



CfR Participant Roberta shows off her Brook Trout with buddy Louise

Oct 2023 Issue #7

Welcome to "On the Mend", the official newsletter of Mending Casts Inc, a registered charity which runs free fly-fishing respite retreats for people with cancer.

This bi-annual 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

Nov 13-15 2023	Reel Recovery Australia Retreat for men with cancer @ Merrijig, Victoria
29 Nov-10 Dec 2023	12 days of Fishmas Auction Annual Online auction @ www.airauctioneer.com
21st Jan 2024	Cane Day on the Pine Fly Fishers Club of Tasmania Fundraiser 9:30am @ Little Pine Lake, Tasmania
March 2024	Casting for Recovery Victoria Retreat for women with breast cancer @ Location TBC, Victoria

CfR participant Julie shows buddy James Norney her trout

MEMBER PROFILE – SHELLEY OLSON

I first became involved with Mending Casts just after its inception in 2019 after a good friend, colleague and fellow volunteer approached me. Why not I thought, let's see what this is all about.

Looking back over my life it's clear I am always drawn toward areas that create positive change for people. My employment has been as a Registered Nurse for 39 years and an emergency ambulance paramedic for 23 years. I hold a certificate in counselling, I've conducted many education programs for people with significant injuries and for the last 7 years I've been recycling uniforms of 3,000 paramedics to those in need across the world.

So I decided to research this organisation. I learned that Mending Casts is self-funded, run solely by volunteers and that they hold free 3-day retreats for people dealing with cancer. One unique aspect is that they include the activity of fly-fishing. Um, what even is that? I had caught one fish in my life in Fiji when I was 19 and I didn't know there were different types of fishing. More research required..... To my surprise it turns out there are many benefits to fly-fishing including resting the mind, lowering depression, anxiety as well as stress levels, improvements in short term memory, creating friendships, networking and of course the emotional benefits of connecting with nature and with other people in similar situations.



Volunteering at our Trivia Night 2019



Fun at Casting for Recovery Eildon retreat in 2019



Speaking to the participants in the role of COVID Officer

Having this knowledge I of course accepted the offer to join Mending Casts. I have volunteered with them since 2019 and at every retreat held since then. What I love most about our retreats is witnessing the trust and special bonds our participants develop, the stories they share and the support they provide to one another. Let's not forget the joy of spending time in beautiful locations while learning new skills in a safe and supportive environment created by the Mending Casts team. These few days of respite create long-lasting and amazing positive impacts for our participants.

I am in awe of my fellow volunteers and the dedication they all display. I am excited to see how much we have grown as an organisation in a relatively short amount of time and I'm even more excited to see our ideas and plans for expansion coming to fruition so that many more cancer survivors can experience the incredible positive effects of participating in our programs.

Shelley Olson



Group photo at our Marysville CFR retreat in 2023

THE FULFILLMENT OF FACILITATION

The Reel Recovery retreat was delivered by Mending Casts at Ballarat on May 8th-10th 2023. The retreat participants consisted of 11 inspirational men from a range of backgrounds, geographical locations and ages but who all shared the common experience of living with cancer.

I was a first-time guest after having recently entered into an agreement with Mending Casts as a researcher at Deakin university to evaluate the benefits of these retreats. I had accepted an invitation to be a retreat facilitator and was thankful for both the opportunity and the support from John and Eric in preparing me for this role ahead of the retreat. Supporting the retreat in this role was an experience I truly appreciated as it provided me with invaluable insights that will support the research partnership between Mending Casts and Deakin into the future. As a fly fisherman I've always been thankful for both the experiences and relationships I have been able to enjoy. The opportunity to support the Mending Casts team and help ensure the retreat was a meaningful experience for all participants was a privilege.

As someone who lives in Ballarat I can confidently say that we are known but not necessarily celebrated for our weather! Fortunately, all attendees were very well catered for in the warm and comfortable surrounds of the Mercure Hotel and whilst the days were moderately chilly at times, the weather continued to improve across the course of the retreat. The fishing knowledge and experiences of the participants varied. I was thrilled to see some of the advanced casting skills displayed by some already very proficient casters and the fast acquisition of casting skills by those new to fly fishing under the guidance of Bob, James and the buddies.



