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Issue #5

Welcome to “On the Mend”, the official newsletter of Mending Casts Inc, a not-for-profit incorporated organisation that runs free fly-fishing retreats for people with cancer.

This quarterly circular 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

www.mendingcasts.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

1st -12th Dec 2022 **12 Days of Fishmas**
Our annual online auction ends @ 8pm Monday 12th Dec

27-29 Mar 2023 **Casting for Recovery Victoria**
Retreat for women with breast cancer @ Marysville, Victoria

April 2023 **Kids Come Try Day**
Assisting an NSFFC Event @ Yarrambat, Victoria

TBA **Reel Recovery Australia**
Retreat for men with cancer
Venue and Dates TBA

RR Ballarat Buddy Craig Coltman with a participant's trout

RR RETREAT – BALLARAT Nov 2022

Our third Reel Recovery Australia retreat kicked off on Monday 7th November 2022 at Ballarat, about 1 hours' drive north-west of Melbourne. Despite weeks of heavy rains and flooding in vast areas of Southern Australia, the weather gods smiled on us with sunny clear blue skies and light winds for the duration of the 3-day retreat. Despite having great accommodation at the Mercure Hotel in Ballarat, clear warm weather was something for which we were very grateful.



Alan (L), Rory (M) and Graham (R) work on casting skills with their buddies

Our 11 participants came from a variety of different backgrounds and were at different stages in their cancer journeys from stage 4 to post initial diagnosis. Most were referred to us through the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre (aka "Peter Mac") and their Men's Shed program. Peter Mac continues to be a significant and valued supporter of our programs and we are truly grateful that they again agreed to fully fund this retreat. Their Men's Shed Program Manager John Howarth also joined us as a guest volunteer to make up 12 people in total. In addition to Peter Mac patients, we had participants attending via the cancer support programs of other hospitals and treatment centers so it is great to see that our programs are gaining wider exposure. A special "Thank You" must be made to the two men who bravely travelled to the retreat just a day after receiving chemotherapy. A late change to their treatment regime and its unpleasant side-effects was not going to stop them from being part of our retreat.



Participant Greg wets a line

Day one started at 4:30pm with an opening welcome and the vesting ceremony where participants were each introduced to their buddy and presented with their fishing vest. Courageous Conversations #1 & #2 then followed whilst the buddies were briefed on their roles and the challenges facing their respective participants. Dinner followed at 6:30pm at the in-house restaurant, then we returned to the conference room for instruction on how to tie a fly, hosted by Joanne Dobson from Aussie Angler. The men soon picked up this new skill and completed a number of fly patterns by the end of the night that they would use for the following day's fishing. They retired that night with a sense of achievement and anticipation for the next day.

Day two started with warm sunshine as the men were car-pooled to a nearby recreational lake for fly casting and fish handling education. The casting instruction was led by Fly Fishers International (FFI) Master Casting Instructor Bob Young assisted by FFI Casting Instructor Andrew Connell. Indeed, many of our buddies were also casting instructors, and this expertise proved invaluable in quickly getting the men's fly-casting skills up to a level where they could catch fish. We were very fortunate to have the captain of Australia's Men's Fly-Fishing team, Tom Jarman, join us for the day as well. At midday, everyone relocated to the Ballarat Fly Fishers club rooms, a beautiful weatherboard boat house situated in a stunning location on the shores of Lake Wendouree. Courageous Conversation #3 then took place on the back deck overlooking the lake which proved to be a perfect backdrop to the men's discussions. Lunch followed, then it was time for the men to team up with their buddies for the first fishing session on the lake.



