

“Breaking Free”

The Rainbow Lodge Story

60 Years

Judge Alfred Rainbow – 1900-1963

The Inspiration

5 Judge Alfred Ernest Rainbow Q.C., M.A., LL.B served as one of the Judges of the NSW Workers' Compensation Commission. As a school student he attended the Kings School Parramatta, later studied at Cambridge; was married in 1932; and appointed K.C. during the reign of George VI. He was appointed on 3 July 1946 to a bench of the then Workers Compensation Commission, then comprised of only three other judges. Former High Court Justice, Michael Kirby described his judicial reasoning as “direct, forcefully expressed and intellectually engaged.” He was a great family man, a Lieutenant Colonel in the A.I.F. who saw service during World War II in New Guinea. He was an elite sportsman who played Rugby for NSW, and served the Australian Rugby Union as President, then as Vice President and given life membership of that body. Above all he was a great and practical humanitarian. His life was enriched by personal attributes including fearlessness, compassion and understanding, from which stemmed the dynamic leadership he gave in the Civil Rehabilitation field. He was aged 63 at the time of his death.

In May 1960 the Australian Prison After-Care Council was formed. Judge Rainbow was its inaugural president, a position he retained until his death in December 1963. That group soon morphed into the Australian Crime Prevention Council which is still active today. At the first Council meeting held in Adelaide in 1960, Judge Rainbow was saying such things as: “Many gaols are out-dated”, and “Prisoners should be allowed out of gaol towards the end of their sentences to get accustomed to the outside world.” In respect of that last comment, he noted: “Although this suggestion has been laughed out of court, the Victorian Government had recently amended its Prison Act along these lines.”



Following his early death in December 1963, a number of those who had been associated with the Judge in his professional capacity, or in one of his other interests, decided that such a man richly deserved a Memorial - a living Memorial which would perpetuate this noble work and service to mankind.

And so, in June 1964, The Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund was formed with a committee pledged to the establishment of projects in prison after-care, which through their path-finding qualities, will perpetuate the memory of a man who, in the history of the Australian field of prison after-care, did more than any other person.

The Beginning

In August 1960, four years before the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund was established, a five man delegation led by the Hon. Justice McClemons and including Frank Hayes, the then Chief Parole Officer of the then NSW Prisons Dept., attended the UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Mr. Hayes continued his tour to study into what was then the new development of "half-way houses" in Britain, Los Angeles USA and Ulm in West Germany. He presented his report to Mr. John Maddison, the then Minister of Justice.

To assist in raising the funds necessary for the work to be done, the Committee published a pamphlet called "A Cause Which Counts - Steps to Freedom."

The First Rainbow Lodge

The early Committee included members of the Bankstown Civil Rehabilitation Committee, which had plans for the purchase and financing of a cottage at Bass Hill. At the time, it seemed most practicable that the Fund should concentrate on the raising of money with a view to giving substantial support to the Bankstown Group.

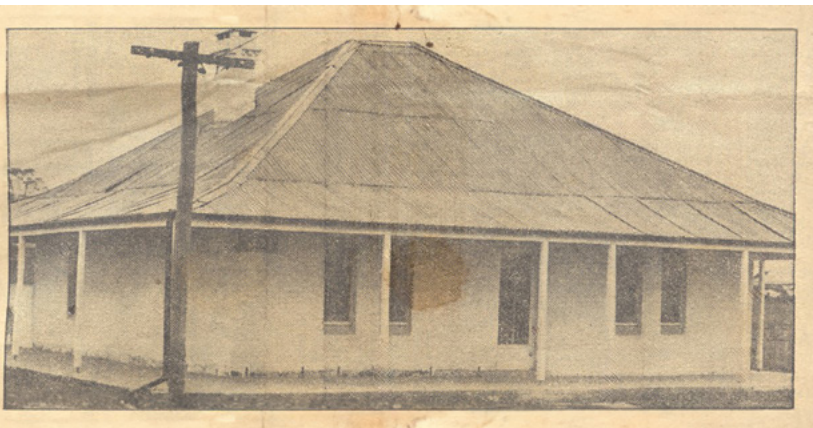
In 1964, a property was purchased at Bass Hill, Bankstown, at a cost of £5,500. An old colonial cottage, standing in an acre of land, lent itself for conversion into a suitable "half-way house" to be known as the Judge Rainbow Memorial Half-Way House. A further £4,000 was being spent on renovation, which included an annex for the supervisor, equipment, and furnishings. Several businessmen, including Mr. Jack Walsh, the President of the Bankstown CRC, guaranteed a loan of £8,000 towards the cost.

This house was to be administered by a Board of Management comprising representatives of the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund, the Bankstown Civil Rehabilitation Committee, and two Government representatives from the Prison's Department. Mr. Frank Hayes was not only the Chief Parole Officer of the then Prisons Department, but he was also a major worker for the Fund.

