

March 2022

# Issue 2

Welcome to "On the Mend", the official newsletter of **Mending Casts Inc**, a non-profit incorporated organisation that runs free fly fishing retreats for people with cancer.

This is a quarterly circular that is distributed to all our members, volunteers and retreat participants as a way to keep everyone involved with the organisation informed of our activities and programs.



# On The Mend

The official newsletter of Mending Casts Inc 

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- 4 - 6 Apr 2022** **Casting for Recovery Victoria\***  
For women with breast cancer  
@ Ballarat, Victoria
- 2 - 4 May 2022** **Reel Recovery/Peter Mac Callum**  
For men with cancer  
@ Marysville, Victoria
- 7 - 9 Nov 2022** **Reel Recovery Australia\***  
For men with cancer  
@ Ballarat, Victoria

\*We are very fortunate that this includes a day at Millbrook Lakes, a private catch and release fly fishery for brown and rainbow trout, located near Gordon in the Victorian Central Highlands.

<http://www.millbrooklakes.com.au/>

*Some of the Mending Casts team 2021*



## REEL RECOVERY “THE BEGINNING”

After an eclectic career in the for-profit world (MBA, telecom manager, video producer, COO of a healthcare start-up, among other explorations), in 2001 I transitioned, by pure chance, into the non-profit world. My wife and I had moved from Berkeley, CA to Needham, MA (just outside Boston) for her doctoral studies, and I was looking for something new. I joined my town's fly fishing club, and there happened to meet the E.D. of Casting for Recovery, a 5-year old organization I had never heard of, based here in Needham, and doing something I'd never imagined: Fly Fishing Retreats for women with breast cancer. Pure serendipity.

I was an avid fly fisher, and breast cancer ran rampant in my family, so I started volunteering for CfR, and then was hired as Associate Director, one of just 3 CfR employees at the time. I loved it for 2 years, until I was told in February, 2003, that the office was moving to Vermont and I was soon to be out of a job. I was crushed, moping in the office when the very next day (more serendipity!) I answered a phone call from Stu Brown, a dentist in Denver. He told me that he and a couple fishing buddies had heard of CfR and wanted to do the same for men; was CfR interested?

They weren't, but I was, and flew out the next week to meet Stu and his friends. We went fishing in a snowstorm, and Stu, with a stage 4 brain tumour, stood steadfast out in the middle of the river, casting until dark. For Stu, fly fishing was the prescription for his healing. I was so impressed with his determination, and that night we all agreed to put a stake in the ground, creating Reel Recovery on the spot and agreeing to self-fund our first Retreat 6 weeks later, on that very same Colorado river.

That first Retreat was an amazing experience: we tried out the Courageous Conversations, Vest Ceremony, Fishing Buddies, Closing Circle; and it worked so well that 19 years later, nothing much has changed from that original Program.



*Stan Golub, Inaugural President Reel Recovery*

Stu left that first Retreat for more surgery the next day, writing on the back of a dirty SUV window: "Be Well! Fish On!" He never fully recovered but did write a letter to Lance Armstrong that told of his idea for Reel Recovery. Lance was so moved that he met with Stu in September, 2003, while Stu was in hospice, and was then compelled to commit his Foundation to helping us financially for the next 3 years.

And the rest, as they say, is history. We held 6 Retreats in 2004, expanding from Colorado to Utah and California, then grew organically each year, in places where we had volunteers to make it happen. I was the only paid employee for our first 10 years, as we built a grass roots community of volunteers that, to this day, still does the heavy lifting (There are only 2 of us on staff now!). We want the bulk of our resources to go to serving our men, and now have some 700+ volunteers in 21 states to make that a reality.

This year, we will serve our 4,000th man, with 28 U.S. Retreats, plus 2 in OZ, 2 in NZ and 1 in Iceland. We plan to continue to expand organically, wherever there are men with cancer and volunteers willing to put their hearts into serving those men. Just like how Mending Casts is doing in Australia, this year and for many years to come! Good on ya mates!

Be Well! Fish On!

*By Stan Golub*

## CFR RETREAT - PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE

Holmesglen, Eildon, Victoria 20 – 22 September 2019

I arrived at Holmesglen at Eildon mid-afternoon, and it was surprising to find such a beautiful place nestled in bushland with views across open paddocks and the Goulburn River Valley.