Doug lands a Tiger Trout

The bright sunny weather occasionally gave way to some cloud cover, which in turn brought the mayflies and caddis flies out onto the water and the fish on the bite. The excitement of the men was clear with fish moving all around them and the anticipation of catching one was on everyone's minds. Several missed takes and dropped hook-ups followed but the smiles on the men's faces were priceless. Returning to the clubrooms in the late afternoon for some group photos, the men then sat down for Courageous Conversation #4 before convening for dinner. Everyone praised the catering provided by Jenni Girvan. The food was fabulous as were the efforts of the volunteers in the kitchen preparing and serving the meals. With full bellies, the men returned to the back deck for Courageous Conversation #5 as the

crimson sun set slowly over the lake. A fitting way to end a great day.

The final day saw everyone check out of the hotel after breakfast and join up with their buddies to car-pool to the day's fishing location, a private fishery called Millbrook Lakes located at Gordon about 30 mins drive away. The proprietor of Millbrook Lakes Mark Weigall had very generously donated a day's fishing access to us for the retreat and so we arrived at "Hillies" cabin on the shores of Gully Lake full of excitement at what the day would bring. After a short safety briefing, the buddies took the men off to start fishing the picturesque lakes and waterways that surrounded us. The fishing did not disappoint with fish moving everywhere chasing damsel flies and several rainbow, brown and tiger trout were caught and then released. The beaming smiles on the men's faces were only matched by the buddies' pride at their achievements. Midday saw everyone return to the cabin for lunch, which was another generous offering of great healthy food before heading back out for the final fishing session. Some more great fish were hooked and landed much to the pride and joy of their captors.

By mid-afternoon, it was time to pack up and relocate to the local Wallace Hotel in time for the bus to pick up the Peter Mac participants. The hotel's management had kindly opened the pub just for us and their beer garden area was the perfect place to hold our "Closing the Circle" ceremony and formally bring the retreat to a close. The emotional connections between everyone at that ceremony were strong and the bonds between the men evident in their hugs and well wishes as they said their good-byes. Some were eager to find a tackle shop and continue their fly-fishing education whilst others were just happy to reflect on the retreat and smile. As the participants and buddies headed home, our Mending Casts members reviewed their feedback sheets and were blown away by the overwhelming positivity of the comments. These glowing endorsements of our programs is what makes our volunteering worthwhile.

All of us left profoundly changed from sharing these experiences with such courageous and inspirational men. Be Well Fish On friends!

By John Billing - RR Retreat Coordinator



Participants, Buddies and Mending Casts volunteers together

REEL RECOVERY RETREAT – PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE

Ballarat, Victoria, Nov 2022

Retreat for hope

The surgical removal of a part of my cancerous tongue at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, followed by radiotherapy at Peter Mac's facility at Moorabbin has not diminished my passion to chatter and remain a storyteller. I am deeply aware that men and fish both get into trouble when they open their mouths. That danger notwithstanding, I cannot help but share this story of a very soul-searching experience at the recent Mending Casts Reel Recovery Retreat. Since the retreat was anchored around fly fishing, a few words about it would be in place.

To begin with, Jo Dobson and our buddies introduced us to the 'rocket science' of fly tying to replicate bugs and thus fool the fish. LOL. Later, despite the effective demonstrations on casting by Bob Young and Andrew Connell, I failed to impress either my buddy or the fish. Not a single fish came even to sniff at my bait at Lake Wendouree at Ballarat. Ditto at 'Hillies', Millbrook Lakes, Mount Egerton. But I must admit that my buddy John Scott displayed tons of patience with a very slow-to-learn fresher like me. The elusive fish irrevocably proved my miserable failure at fly-fishing. However, I experienced that "the charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of that which is elusive but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope" (author unknown).

For me the best part was the series of 'Courageous Conversations', empathetically moderated by Eric Smith, wherein the participants shared their tribulations, challenges and fears

Sudhir (M) attending one of the Courageous Conversations with the other retreat participants



Sudhir (L) learning to cast a fly rod with buddy John

John Billing was present all through too, absorbing every spoken word and leading the conduct of the retreat. Through these conversations I realised that as compared to me, most other participants are facing greater cancer-related challenges. Hence, I should not have any reason whatsoever to complain or be in a state of self-pity. These conversations also helped in the bonding of the participants, who have now formed a WhatsApp group, so aptly named 'Semi Pro Fishermen'.

