



Volunteer News March Update

Dear Valued Volunteers,

Well 2019 has certainly got off to a great start! We are close to the end of the first quarter and so much has been achieved already.

Premises

We finished 2018 signing the lease for [27 Ross Smith Avenue East](#) on 1 December. While the boutique was closed over the Christmas break and many of you took a well-deserved break – a stalwart few were working hard to render No. 27 fit for work! Our friends at Project One Construction – Ben and his team – got stuck straight in and completed all the building work before Christmas, including creating a walkway between the two buildings, effectively creating one large space.

Through the Christmas period Robyn Wight and Robyn Tredinnick performed miracles with paint and cleaning equipment to render the premises fit to occupy. Our heartfelt thanks ladies!

Promotional Material

With the launch of Smart Blokes and Be Who you Are as well as the need to bring Groomed to Go to the fore, we needed to revamp all our marketing materials. Rhonda Idzcak took this task on in addition to the many other duties she performs on our behalf and has done a sensational job of creating a whole new look for the organisation! Thank you and congratulations Rhonda!



People

Just prior to Christmas we welcomed Sandy Gregory, our Program Manager, tasked with ensuring the efficient execution of the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund grant. Sandy has settled in well and proven that there is no job too big or detail too small for her to tackle – welcome once again Sandy and thanks for the great job you are doing thus far.



Christine Hodges took on the role of Recruitment Team leader just before Christmas. Thanks to Christine for taking on this important role.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some of our dedicated volunteers who have recently resigned. Robyn Thomas was with us for 4 years, and was always fantastic with the clients. Amy Marais has relocated to Sydney due to work commitments - Any volunteered once a month and Saturdays for our post employment sessions for around 2 years. Fay Murphy was with us for around 2 years and has unfortunately resigned due to ill-health. Many thanks ladies, for your enthusiastic service to Dress for Success South East Melbourne.

Team meetings

Prior to the opening of Dress for Success South East Melbourne on January 14, the Team Leaders met to review the plans for the year, including timelines for the launch of our new programs, the potential to introduce a fee for service model and to meet Tanya Williams, our Team Leader for the Be Who You Are Program. Welcome Tanya and congratulations to you and Susan Brown on the development of the program. If you haven't had a chance to listen, Susan has participated in a couple of great interviews with our program ambassadors, Rebecca Lovejoy (<https://joy.org.au/thegenderagenda/2018/11/22/ep-51-a-day-of-remembrance/> - starts at the 15 minute mark) and Sandra Pankhurst (<https://www.buzzsprout.com/249314/985130-sandra-pankhurst-friends-ep-3?fbclid=IwAR3Mbfj7DPvRXJ8XJf2Qng9A-nYg5XrbNX5hIUeEj62-kZrgwz3Jy5w3fo0>). Thanks to Susan for this great promotion of our services!

In February, all volunteers were invited to participate in a Volunteer Kick off Day to learn of our plans for the year, new programs and processes and to

discuss the changes that have come along so quickly over the past few months. Thirty-four volunteers participated in the day, which was facilitated by Dina Pozzo from Insium Pty Ltd, who gave of her time on the day. Those of you who participated, would have received your letter from yourself, as a reminder of the resolutions made on the day. I do hope you all enjoyed the experience and took away new knowledge and an understanding of the direction of Groomed to Go. Always happy to hear your feedback, which you can add to the Suggestion Box in the kitchen or contact me or any of the Committee of Management directly.

International Women's Day

Many thanks to Frankston Women Connect, who once again held a fabulous luncheon to honour International Women's Day, with 50% of the proceeds coming to Dress for Success South East Melbourne. Attendees heard fascinating presentations from Kerry Tucker, Robin Bowles & Sandra Pankhurst. A wonderful time was had by all – thanks to Frankston RSL for hosting and providing a sumptuous lunch!



The poster features a purple and white color scheme. At the top, it reads "International Women's Day Luncheon" in purple text, with a logo for "WOMEN CONNECT FRANKSTON" to the right. Below this, a purple banner contains the text "WOMEN IN CRIME EVENT" in white. The bottom section of the poster is divided into three columns, each featuring a portrait of a woman and her name and profession below it: Kerry Tucker (5 yrs in Maximum Security), Robin Bowles (True Crime Writer), and Sandra Pankhurst (Trauma Cleaner).