Loch (L) with Mending Casts committee member Eric Smith (R)



Loch leads the men in the "Closing the Circle" ceremony

Many powerful messages were shared over the course of the retreat during the courageous conversation sessions. The camaraderie and shared experiences between all in attendance visibly flowed over into our trips to Lake Wendouree and Millbrook Lakes. Some beautiful fish were caught in tough conditions and these successes were celebrated collectively. I also sensed that what Thoreau once said about how *'many of us go fishing, without knowing that it is not fish we are after'* was somewhat applicable to this occasion as it seemed evident that it was just not the catching of fish that was important. Rather it was also how the activity of fishing can help further connect us with nature and each other to provide us with a window of time to recalibrate and reflect on the things that are important in our own lives.



There was much wisdom shared by all participants across the retreat focussing on both life and fishing. There was also much good humour and laughs shared. It was during one of the evening dinners, whilst enjoying a wide-ranging discussion with some of the participants, that one of the men said to me *"Sometimes, you can be on a path without realising you're on it."* Rarely has a day passed since the conclusion of the May retreat that I haven't reflected on that statement. For all those who attended the Ballarat retreat, Be Well, Fish On.

Dr Loch Forsyth - Deakin University
Reel Recovery Facilitator – Ballarat March 2023



PORTRAITS OF COURAGE

This Breast Cancer Awareness Month YETI® joined us, Casting for Recovery and their other longtime partner Boarding for Breast Cancer, in sharing the journeys of six breast cancer survivors. See their stories on how they found healing in the wild at [YETI.com](https://yeti.com).

One of the amazing women featured is our very own Mending Casts Secretary and Casting for Recovery Co-Ordinator....



CASTING FOR RECOVERY RETREAT- MARYSVILLE MARCH 2023

Another fantastic retreat. As our experience grows the quality of the retreats continues to improve. This year we held the Casting for Recovery (CfR) retreat at Marysville again. The weather was reasonable on days one and two which allowed some practice on the Steavenson River with some participants catching their first fish. On day three it was miserable and cold. The participants didn't let this dampen their fun or desire to get out there and catch that trout! One even resorted to using a black plastic bag as a modified raincoat to stay a bit drier. Most caught great fish and some on flies they had made themselves on day one. Despite the black plastic bag, they looked fantastic in their new glitzed-up vests thanks to Jo Dobson.

Ladies have an amazing ability to walk into a room of strangers and start up a conversation which leads to friendship and solidarity amongst those going through their individual but similar breast cancer stories. This group was no different and they continue to stay in contact with some even learning the ukulele together under the tutelage of the indefatigable Roberta (another participant). Several of them subsequently performed at Mending Casts recent Trivia Night in August. Thank you to the Buddies who continue to be a fantastic asset helping make these retreats possible. Look Good Feel Better continue their support of us and enjoy giving these ladies the pampering they deserve.

Linda, one of the participants, was so impressed with Mending Casts she decided to join our committee and has proven to be a very valuable member on our Fundraising Sub-committee.

Can't wait for the next one in March 2024....

Cherrie Ninness – CfR Co-Ordinator



ARTICLE BY REEL RECOVERY PARTICIPANT in FISH'n'BOAT MAGAZINE

P30 - FISH & BOAT, August 2023

Fishing

Mending More Than Casts

By Dan Bowater

‘A bad day’s fishing is better than a good day’s work.’ It’s an age-old phrase used to rationalise an empty rucksack after a humble day on the water. In the bigger picture, fishing acts as a kind of equaliser regarding mental health. When everything goes well, I see it as ‘living in synchronicity’ - an optimal balance between the mental, physical and spiritual states. When these spheres get thrown out of balance, the chance of chronic illness grows.

A cancer diagnosis means your life is divided into two halves. The first half is the part before cancer - everything before the doctor gives you the unexpected tap on the shoulder. For me, this moment was 26th March 2020 at the age of 38 with a diagnosis of multiple myeloma. What’s this got to do with fishing? I’ll explain soon! Australia has the highest incidence of multiple myeloma in the world. In May 2023, Aussie sporting commentator Sandy Roberts announced he was undergoing myeloma treatment. Then, only a week later, Essendon’s AFL assistant coach Dale Tipping announced his multiple myeloma diagnosis. Channel Ten’s Barry Du Bois has publicly shared his fight against multiple myeloma for many years. It has been the undoing of some even stronger men, including US military leaders Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell.