Cherrie Ninness's role to efficiently coordinate, Shellie Olson's in keeping Covid away (and providing fishing and other equipment), and Val Young's and Noni Wilson's for the appetizing drinks and yummy food were all there to support the participants. Interesting conversations with Noni on pharma industry – her field of expertise, were a bonus learning for me. Surely John Howarth has also taken back institutional learnings from this event for Peter Mac, who so generously funded this retreat.

*Sudhir Sakhujia, Infantry Veteran
Reel Recovery Participant – Ballarat Nov 2022*

CALDER FLY FISHING EXPO – Oct 2022

Following the cessation of COVID lock-downs the Calder Fly Fishing Association ran its first Fly Fishing Expo after the pandemic on 2 October 2022 at Woodend and Mending Casts Inc. was delighted to receive an invitation to participate. The event was held at the Buffalo Sports Stadium in Woodend on a beautiful sunny Sunday and was a resounding success with over 600 people attending on the day.

The Mending Casts stall was run by Mending Casts volunteers John Billing, Cherrie Ninness, Alisa Christie, Val Young, Bob Young and Andrew Connell and was the subject of much interest from those attending. People were interested in the Casting for Recovery Victoria retreats for women with breast cancer and the Reel Recovery Australia retreats for men with any form of cancer which Mending Casts run each year. Many brochures were handed out and several possible retreat participants registered their interest including one who had driven all the way from the Mornington Peninsula to get more information. This person subsequently attended the Reel Recovery retreat in Ballarat in November this year. A lot of Mending Casts merchandise was also sold on the day.



Our Mending Casts stand @ the Expo



A happy raffle winner pictured with Dave Anderson (L) of Riverstoned Cane Rods

Mending Casts also ran a fund-raising raffle at the event with the major prize being a voucher for a cane rod to be built by David Anderson and this was subsequently won by a very excited young teenager – thank you David for your generous donation. Overall Mending Casts raised just under \$1,700 thanks to the fabulous support of all those attending. In addition, the day was rounded-off nicely when the winner of the distance casting event promptly donated his prize of a \$300 voucher for Millbrook Lakes to Mending Casts. This voucher will be offered as one of the items to be sold in our Fishmas on-line auction at the beginning of December.

Mending Casts is very grateful for the support provided by the Calder Fly Fishing Association to its endeavors to provide cancer patients with respite from their daily challenges through fly fishing.



The team from Calder FFC plus all the stall holders and volunteers – Calder Fly Fishing Expo 2022



FLY CASTING TIPS

- If fishing at a consistently short length (e.g. in small streams) it may be beneficial to use a fly line rated at a higher weight than that suggested for the rod as this will assist rod loading with the short length of line.
- When casting in wind it may be beneficial to use a heavier line than normal to minimise disruption of the cast.
- To prolong a drag-free drift and present the fly naturally it is often beneficial to deliver the fly with some slack line. This can be done by selecting an appropriate cast to deliver the fly or by repositioning the line in a controlled way after the cast (this is called “mending” the line).

By Bob Young FFI Master Casting Instructor

Mending Casts
changing lives one cast at a time



1ST TO 12TH DECEMBER

**12 DAYS OF FISHMAS
ONLINE AUCTION 2022**

SUPPORTING MENDING CASTS CANCER RETREAT PROGRAMS

Casting for Recovery
Victoria, Australia
WOMEN

REEL RECOVERY
MEN



12 DAYS OF FISHMAS ONLINE AUCTION 2022

Supporting Mending Casts Cancer Retreat Programs
Casting for Recovery Victoria & Reel Recovery Australia

Our annual "12 Days of Fishmas" online auction is one of our major fund-raising events each year. All the money raised will be directed into our Australian cancer support programs. Our Casting for Recovery and Reel Recovery programs are uplifting life-changing events for the participants, so many of whom are facing very significant challenges and hardships. So please help us to help them by bidding generously on the wonderful items that our sponsors have donated. We are fortunate to have 21 items with a total value exceeding \$5000 to auction off this year, so simply register with the AirAuctioneer platform and grab yourself a bargain. If you miss out on an item, there is even an area where you can donate directly to Mending Casts instead.