It employed a House Manager, Mr. Philip Gaffney. The State Government contributed £1500 per year towards his salary and a public appeal was conducted to repay the loan.

The Committee's aim at that time was to open the half-way house for men and later one for women. Bass Hill proved to be unsatisfactory because it was too far away from the city and places of employment at that time. The "half-way house" then moved to premises at Dulwich Hill, where a former prisoner and his wife conducted it. For whatever reasons, having premises at Dulwich Hill proved unsatisfactory. They were closed in September 1970.

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The Move to Wigram Road, Glebe

In the 1960s, the then government decided to build a freeway to the western suburbs which would pass through Glebe. Towards this end, the Department of Main Roads (the DMR) acquired many houses including 22 Wigram Road.

The Government deferred its freeway plan and 22 Wigram Road remained empty. Thanks to representations by the then Management Committee, aided by Frank Hayes, the DMR agreed to lease 22 Wigram Road to the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund. Residents and Staff moved in about April 1971 and have occupied it ever since.

By the mid-1980s the Government had abandoned its freeway plan and the DMR offered to sell 22 Wigram Road to the Rainbow Lodge Memorial Appeal Fund for \$200,000 – a bargain even at that time.

And so, the Committee set about raising the money. It raised close on \$50,000 but were a long way off the \$200,000. Again, the loss of a building to accommodate new released prisoners was facing the Committee, staff, and prospective residents. However, a committee member who knew a senior official in the Housing Commission was able to secure the Commission's assistance. The Commission saved us by buying the premises and leasing it to us for a "peppercorn" rental.

The Residential Experience in the Early Years

All the early residents at the Wigram Road premises were discharged male inmates. They were men usually having difficulty functioning in the community. Almost all lacked family and similar support; Rainbow Lodge acted as a substitute. It sought to provide the residents with supervision, guidance, encouragement and, where needed, actual protection from their own behaviours.

The aim of Rainbow Lodge was in providing the kind of environment and helping services as would enable each resident, in his own time, to develop sufficient strengths to function satisfactorily and to survive on his own in the community without the need to resort to crime. One resident stayed for two years, the longest, while the shortest was a stay of a few days. The average by 1977 was 3 to 4 months. There were "regular returnees" – former residents who had not necessarily returned to prison, but who had

found they were not yet ready to cope with living on their own.

In both 1976 and 1977 there were 41 admissions. The capacity of Rainbow Lodge in those days was limited to eleven or twelve residents at any one time. The daily average during this period was ten residents. The cost of operating Rainbow Lodge in 1977 was \$8.00 per resident, per day – assuming a full capacity of residents each day. Each resident was charged \$30 per week board, but at times short-term concessions were made to those "in necessitous circumstances".

The first Manager of Rainbow Lodge at Wigram Road Glebe was Mr George Jepson, a former prison chaplain who was described, not surprisingly, as having had considerable experience with prisons and prisoners and helping socially disadvantaged people. The Manager's salary was being paid by the Treasury through the Department on the basis he was a Section 44 employee (presumably of the Treasury). A relief manager worked two days weekly and covered for the Manager when he was ill or on recreation leave. Government support was limited to provision of the premises and salaries for the manager and relief manager.

All other costs of operating Rainbow Lodge have been met by the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund, supplemented by board paid by the residents and subsidies from the Commonwealth Government under the Homeless Persons Assistance Act. Under this Act the rent and sustenance allowance of 75 cents per day, per person housed and fed are paid by the Commonwealth government.

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Mr. Frank Hayes Chief Parole Officer of the Prisons Department.

Picture from Sun Newspaper 26 Nov. 1965

Ruby Rich – a “Halfway House” for Women

The goal of establishing a halfway house for women was not forgotten. In April 1973, a special meeting was held to establish the Women’s Committee of the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund the object of which was “to work towards the establishment of a hostel for women who have come into conflict with the law”.

This Committee worked tirelessly holding functions to raise money, looking at premises and assessing their suitability, and canvassing for funds.

It took seven years of fundraising and searching for suitable premises before the Ruby Rich House could be opened at Ashfield. A reading of the minutes and correspondence during that period shows that when premises of suitable size were located, the cost of either purchase or rent was beyond our capacity and what was within our capacity was unsuitable.

Applications made to the Federal and State Governments for a capital grant to assist in the purchase of premises were unsuccessful.

Following a suggestion by Ruby Rich (then a member of the Women’s Committee) on 12 February 1974 a segment was included within the International Women’s Year program on the need for rehabilitation of women who have come into conflict with the law.

Finally, in April 1980, Ruby Rich House was opened at Ashfield for women. There, accommodation, and support services for female ex inmates were provided by the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund. In addition, special accommodation and support services were provided to women inmates who were about to have a baby and for the first three months after the birth. Those women were released to our care under the then section 29 of the then Prisons Act.

Joan Mulligan, Lynn Rainbow, and Wendy Cooper were especially active in the supervision of this House.