‘Cancer Ghosting’
Many fellow patients talk about an unpleasant social phenomenon called ‘cancer ghosting’. The time following diagnosis starts with a flood of emotional messages from close friends and family. Ironically, that’s also what most people use as a calculated opportunity to remove you from their lives. Talking about mortality is ‘dirty work’. It raises a melting pot of complicated emotions that are difficult to manage with no social protocol for discussion. From the patient’s side, many of the questions arising from chemotherapy treatment can’t be shared



The author with a breakthrough tiger trout at Millbrook Lakes.

because they’re incomprehensible or generally too awkward. Unfortunately, these factors alienate cancer patients from the rest of society - it’s just the way it is.

A Social Media Solution
The Facebook page ‘Multiple Myeloma Under 50’ stands as one of the few social enclaves for those dealing with the ‘Big C’. This group has a wealth of information for patients and carers. Victor Sawrsky, a dedicated online moderator, sent me a personal message earlier this year recommending I apply for a spot with a special fly-fishing charity called ‘Mending Casts’. When I heard ‘fishing’, you might imagine my ears pricked up like a jackrabbit! Initially, a linking program for cancer patients named ‘Reel Recovery’ began in the United States

to provide participants with respite through an outdoor angling retreat experience. It became evident this program created a rare opportunity for forging new friendships, finding hope and having courageous discussions.

Ballarat Bound!
In 2021, Mending Casts hosted the first-ever Aussie Reel Recovery men’s retreat in Victorian Goldfield’s renowned trout country. By all accounts, eight blokes formed a powerful bond, and organisers affirmed the promise, hope and support of the Mending Casts program. Since then, Mending Casts and its charity programs, have grown from strength to strength.

For an ex-FNQ angler with a fair

swag of big barra experiences, targeting diminutive trout in sub-zero Ballarat temperatures seemed beyond comprehension.

Nevertheless, in May 2023 I bit the bullet, boarded a Qantas flight to Melbourne and endured a two-hour bus ride out to Ballarat. My guide, James Norney was waiting at the Mending Casts conference room, ready to demonstrate the intricate art of fly tying. Did I mention it was cold outside? Thankfully myself

and ten other avid anglers could enjoy the comfortable Mescire Inn complete with fireplace, delicious food and coffee on demand! Each of us had our own fishing guide at our disposal too, which helped give us weary-eyed northern travelers some sense of direction.

The Wonderland Wonderland
The next day at Lake Wendouree, we began learning effective fly-casting techniques as a howling winter goldfields breeze tested our resilience. At one stage, I overheard a well-seasoned fly angler muttering, ‘This fella has held a fish on a rod before’. If it looked easy - I can assure you it wasn’t! It took a good couple of hours to sling that weighted line with any kind of rhythmic consistency. All eleven of us enjoyed an excellent meal at the nearby Ballarat Fly Fishing Club that evening. Apparently, this is the oldest fly fishing clubhouse in Australia. It even sat over the water, adding a special touch for the budding angler. Inside, the walls displayed photos, trophies, taxidermy wall mounts, numerous trout fishing publications and hundreds of intricately tied flies. It was like a wonderland for the trout fisherman (or any fisherman really).

It served as a special place for us to share fishing stories and ultimately our unique journeys dealing with chronic illness.

Marvelous Millbrook Lakes
The next morning, we were blessed by warmer/brighter conditions for

our day at a fishing location called ‘Millbrook Lakes’. The FNQ angler in me fantasised about walking a topwater barra lure through the lilies and standing grass. But there were no tropical species

to be found here. These lakes were home to rainbow, brown and tiger trout. Low-hanging branches, gusts of wind and tall blades of grass undoubtedly tested the previous day’s fly-casting practice.

My guide James spotted several beautiful tiger trout mooching in the shallows.

After so many botched casts, it only took one accurate cast to get one of the elusive buggers to eat the fly! It felt kind of like a good golf shot - a moment I’ll never forget amid some very challenging circumstances.

Within minutes we heard screams of joy coming from the neighbouring lake. The noise came from fellow multiple myeloma patient David, who landed a lovely rainbow trout. By all accounts it was lots of fun trying to get the trout to bite.

Finding Fishing Freedom
In recent years, it has been obvious how the Aussie media has desperately pushed some kind of anti-male agenda. The underlying aim seems to be based around creating a state of assumed guilt and fear among men in social settings. The arrival of a horrible cancer diagnosis exacerbates these feelings - particularly the fear

For an ex-FNQ angler with a fair swag of big barra experiences, targeting diminutive trout in sub-zero Ballarat temperatures seemed beyond comprehension.