Please check out the "12 Days of Fishmas" items on the link below. The auction commenced on December 1st 2022 and finishes at 8pm on Monday Dec 12th.

<https://airauctioneer.com/mending-casts-12-days-of-fishmas-auction-2022>

We thank all our sponsors and auction bidders for your support. Every dollar raised will be directed back into our cancer retreat programs and the activities which support them. With your help, we can continue to change lives, one cast at a time!

UPCOMING RETREATS

Casting for Recovery Victoria: 27-29 March 2023 @ Marysville

Dates, venues and details have been confirmed for our next CfR retreat in March next year.

If you are interested or know someone who may benefit from participating, please contact us via email at admin@mendingcasts.org



IN VEST MENT

Casting for Recovery Victoria Retreats are heading into our fourth year, it is time to up our game and outfit our program participants in waders and vests. In order to help this, we are holding an InVESTment drive.

What's this, you ask? Well put simply, Mending Casts would like to ask for donations of pre loved fly fishing vests. Each vest will be embroidered, repaired and generally made very useful so that our Casting for Recovery participants are able to wear a vest at the retreat. They then write a message and leave it with the vest for the next participants to read and enjoy.

So, it's a win/win for all. You feel good moving on something you no longer use, we feel great to have your fly vest as part of the CfR program. Our ladies will feel awesome wearing a pre loved fly fishing vest! Please contact Jo Dobson on 0429 140 341 or post to our P.O. Box 256, Montmorency 2094

Presentation to Latrobe Valley Fly Fishing Club

On the 8th August we had the pleasure of attending the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishing Club's (LVFFC) monthly meeting to talk about Mending Casts and our retreat programs. Thirty members had made their way to the Nth Hazelwood Community Hall for the presentation, including James Hearne (President), Kim Jacobs (Past President), Matt Campbell (Secretary) and LVFFC members Wayne Moon, Rod Booker and Neil Pryce who have been fishing buddies at previous Reel Recovery retreats.

It was a very successful evening. John ran through a PowerPoint presentation which included showing the most recent CfR Ballarat and RRA Marysville videos. Wayne Moon then spoke on behalf of the buddies present which provided a great insight into the program for the other members present. Rod Booker and Neil Pryce also spoke strongly about their roles as buddies and the positive impact this had on them.



LVFFC members watching our presentation

Rod Booker kindly donated two wonderful fish paintings. One we will offer in the December "12 Days of Fishmas" online auction. The second will be auctioned off by LVFFC at their next fund-raising night & they kindly agreed to donate all the money raised to Mending Casts. This is a wonderful show of support as we truly value every dollar that is donated to us.

Discussion then turned to the possibility of running a Reel Recovery or Casting for Recovery retreat in the region. There are some major cancer treatment and support facilities in the Gippsland area so it is hoped that we can generate some interest in running local versions of these programs in the near future. Kim Jacobs was provided with a prospectus and pamphlets to distribute amongst her contacts in the local health industry as she was very confident of finding additional support for us.

The meeting ended with pizza being shared thanks to the club. It was a great night and a wonderful opportunity to meet more fantastic people who share a passion for fly fishing and our programs. We look forward to having more involvement with the LVFFC and hopefully running a retreat in the region soon.

John Billing



LVFFC President James Hearne(L) presents Rod Booker painting

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.

Mending Casts Trivia Night – 15th October 2022

The second, long-awaited Mending Casts Trivia Night to raise funds for on-going retreats for cancer patients was held at the Eltham Bowling Club on October 15 2022. Covid restrictions during the Pandemic meant a three year wait between events and a lot of interest was shown from our supporters when the night was announced. We had a full house of approximately 100 people attend on the night to help us in our cause and it was an outstanding success with over \$7000 raised.