Open for Business!

Since then, it has been business as usual at DFS SEM , with 55 clients attending our dressing service. Career Centre Workshops re-opened on 7th March, with 8 clients attending workshops so far in 2019.

Smart Blokes dressed its first clients on Tuesday 26 February. Thus far we have dressed 14 men and 11 have participated in interview coaching. Huge thanks are due to Netsa Horsey and Sheila Sedgwick who have added shifts as Service Coordinators for Smart Blokes to their existing workload for women. Thanks to Sonia Alberca, who has been tireless in her support of this program and to new recruits Len and Irene who have brought their extensive expertise in menswear to us at Smart Blokes. To the already stretched Career Mentor team – Julia, Fiona, Rebecca, Lorraine – thank you so much for helping out our male clients.

On March 5, the first full day workshop of our Be Who You Are transgender program was conducted to a full house. Attendees participated in a Celebrate Me: Building Self Esteem workshop and had fun in the boutique being styled.

Feedback was extremely positive and constructive ensuring this program will continue to evolve to best address our clients needs. From April we will have the support of Kristen Prins with wigs and hairstyling and from May Will Costello will join the team to provide tips on makeup and looking one's best! Congrats again to the BWYA team!



Desperately Seeking Volunteers!!

With the launch of Smart Blokes, our resources are stretched to the limit. We desperately need more volunteers for both programs, especially Smart Blokes. Please spread the word about what a fulfilling experience you have at Groomed to Go! Any expressions of interest should be directed to volunteering@groomedtogo.org.

Vacancies include Stylists and Career Mentors for both men and women, so please, if you have any experience or desires in this area, or know individuals who could assist, make yourself known to Sue Large, Sandy Gregory and Alison Swift.



Systems and Processes

Two BIG improvements have been initiated in the first months of the year. Firstly, thanks to Lori Polkinghorn who has researched and developed a new set of databases for us to manage our business. The Volunteer database was

rolled out in December and the new Client database in January, just prior to our opening for the year. This system is easy and intuitive and importantly is able to flex with us as we grow. Lori is constantly refining the system and it will allow us to keep track of all our activities in one place – Hallelujah!

Very early in Sandy's tenure, the Committee tasked her with investigating methods of reviewing our financial sustainability post the cessation of our grant funding which ceases at the end of 2019 . I am pleased to report that the initiative to charge a fee for service to our referring agencies commenced on 25 February. Huge thanks to Sandy for the speed with which she investigated, performed due diligence and sought customer feedback on this change to our operations. Most of our referral agencies have access to government funds to support their job seeker's efforts to find work. Groomed to Go qualifies for this funding and we are now charging a variable rate to these agencies, depending upon the clients' pathway. If you have any queries about this fee, feel free to chat to Sandy.

It is important to note that all our services remain absolutely free to our clients!

AGM and Grand Opening!

Just to round out the first quarter we have conducted our AGM on 21 March, at which the current committee, except Prue Leggoe, was unanimously re-elected. Prue has given so much to Dress for Success and felt the need to step back, but she has not left us! Thank you Prue for your tireless efforts. We also used this occasion to farewell Maureen Robins, who has resigned as Community Engagement Team leader and is taking well-deserved holidays over the next few months.

We decided to hold our Grand Opening on the same night as our AGM as we would have many members already in attendance. It was great to see the turnout! We had 74 acceptances and around 60 plus actual attendees.

We took the opportunity of having many members already in attendance to hold our Grand Opening on Thursday 21 March. It was great to see so many people there! We had 74 acceptances and around 60 plus actual attendees. Mr Chris Crewther, Member for Dunkley, who has been a great supporter over the years, was pleased to attend and to officially declare our fabulous new premises open! In attendance were many past members and volunteers as well as Simon Linardi, the architect who gave so generously of his time and energy to [25 Ross Smith Avenue](#) and our fabulous mural outside.

More thanks are due to Gail and her team who worked hard to make the place ship-shape for the night, to all the Committee members and Christine Hodges who helped with the catering and to Linda for making sure everything ran like clockwork



Thanks to you!

Finally, our thanks to you – our wonderful volunteers, without whom, the organisation does not function! It has been a great start to the year, let's keep up the momentum and cement in our new programs and processes and go on to provide an even better service to clients whom we serve.

Cheers

Marian Gandy

President



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