Dan Bowater at the Ballarat Fly Fishing Club at Lake Wendouree.

Continued next page

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aspect. Encouragingly, the Mending Casts retreat helps guys adopt a healthier perspective on life without needing to conform to anything other than their own conscience. It removes morality caste systems and reframes all participants as relatable and equal in inherent value. Afterward, it really felt like I knew the Ballarat blokes much longer than just a few days.

The Final Farewell

Fly fishing is a surprisingly attractive and consuming pastime that asks much about focus and creativity. Sadly, these are precisely the skills left on the backburner when defeatist narratives disempower cancer patients. We are always told to accept some kind of hopeless sterile existence. For fit guys in their 40s and 50s its farcical to think that's helpful advice or even a healthy mentality for that matter. The truth is, no-one knows how to handle young cancer patients. I appreciated how this retreat offered a rare chance to be free from all the defeatist ideologies and merry-go-rounds of medical appointments.

During the final farewell session, we could all write a message on our fly-fishing vests to be shared with future participants. Mine read, 'Rise like a trout! That's how I'd like to live the cancer-half of my life. In an active manner without guilt and fear! Make sure you check out the Mending Casts website www.mendingcasts.org and the information provided for their men's Reel Recovery and women's Casting for Recovery cancer retreat programs. It has loads of interesting content for future participants, volunteers, donors and avid anglers alike and as a registered charity, I'm sure they appreciate a donation.



John Addy and Ian Wiseman take in the beauty of Millbrook Lakes.



All the May 2023 Mending Casts' Ballarat participants at the Ballarat Fly Fisher's Club.

ANNUAL ONLINE AUCTION: 29th Nov to 10th December 2023



12 DAYS OF FISHMAS - ONLINE AUCTION 2023

proudly supporting Mending Casts Cancer retreat programs

Casting for Recovery Victoria & Reel Recovery Australia

The online auction is run via the AirAuctioneer platform: to see more [CLICK here:](#)
 The individual auction items and their reserve prices will be finalised by 28th Nov 2023.
 All purchases must be finalised by Dec 13th to allow postage prior to Christmas.



WE'RE LAUNCHING SOON!!

THIS EXCITING NEW PROGRAM

Keep an eye on our media and socials for more details
about our expansion plans for retreat programs
in Tasmania



Casting for Recovery

Tasmania





FLY CASTING TIPS

- When casting into a head-wind it is beneficial to:
 - Use narrow loops.
 - Tilt the front loop trajectory downwards so that the loop fully unrolls just as the fly touches the water. This will require the back loop to be thrown upwards so that the two loops are in a straight line opposite each other.
 - If necessary increase the line speed a bit to offset the slowing effect of the wind. This can be done by casting a bit faster or by hauling.
 - Minimise the number of false casts – a pick up and lay down cast is ideal.
- When casting with a tail-wind it is can be beneficial to:
 - Use a continuous tension cast such as a Belgian Cast.
 - Use a Roll Cast (may require a modified D loop setup).
- When casting with wind coming onto the casting shoulder there is a real risk of the line and fly being blown onto you and it is therefore beneficial to:
 - Tilt the rod tip over the downwind shoulder and otherwise cast normally. This will place the casting loops downwind of you.
 - Turn around so you are facing the other way and deliver the fly on the back cast. This will also place the casting loops downwind of you.
 - Cast with your non-dominant hand (not as hard as you think). Again, the loops will be downwind of you

Organise lessons with a casting instructor to learn these casts.

Bob Young – FFI Master Casting Instructor

PASSING IT ON

At the VFA Fishing Expo in February Mending Casts members met a lady who wanted to donate her father’s fly-fishing items. We were finally able to meet up with her and his granddaughter in June where she presented us with his much-loved fly-fishing gear including two rods, a reel and a few other items. The joy they got out of putting their father’s/grandfather’s fishing gear to further use in a cause close to all their hearts was both humbling and heart-warming. Thank you Jo and Lilly.



Dan Cox with granddaughter Lilly

“My dad was a keen fisherman who spent most of his free time with a rod in his hand (or a beer). My earliest memory growing up is of him fishing on the banks of the Loddon River or Cairn Curran, with us kids jumping around in the water scaring the fish away. He loved fresh water and salt water, fly, lure or bait fishing. He travelled the loop around Australia twice, trying different places for that elusive trophy fish.