The major prize for the night was a very generous donation from Scape Living of three nights' accommodation in their Aurora Apartments which raised an invaluable \$1000 in the live auction. Other prizes for the trivia quiz, raffles, door prizes and the silent auction were donated by various people and organisations - we would like to thank our donors for their much-appreciated support. Events such as this would not be possible without this.



The winning Trivia Night team



The evening is about to kick off

The night commenced with videos of our previous retreats at Omeo for Reel Recovery and Ballarat for Casting for Recovery. For a lot of those present this was the first opportunity to see the impact these retreats have on the participants - you could have heard a pin drop while they were being shown.

The trivia quiz was conducted over three rounds each of fourteen questions covering six categories. At the end of the quiz two of the tables were tied in first place and the result was determined by a roll of the dice, a very happy, noisy activity with a popular result.

Other activities on the night included games, a silent auction and a sales table.

The atmosphere throughout the night was very buoyant and noisy with lots of positive feedback and requests for a repeat event in 2023.....Watch this space! The venue at the Eltham Bowling Club was perfect and we would like to thank the club and its hard-working members for their support on the night.



Fun games are a feature of the night's entertainment – everyone is having a great time

CATERING for RECOVERY

Special Carrot Cake Recipe.

At the Ballarat Reel Recovery retreat recently, we were asked by several of the participants if we could send them the recipe for the Carrot Cake that was served each day which we all enjoyed. Jenni Girvan who catered for the event has kindly agreed to allow the recipe to be shared to all in the December Newsletter.

Carrot Cake Ingredients.

- Carrot, grated. 2¼ cups
- Vegetable oil. 150ml
- Eggs. 3
- Sugar, raw. 300g
- Walnuts, roughly chopped. 100g.
- Plain flour. 225g.
- Bi-carb soda. 10g
- Mixed spice. 1tsp
- Cinnamon. 1tsp
- Nutmeg. 1tsp
- Salt. ⅛ tsp



Method:

Grease and line base and sides of a 20cm springform tin.

Mix carrot, oil, eggs, sugar and walnuts together.

Sift all dry ingredients together and stir well into the carrot mix.

Bake at 140°C for approx. 1 hr -1½ hrs. Always check with a skewer. Time may vary with different ovens.

Cream Cheese icing:

- Cream cheese, soft. 250g
- Butter, very soft. 125g
- Pure Icing sugar. 400g
- Vanilla essence. 1tsp

Method:

Beat cream cheese until soft.

Add icing sugar and mix well.

Beat in very soft butter and vanilla.

ENJOY!

Thank you, Jenni.



RR Retreat caterer Jenni Girvan (M) with John Billing (L) and Val Young (R)

OUR CHRISTMAS WISHES

As a volunteer run not-for-profit organisation, we are always searching for new and better equipment, goods and materials to help improve our programs. In order to run successful retreats Mending Casts is in the need of a number of items including the following:

- Van or trailer (approx. 8 x 5) with weatherproof body.
- Defibrillator.
- Data projector.
- Sturdy folding chairs (approx. 20).
- 3 x No. 6 weight graphite 4-piece fly rods with tubes.
- 6 x wading staves.
- 15 x New thigh waders with sturdy built-in boots in various sizes.
- New fly boxes (160 x 80 approx.) for use with donated flies.



Currently all of our funds are utilised for the direct costs of running each retreat and any assistance with the above list would be greatly appreciated. Please email us at admin@mendingcasts.org if you can help.



On behalf of everyone at Mending Casts Inc we would like to wish you all a wonderful festive season and a sincere "Thank You" for all the support provided to us over the past year. It has been a challenging time for all of us on so many fronts, but we continue to grow and plan to offer more of our cancer retreat programs in the year ahead.

Be well...fish on! ... and stay safe.



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