

Free Hugs

We were inspired by seeing **Juan Mann** on Andrew Denton's show on the ABC.

Juan had returned from London to Sydney after his life had taken a downturn. All he had was a carry on bag full of clothes and a world of troubles. No one to meet him and no place to call home.

At the terminal he watched other passengers meeting their friends and family with open arms and smiling faces, hugging and laughing together.

He wanted the same for himself, so he got some cardboard and a marker and made a sign "FREE HUGS ".found the busiest pedestrian intersection in the city and held the sign aloft. What followed was a symbol of human hope that spread across the city as he touched the hearts of many with his hugs.

For the past two years ADASE decided to reach out to others by giving free hugs at Centro shopping centre as part of mental health week. The response was nothing short of amazing.

We have had people burst into tears, others grin from ear to ear. Many take up the opportunity to gain further information around mental health and mental illness.

It gives people the message that we care and that we want to help, and that caring for ourselves is the first step in keeping ourselves mentally healthy.

Definitions from unknown authors

"A hug is a handshake from the heart"

"Hugs are not only nice they are needed...Hugs can relieve pain and depression. Make the healthier happier, the most secure even more so...Hugging feels good and overcomes fear. Hugging makes happy day's happier and impossible days possible"