He taught himself to fly-fish in his 50’s as he saw it as a new challenge. He told me endless stories of his ‘monster’ fish that always seemed to elude the camera. Dad and I spent many hours on the water when I visited, fishing and talking. He taught my daughter to fish as well as my nephews and niece. We all knew that when you go to visit ‘Grumps’ you will always end up fishing.

Many of the world’s and society’s problems were discussed and the road to world peace discovered on the bank of a river or bay, rod in hand,

Dad passed away from cancer a day before his 75th birthday.”

Jo McCann - Daughter



Lilly and Dan’s daughter Jo

UPCOMING RETREATS



REEL RECOVERY:

FREE FLY-FISHING RETREATS FOR MEN WITH CANCER

Reel Recovery is a national non-profit program run by Mending Casts Inc that conducts free fly-fishing retreats for men recovering from all forms of cancer. Combining expert fly-fishing instruction with directed "courageous conversations", these retreats offer a unique experience for men with cancer; a time to share their stories, learn a new skill, form friendships and gain renewed hope as they confront the challenges of their recovery.

"This was the best time of my life!
It's by far the best thing out there for men with cancer."
Retreat Participant

Retreats are conducted over a two-and-a-half-day period at an accommodation with onsite or nearby fishing access. All meals, lodging and fly-fishing equipment are provided at no cost to the participants. Retreats are led by trained facilitators & expert fly-fishing instructors. A maximum of 12 men are invited to participate, to maintain the quality of the instruction and to create a powerful small-group dynamic.



"I discovered that while fly-fishing, I was in another place. In this place there was no cancer, no pain and no fear."
Retreat Participant

"This retreat was so much more than fishing; this was a life-changing experience."
Retreat Participant

GOALS

- Provide a safe, reflective environment for the participants to discuss their cancer experience with other men who have gone through it too, thereby providing support and information to help them in their recovery.
- Provide introductory fly-fishing instruction that enables the participants to learn a new skill, form a healing connection with nature, and participate in a sport they can continue throughout their recovery and lifetime.
- Provide participants information about cancer-related resources, both in the local community and nationally to facilitate networking and enhanced management of their recovery

If you would like to be a participant, please contact us.

Mending Casts Inc email : admin@mendingcasts.org web : www.mendingcasts.org
FB: <https://www.facebook.com/reelrecoveryaus>



To find out more and apply to participate click [HERE](#)

The Unexpected Gift of Giving-up Guiding by Charley May

After much soul-searching I hung up my fly-guiding boots late last year. Balancing full-time work, a family and an increasingly busy side gig was super challenging. Something had to give ... what transpired turned out to be so much better than I thought. I started volunteering for Casting for Recovery (CfR) retreats with a charity named Mending Casts.

The last CfR retreat in Marysville in March 2023 confirmed I'd made the right decision. It was a brilliant few days filled with amazing people, courageous stories, kindness, fun and memories for everyone to draw on when life gets tough. I think this retreat is one of my favourite fishing experiences of the year - here's why.



Charley(R) and her CfR participant Emma

When I arrived at Elkanah Lodge, the venue for our retreat, the place was filled with good energy and enthusiasm. It felt like walking into a family gathering you actually wanted to be at ... such is the camaraderie of the fly-fishing community. After an ice-breaker, I sat down at the fly-tying vice with my participant Emma to create some eye-catching fly patterns. She took to it like a duck to water and I could tell by her artistic flair and attention to detail we were kindred spirits.

The next morning didn't start so well. Emma recently changed medication and had a rough night so missed out on the introductory fly-casting session. I felt sad for her and angry with cancer and its ability to indiscriminately hurt so many people. But you can't keep a good woman down and she joined us in the afternoon on the Steavenson River. While we couldn't fish because she was feeling pretty wobbly, we got to walk along the river, watch other people and talk about the streamcraft needed to catch trout. It was the gentle dose of nature needed to help Emma gather her strength.

With the help of fellow CfR volunteers and qualified healthcare professionals, Dr Renata Fliegner and Cherrie Ninness, Emma pulled up fit for the final day. While it drizzled it didn't dampen her spirits to get out and land a fish. So off we drove to join the crew at a private pondage down the road. After a whistle-stop introduction to fly-casting we were throwing lines on the drink. It wasn't long before the whoops of joy rang out from around the pond and each happy howl inspired fresh determination to join the Catch Club.