My anxiety and hesitation shifted once I met the ladies (volunteers) who had given up so much of their own time to care and support the participants.

One of the best parts of the retreat was we were all given time to talk as individuals and as a group. Together we laughed a lot, cried even more, and shared our own experiences in our breast cancer journey, all this out-pouring of fear, anger, and guilt helped us all understand that we are not alone and brought us even closer. This really helped in my healing process on the inside. During our group and individual discussions, the volunteers were so understanding, and we were so fortunate to have a medical professional, psychosocial counsellor at hand to help us. I cannot praise them enough. It was just a wonderful experience.

We certainly found ourselves being spoilt taking part in deep relaxation/meditation sessions and Reiki just to mention a few. Everything was done in a very relaxed, positive and friendly manner, no pressure to do anything.

Learning how to tie a fly was an amazing experience. It was fascinating how pieces of feather, beads, threads of colours and texture are used to make a fly. How to cast a fly rod was a bonus. The casting instructors were so encouraging and patient and by the time we had the basics under our wing we were all eager to put our newfound skills to the test.



*Fran Staton (left) with her buddy, Jo Dobson*

To finish off our fly-fishing introduction, we got the chance to get out on to the water. This was so much fun and to actually catch a fish was such a rush, no wonder so many people enjoy fly fishing so much. For me I found that when I was out by the water casting and being a part of nature, (although there was a lot of excitement and laughter) it truly put me in a place of peace and calming, which was good for the body and mind.

I was truly blessed to have had the opportunity to attend the first Casting for Recovery retreat in Victoria. The friendship that followed with the other participants and volunteers is something I will cherish. It was truly an overwhelmingly positive experience that I will never forget.

*By Fran Staton*

*Note: Participants are sought for the next CFR retreat 4 - 6 April 2022*



## MENDING CASTS PARTNERS WITH PETER MAC

Mending Casts is proud to announce that we are partnering with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute's (Peter Mac) Men's Shed program to bring our fly fishing retreat programs to their cancer patients.

Peter Mac is a world leading cancer research, education and treatment centre and Australia's only public health centre solely dedicated to caring for people affected by cancer. Our partnership will see Peter Mac fund several Reel Recovery Australia retreats over the next 2 years, which is a wonderful endorsement for our organisation, its programs, and the benefits of fly fishing to cancer patients' health and wellbeing.

The inaugural event is to be held 2 - 4 May 2022 at El Kanah Retreat in Marysville, Victoria. The retreat is limited to male cancer patients affiliated with the Men's Shed program and applications will be handled by Peter Mac (For further information see <https://www.petermac.org/reelrecovery>. To apply, see <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/petermacreelrecovery>).

Twelve participants will be hosted through the Reel Recovery program which will provide free food & lodging, fly tying, fly fishing and an environment for courageous conversation. Our mission is to help these men in the cancer recovery process by introducing them to the healing powers of fly fishing, while providing a safe, supportive environment in which to explore their personal cancer experiences with others who share their stories. These are truly life-changing events for everyone involved.

Our next Reel Recovery Australia retreat that will be open to the public is scheduled to be held November 2022 at Millbrook Lakes near Ballarat, Victoria. If anyone is interested in attending that event, or indeed any one of our retreats, please check out the retreat schedule on our website [www.mendingcasts.org](http://www.mendingcasts.org) or email us at [admin@mendingcasts.org](mailto:admin@mendingcasts.org) for more information.



## A BUDDY'S PERSPECTIVE

There is no finer thing in life apart from fly fishing than to be able to help someone who is less fortunate than yourself. Fly-fishing, fly-tying and many other arty things are food for the soul and in some cases people who take up these pursuits do so to mend broken souls, or bodies that may be failing them.

Recently a group of like-minded people volunteered to assist as fishing buddies for a group of people in such a situation, people not necessarily with broken souls but whose spirits were certainly being tested. Our mission was to take these tested spirits to another place and try and impart the feeling of magic, peace and tranquillity felt when we are at one with a piece of trout water.

Omeo in the high country is one such magical place and so it was the meeting place for the magic to happen. Being tasked with taking someone who for the most part has had limited exposure to this sport, and showing them the finer points of casting, stream craft, insect/hatch identification and finally getting all that together, comes with a certain amount of uncertainty and an eye on the failure meter, because rest assured none of us wanted to fail.

