarding a appointment with, I thought you. But no, I'm not sure, Frank. from yeah. Yeah. So he has, requested. We have discussed potentially me coming on the twenty-seventh of June. I'm just waiting for his reply. And I didn't have you in that email. Is that okay for me to come and observe it.

Speaker 2

Yeah, it's 1120 tricky time, but they break out of group classes at about 1130, so I get to about 1120 in the morning, for now.

Speaker 1

So I should be there at 11 am?

Speaker 2

Oh, no, it's it's 1115 is plenty. parking. It'd be very tough down there.

Speaker 1

Yeah, okay, I'll give myself heaps of time. I don't want to miss out. The only thing that we were having issues with that. So I was waiting for so I've been able to get consent from you. and I need consent from whoever it is that so I won't be observing you. I won't be observing the participant. I'll be observing Reggie, but I still need I'll sorry the consumer. I still need consent from the consumer regarding whether I can be there to observe. Reggie, do you think that any of the patients that the consumers that you say that would be appropriate.

Speaker 2

You could also say, you on training as the other side. If you have a genuine desire to this work. It's just part of a research project and also training. I don't know nobody. I can't see anybody objecting to that at all, because I have a lot of young people there from various a lot of health facilities who are there for training and observation as well, with that students in the past as well. I'm sure of that. That's up to Frank to he's a staff member. He's a he's what's called a peer support person. He! He coordinates the the business. So he's the right guy to to speak

Speaker 1

right, because I wasn't quite sure exactly who he said he was it lived lived experience peer support. I wasn't sure if he was the consumer. I was a little bit confused. That's great. That's amazing. I'll look forward to meeting him as well. Would I be able to just CC you into that email thread?

Speaker 2

Just, I'll be going. So it'll be fine.

Speaker 1

Okay, great. Well, I'll be in contact with you closer to the time to just to let you know that before that I'm actually coming. Thank you so much.

Speaker 2

How many words have to be! How many words did you say you have to be in front of the whole thing,

Speaker 1

I think, is 12000 that I've just done on it. It has been more than that, because it's just on my literature review. It's 5,000 methodology with 3,000. I'm just doing it one day at a time. About 15000 I think it is altogether

Speaker 2

I'm sure Sharon will be interested in that. And I will be interested in that

Speaker 1

absolutely yes, yes, I would, definitely. So I will be handing in my paper to the university, and then I'll also potentially be writing a journal article as well. So I'll make sure that you are you and everyone involved is more than welcome to read that. So thank you so much for your time. I know we've got a little bit over.

Speaker 2

But no, no, no, no, it's it's great. I really appreciate it, and good back to you.