Then it happened ... the bobber dipped under the surface! In her excitement Em dropped the line. I grabbed it and gave it a good tug to set the hook and handed the line back to her. The smiles and pure joy radiating from Emma as she played the fish was priceless and I could have cried with happiness. However, the tears really came when we were landing the beast because just as we were about to net it we lost a little tension from the line and it spat the hook and ran. I could feel the disappointment in her. But what she'd caught was much bigger - the bug for fly-fishing and the desire to get out there again to get the one that got away.

After the retreat I got a message from Em seeing if we could fish together again. It hasn't happened yet but I'm going to make it happen this season to see if we can get her the trophy shot she deserves. I'm also going to get ready for the next CfR retreat so I can help change more lives one cast at a time.

VOLUNTEERING WITH REEL RECOVERY RETREAT

Ballarat 8-10 May 2023

I first met Val and Bob Young with John Billing at the Yarra Valley Fly Fishers Club meeting when they came along to give a talk on Mending Casts incorporating Casting for Recovery (CfR) and Reel Recovery (RR). I was impressed with their mission to provide retreats including fly-casting and fly-fishing for people who have experienced some form of cancer in the past or who are currently going through cancer-related treatments. This provides an outlet for participants to concentrate on things other than their own health concerns.



Cherrie (L) Merrill (CL), Val (CR) and Shelley (R) @ Millbrook Lakes

After completing a few forms for Mending Casts I was all set to go and headed out the Western Highway to the Ballarat Mercure where the three-day RR Retreat was being held from 8-10 May. I arrived around midday and was welcomed to enjoy a lunch with the Mending Casts crew and some of the fly-fishing buddies.

As a volunteer over the three days, some of the aspects of the retreat that I was involved in included the following:

- Directing arriving participants to the Conference Room.
- Helping to ensure each participant left each event venue with their buddy.
- Taking photos at the various events.
- Setting up tea and coffee stations.
- Setting up the fly-tying stations.
- Assisting with the setting up of the tables, chairs and buffet area for the lunch and dinner on the second day at the Ballarat Fly Fishers Clubrooms on Lake Wendouree (which were extremely impressive).
- Assisting in the kitchen with dishwashing for both meals.

The van within which all the equipment was moved around was something that had me in awe. So much equipment came out of it and due to the diligent manoeuvring during unpacking and packing – everything did fit back into the van in an extremely organised manner. Well done, Cherrie!



Another aspect that I was very impressed with was the catering on both the second and third day. Being present for most of the day whilst the meals were being prepared, I can attest as to how much beautiful food was presented and I'm sure enjoyed by all the participants. Well done, Jenni!

At all times, the health and well-being of the participants was at the forefront of the Mending Casts team's minds and I know Shelley was responsible for taking on this very important role. Well done, Shelley!

I very much enjoyed the experience and I was amazed at how much work had gone on behind the scenes to produce such a successful retreat.

I was made to feel part of the team and I appreciated spending time with Val Young who took me under her wing and was a great mentor throughout the three days – thanks Val! Working with the Mending Casts team was an absolute pleasure and I would like to thank them all for the opportunity! After the event, I was asked would I help again and the answer is – yes, I definitely will if given the chance!

Merrill Wenlock

MENDING CASTS TRIVIA NIGHT – by Fiona White



26th August was the long-anticipated date of the third Mending Casts Trivia Night. As our main fundraiser, an enormous amount of effort went into it to ensure the best outcome possible; a fun and memorable night for all those attending and a nice amount of money raised so that we could afford to move forward with planning future retreats.

We had extraordinarily generous donations of everything from wine to footy jumpers to gourmet goodies to fishing and golf equipment, along with plants, vouchers, artwork and personal luxury items and many others too numerous to list here. These were all used as auction goods, raffle prizes, seat and door prizes, trivia prizes, or placed on the “for sale” table.

The lovely Linda Cavanagh, who is a committee member, was particularly proactive in seeking donations and in addition, celebrated her 60th birthday at the event along with loads of her generous friends. John Billing, Bob Young and James Norney took the stage for the evening, emceeing, umpiring and calling the trivia questions. Special thanks to James for the fabulous job he did as Master of Ceremonies. As an introduction to the evening the short film that had been made about past retreat experiences was shown and we were thrilled to have some previous participants with us. In the film people spoke of the significant value and meaning that they have taken from attending a retreat.