In 1989, due mainly to changes in Government policy and staffing issues, the number of women requiring our assistance was so low that we felt that the continued operation of Ruby Rich House was not cost effective particularly as Guthrie House was able to take over the very few women who then needed our service. Accordingly, Ruby Rich House was closed and the parts of our equipment relating to women and babies were given to Guthrie House.



Phillip Gaffney, manager of the Half-way House — and the door is open.

A New Direction

In 1987, we were incorporated as The Judge Rainbow Memorial Fund Inc. (dropping the word “Appeal” from our name) under the Associations Incorporation Act.

In 1989/90, we experimented with the opening of a three-quarter-way-house but had to close it due to lack of funds. Apart from this, since 1989 we have operated just the one half-way house, namely Rainbow Lodge at Glebe for men only.

On 28 November 1996, the Dept. of Corrective Services advised us that our past system should be scrapped. It decreed that we should henceforth employ three Welfare Officers plus a coordinator. These four employees should be rostered so that one person would be on duty at any time resulting in 24 hours a day coverage.

Furthermore, they were not to be regarded as “live-in workers” in accordance with the relevant Award but were to be paid full shift and penalty allowances.

Since November 2011, the Committee of Management has had an infusion of new blood and new ideas. The staff has substantially changed. The Staff and Committee of Management have adopted a new strategic and business plan after several weeks of consultation with experts in the area of homelessness, governance of voluntary organisations and rehabilitation. There is improvement in the standard of service being delivered to residents with more emphasis on pre-emptive rather than reactionary support.

We will celebrate 60 years in 2024 since the establishment of the Judge Rainbow Memorial Appeal Fund and the establishment of the first Rainbow Lodge residential centre at Bankstown. For decades, the Rainbow Lodge centres ran on a shoestring budget. Funding now is primarily Government based, secure for three-year periods and won after competitive tender. The two principal Government funders are the Department of Communities & Justice-Corrective Services and Homelessness departments.

The profile of residents has changed over the years. In years past, residents opted to come to Rainbow Lodge. Since circa 2014, there has been input by Corrective Services in the selection of those coming to Rainbow Lodge. Almost overwhelmingly, those selected are longer-term inmates who have served sentences more than three years. Many are recidivist offenders with a greater than average likelihood of re-offending within two years. Nearly all qualify as “dual diagnosis” persons; that is, they have mental health issues and significant drug misuse. Many lack formal education, often institutionalised from spending childhood years and then adult years in institutions; economically disadvantaged; socially isolated, and lacking living and social skills.

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Rainbow Lodge Today

Between 2020-2024 Rainbow Lodge has grown its income from \$700,000 p/a. to \$1.6 Million this financial year.

Today Rainbow Lodge has 8 beds assigned to our Transitional Supported Accommodation program (TSA) and 2 beds set aside for our innovative First Nations Walama List program run in conjunction with the District Court of NSW Walama List.

Rainbow Lodge was featured in a documentary on the ABC's flagship current Affairs program Four Corners this year called “Breaking Free”. The airing of this episode has been life changing for Rainbow Lodge. It has brought our service recognition from both government and the public with over \$100,000 in donations from people who watched the film.



We have diversified and are now running a two year trial with our “Healing through Culture” First Nation men’s program at John Morony Correctional Centre facilitated by our partner Wiimpatja Consulting and being evaluated by Origin both First Nations owned and operated businesses.

We have started our Ngaramura Therapeutic Transport initiative, which provides culturally safe transport for male and female First Nations people who are on remand in NSW prisons and need to get to treatment centres or family across NSW. Without this service these people would remain in custody. This is currently funded by donations from philanthropic organisations and the public. We are currently in negotiations with NSW Aboriginal Affairs to have it funded by government for the next 3 years.

In 2024-25 we will work with about 220 men across our residential program, day program, Healing the Warrior program and Healing through Culture program, with 90% of our clients First Nations and another 50 First Nations men and women will be transported by our Ngaramura program.

We are also in talks with government about funding for our residential DV program for men who use violence called “Safer Men – Safer families”

We have a diverse board of directors with a wide range experience, including a magistrate, solicitor, people with lived experience, business and finance, First Nations business owner, First Nations Elder with lived experience and two treatment specialists with 40 years collective experience in working with men engaged in the criminal justice system.

Rainbow Lodge incorporates all the best practice models of treatment when working with men who have experienced trauma in their lives. We utilise a person centred, trauma informed, and culturally appropriate framework built around the individual needs of each client.

We have diversified our funding streams to include philanthropic funds from The Paul Ramsay Foundation, Justcares Foundation, Igniting Change and the public.

We have a completely professional workforce, comprising of a manager, 2 case workers, 4 support workers, a First Nations Elder, First Nations cultural peer worker, Art Therapist and engage two psychologist and external group facilitators including a Music therapist.