And so, 8 buddies met 8 participants on the banks of the Mitta Mitta, and at it we went.



*Buddy Rod Booker (left) & Charles Englander at the Omeo Retreat 2021*

There were wide loops, tailing loops, loop de loops, the odd looped drone and lassoed buddy. But at the end of the first morning, I would say for the most part buddies were happy with where things were at.

Of course, the river sessions had not yet commenced, and so with some trepidation the buddies escorted their men to the assigned beat. It is at this point that the threshold between practice and complete information overload hits, timing, aiming, reading the water, identifying bugs, matching flies, wading techniques, stream etiquette and the list goes on.

As the session wore on the buddies could feel, well I certainly could, the complete wonderment and feeling of satisfaction that the participants could feel as casts laid out as desired, and practice became perfection, in some cases causing the odd trout to come and inspect. Spirits lifted, as the chatter got more excited and minds were distracted as the guys began to feel the surroundings, the gentleness (in most cases) and relaxing feel of the rhythm of the cast. Smells, sights, trees, water and rocks. One could feel the force.

To be a buddy to these guys was one of the most humbling things I have experienced, I believe all the buddies would agree. The excitement we had in seeing our guys actually put it all together and reach the ultimate goal of catching a trout on a fly, the satisfaction that we had imparted only a minute amount of the knowledge we had and the feeling of what it is to be a fly man. But over and above that, that we were part of a team of people working selflessly to make someone less fortunate better in mind body and soul for the experience.

*By Rod Booker*

*Note: Participants are sought for the next RR retreat 2 - 4 May 2022*



## MEMBER PROFILE: JOHN BILLING, PRESIDENT

I first became involved with the organisation as a casting instructor/buddy volunteer but was soon enveloped by the magic of the programs and the people involved. I was in awe of the simplicity of the CfR fly-fishing retreat program and the amazing positive effects it had on the breast cancer survivors who participated. I, like most of us, have known family, friends and others who have been affected by cancer and have seen the challenges that confront them. I immediately felt a connection to the program through the freedom and respite that fly-fishing provided me in my own life. I was keen to share my "therapy" with others and a Casting for Recovery retreat was the perfect vehicle through which to share that joy.

**“I immediately felt a connection to the program through the freedom and respite that fly-fishing provided me in my own life.”**

The original organising committee that was formed to run CfR retreats in Victoria faced a few challenges and eventually dissolved, but a few members remained committed to the cause (Val Young, Jo Dobson, Brenda Gale, Cherrie Ninness, Alisa Christie and our inaugural President Peter West).



In January 2019 at a meeting held in a roadside truck stop outside of Lara, I was asked to help form a new committee and the foundation of what would become "Mending Casts Inc" was born.

That new association was officially registered in February 2019 and we have since run Casting for Recovery retreats for women with breast cancer and Reel Recovery retreats for men with cancer. These programs have a profound effect on everyone involved and we continue to look forward to hosting many more of them in the future.

I am extremely proud to be part of such a special organisation and to be associated with the wonderful committee, volunteers, sponsors & participants that make our programs the successes they have become.

*By John Billing*





## FLY CASTING HINTS

- Hold the rod grip in whatever way feels most comfortable to you but hold it lightly in your fingers, not the palm of your hand – don't crush the corks.
- For narrow loops the rod tip must be moved along a straight-line path during the casting stroke. Narrow loops are good for both accuracy and distance.
- Always speed the rod tip up smoothly during the cast and come to a crisp stop.

*By Bob Young  
Fly Fishers International Master Casting Instructor*

## FUNDRAISERS

As a registered non-profit organisation run by unpaid volunteers, we need independent funding to be able to provide our programs and services. Our fundraising activities are vital for us to be able to host these retreats and benefit the people we serve. None of our staff are paid thus every dollar is invested back into our programs and the activities which support them, so we truly appreciate every cent that is given to us.

One of the main fund-raising tools we rely on is our online auctions. These are run at regular intervals throughout the year using donated goods/services and provide much needed funds for our organisation. We really appreciate the support of our donors and sponsors as we could not operate without their help.

Thank you to everyone for participating in these recent online auctions and look out for more in the months ahead.

### Total funds raised:

- 12 Days of Fishmas      \$2,245



## MENDING CASTS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: CHERRIE NINNESS



I first met Cherrie at a Peter Morse casting clinic at the Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club pool in 2016. She was the only female in the group and Peter encouraged me to get her involved in future women's fly fishing events.