All tables joined-in with great enthusiasm in the rounds of trivia, taking the opportunity to increase their points through various means – donations that is, not peeking at Google! As James read out the answers there was much clapping, groaning and hilarity.

Between rounds the silent auction was visited by many and raffles were drawn. Linda the birthday girl, Roberta Pearce, and Linda Pearson provided an energetic and very well-received ukulele performance. The game where the closest coin thrown to a bottle of whisky was the winner, was an incredibly hard fought and heart-stopping exercise!

The live auction was also extremely popular with people generously bidding for some fantastic goodies. The highlight of this auction was the tense bidding war for a framed and signed Collingwood jumper, which eventually went for \$1800! All but two of the approximately forty silent auction items sold much to the delight of some of those who carried away the quality bargain-priced goods and services on offer.

The final winners of the trivia competition, after a careful count by the umpires, was Table 11 (which included a past retreat participant – Steve Chlopek) by two points and they were delighted to share a prize consisting of a multitude of donated goods. At the end of the evening we were absolutely thrilled to have raised more than \$16,000 which is almost the exact amount that it costs us to run a retreat.

We honestly cannot thank enough all those who contributed to make the night such a success; the exceptionally kind donors, the participants who joined in with such a spirit of fun and generosity, the Eltham Bowling Club for the use of its clubrooms, James for taking on the task of MC, the Mending Casts working group which did most of the organising (Cherrie, Val, Linda, Shelley and Sandy) and all those who helped in any way; setting-up tables, decorating, assisting with sales (Sandy), receiving payments (Fiona), feeding the committee (Con), personalising drink bottles (Alyshia and Trudi), all-round exceptional assistance (Andrew and Roberta) and those who helped clean-up at the end of a brilliant night. We cannot wait for next year!

MENDING CASTS TRIVIA NIGHT (Photos)



MAGNIFICENT MONICA

The article below that was published recently in the Herald Sun newspaper. "Thank You" [Monica](#) for the incredible support. To donate go to our GoFundMe page: <https://gofund.me/21013859>

NEWS 15



Monica Tonner, pictured at Port Melbourne, will swim the English Channel to raise money for Mending Casts. Picture: David Crosling

Channel swim a reel challenge

Erin Constable

Monica Tonner is taking on the English Channel to raise money for a cause close to her heart.

The Melbourne woman will be fundraising for Mending Casts, a charity that provides cancer patients with fly fishing retreats to reconnect with nature.

"My own father, Peter Tonner, passed away from cancer 20 years ago," she said. "He was an avid fly fisher, he loved being out in nature during his battle with prostate cancer.

"My father used fly fishing to help live his life when he knew he had limited time.

"It's not about the fish, it's about standing in some of

the most beautiful lakes and connecting with the outdoors."

Ms Tonner, an experienced triathlete and sailor who has competed in the Sydney to Hobart, is hoping to tackle the roughly 34km crossing in around 14 hours.

"I have never swum any distance like this before, and the challenge was there so I

took it," she said. Her training has included cold camps, six-hour qualifying swims, ultra-marathon swims and a strict nutrition plan.

Ms Tonner hopes to raise \$60,000 for Mending Casts.

"Anything helps, \$60,000 means funding the entire program for a year," she said.

She plans to tackle the swim on August 20.

MAGNIFICENT MONICA cont'd

Following her successful English Channel swim Mending Casts Treasurer Jonathan Myers caught up with her in the UK whilst he was there for a holiday.

All action and a bit of a talk

You know how some people are all talk and no trousers? Well this is not the case with Monica Tonner. As you may have seen from Mending Casts social feeds, Monica swam the English Channel to honour her father and to raise funds for Mending Casts – which she has done to the tune of more than \$13,500. An amazing achievement on so many levels. As I happened to be in the UK just after her swim I had the opportunity to catch up with Monica to chat with her about her swim, fishing and life in general. She was in Spain visiting family but we “WhatsApped” successfully.

How was the swim – was it what you expected?

It actually was pretty much what I had expected. A thorough training regime with insights gained from experienced ocean swimmers and several people who have completed the Channel Swim [Ed - one of the seven recognized ocean swims globally] really helped to manage expectations. The physical and mental challenges were definitely there and the last couple of hours of getting through the tide were certainly the toughest. My team was saying “push for 15 minutes”, then having done so they asked again “push for another 5” and then “push for another 15!!”. My left arm was pretty sore at that stage and after the swim I couldn’t move it for two days – I had to fight hard and kept asking myself “how much do you want this?” I told myself you have to fight for it regardless of how hard it is and I also reminded myself that my sisters were trying hard to find a way to meet me on the beach wherever I landed, so I kept saying “I’m on my way I’ll be there”. I also remembered the advice of other Channel swimmers - “you’re not there until you have your feet on the sand regardless of how close land may seem”.