Not long after this, Peter West announced that Casting for Recovery Victoria (CfR) was in the planning stages, and he was looking for volunteers to be a part of this exciting venture. Cherrie jumped at the chance to be involved and we attended the first meeting of CfR together to sign up. Cherrie has first-hand knowledge of breast cancer and just what effect this can have on day-to-day life. This understanding is invaluable when holding retreats as each person has a different cancer experience and possible needs to be considered.

After Mending Casts Inc was formed as the umbrella organisation to run CfR and Reel Recovery retreats, Cherrie took on a major role on the Management Committee as Secretary. She has managed a full-time career as a Paramedic as well as Mum and Nanny duties, and home renovating (you should see the staircase) while also devoting countless hours every week to Mending Casts.

The inaugural Volunteer of the Year award could not have been presented to anyone but Cherrie whose efforts have been amazing.

*By Val Young*





## AUSTRALIAN LADIES FLY FISHING TEAM TO TAKE ON THE WORLD

The first ever Australian Ladies World Fly Fishing Team has been selected to compete in the inaugural World Ladies Fly Fishing Championships to be held in Norway from the 4th to 10th July 2022. The team has been selected on individual rankings based on Fly Fish Australia competitions over the past 3 years.

The team members are:

Karen Brooks (Tas) - Team Captain

Casey Pfeiffer (SA)

Julie Butler (Tas)

Jane Forster (ACT/NSW)

Marian Miller (Vic)

Julianne Stevens (Tas) - Team Manager / Reserve

There is great excitement in the team as the First World Championship has been postponed twice due to Covid but is now likely to proceed in July.

The Championships can be followed on:

World Ladies Fly Fishing Championships 2022 website  
[www.wlffceffc.com/wlffc](http://www.wlffceffc.com/wlffc)

Fly Fish Australia website - [www.flyfishaustralia.com.au](http://www.flyfishaustralia.com.au)



Practice is in full swing and the team members have held several dedicated practice days in preparation for the event (see photos of the team on the Tyenna River – Marian Miller not present).

As part of their fund-raising activities for Norway the team, along with other like-minded women, are planning a fly fishing day on Sunday 24 April at Penstock Lagoon, Tasmania, which will also support Casting for Recovery.

For more details contact: Jane Forster 0410 454129

As Mending Casts Inc. programs are built around the health and well-being benefits gained from fly fishing we proudly support the Fly Fish Australia (FFA) Australian Women's Fly Fishing Team.



## SPONSORS IN FOCUS

Each newsletter, we would like to highlight one of the wonderful sponsors who help us realise these programs.

This month's online auction was held to raise funds for our upcoming CfR retreat. It featured a range of sponsored and donated products, including:

- one day guided fly fishing for 2 with Karen Brooks, the Captain of the Australian Women's fly fishing team.

- custom made CfR fly reel by Ashleigh Dunsmore (Harfin Fly Reels)

- number of fly boxes with flies tied by Victorian fly fishing club members.

Click [here](#) for our full list of our amazingly generous benefactors, please check them out and thank them by sending business their way (full link here: [www.mendingcasts.org/sponsors/](http://www.mendingcasts.org/sponsors/)).



Harfin reel donated by Ashleigh Dunsmore, Harfin Fly Reels.



Karen Brooks, Captain of Australian Women's Fly Fishing team.



## SALES MERCHANDISE

Mending Casts has an online store on our website. We plan to introduce a range of custom merchandise and fly fishing related items for sale and all monies raised will be invested directly back into our retreat programs.

Please check it out at: <https://www.mendingcasts.org/online-store>



Basball Cap - Mending Casts  
**AU\$28.00**



Baseball Cap - Casting for Recovery Victoria  
**AU\$28.00**



Baseball Cap - Reel Recovery Australia  
**AU\$28.00**



Baseball Cap with Fly Logo  
**AU\$28.00**



Bumper Sticker Casting for Recovery Vic  
**AU\$5.00**



Bumper Sticker Reel Recovery Australia  
**AU\$5.00**



Bumper Sticker Mending Casts  
**AU\$5.00**



Bumper Sticker 3 Pack  
**AU\$10.00**



Reel Recovery Buff  
**AU\$38.00**



Reel Recovery Mesh Cap  
**AU\$30.00**

## CONTACT US

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