Figure 1: Out in the shipping lanes

It's a 12 to 16-hour swim – what do you think about all that time?

Yes, in my case 14 hours. My feeders were always on deck watching me and sometimes the skipper and crew would come out - I would wonder what they were chatting about. I sometimes sing (in my head!) or recite a poem. I don't know really; your mind just zones out – a bit like when you are fishing and you just work in the rhythm.

What was the worst bit?

Probably having electrolytes to drink for 14 hours when all you want to do is stop for steak and chips! Maybe the hardest challenge was to get into the rhythm of swimming whilst it was dark (I started at 2am). The boat has a drogue to assist in slowing it down - like loch style fishing – but with the wave motion it surges, so it was hard to judge quite how close to the boat I had to be. Also spotlights from the boat above make it difficult to see so we used glo-sticks on the bow and stern so that I could gauge the distance better.



Figure 2: Celebration hug in France

What was the best bit?

Feet on the sand and having my sisters there to share the emotion and joy of completing the swim. Knowing that they were trying to be there to greet me was a real motivator and so lovely when I did get there. I am one of 6 siblings and my three sisters were all there - they were following my progress from the shore and were on electric bikes. My feeder was trying to communicate to them via WhatsApp so they could ascertain my possible landing point between Wissant and Cape Gris Nez, but when they caught sight of the boat via a photographer's zoom lens they had to run about a kilometre up the beach as the tide was pushing me south.

You have achieved this goal – what's next?

Hah! Lots of people have asked me this and to be honest I don't know yet - but I have been thinking a lot about it. From a swimming perspective there is the "Triple Crown" which (in addition to the Channel) is a swim in the Derwent in Tasmania and the Palm to Shelly swim [in Sydney?]. But it doesn't have to be swimming - I was thinking maybe the Kokoda Trail or Everest base camp?

[Ed – this person is seriously bonkers, but impressive!]

Let's talk fishing now – have you done any yet in UK or Spain?

No not yet - I left all my gear in UK and I'll do some when I get back next week. I have a beat booked on the Test and I will perhaps try a beat on the Frome near your sister in Dorset. Up until now it's been too hectic and it's too hot here at the moment - so I am just focused on recovery and family time.

Figure 3: the Frome at Wrackelford, Dorset



What is your favourite place to fish?

I love dry fly above all. I have fished in Montana and Yellowstone in the States, NZ North Island and Tassie, as well as Victoria of course. The Steavenson is the closest to home so that's probably my go to but in terms of "best so far" may be Yellowstone. I don't really fish lakes although having said that I was inspired by the Womens FF team performance in Scotland - so I shouldn't rule it out.

[Ed – you should try the mayfly hatch on the big Irish lochs in May too...]

What about your fishing bucket list for places you would like to fish?

Well, I do have that book "Fifty Places to Fly Fish before you die" - so all of them! I haven't done the South Island in NZ yet so that's probably my first target.

Editorial Comment: that about wrapped it up as Monica's phone battery was dying but as a footnote, at her request John Billing (Mending Casts President) has put her in touch with Marian Miller – former Australian Women's Fly Fishing Team member and volunteer at our CFR retreats. I suspect we may hear more of this anon – you kind of get the impression that when Monica sets her mind to something, it happens!



Figure 4: Monica signing the club wall (note Channel Swim Club T-shirt - not many people have one of those!)



CfR PARTICIPANT- ROBERTA PEARCE – MARYSVILLE MARCH 2023

“I wish” was a comment that I’d made on a Facebook post which started my conversation and friendship with Val Young (Mending Casts) about 18 months ago. Val had posted about a fly-fishing retreat in Victoria for women who’d had breast cancer - but I lived in NSW. I thought that you had to reside in Victoria to qualify to attend - but not so! Val got back to me and said she’d love to see me attend the retreat and added me to the list of potential attendees.



Roberta in her CfR gear

I was planning on attending a retreat in 2022 but my husband (who had stage 4 stomach cancer) suddenly declined in health and I had to cancel. Sadly, Keith passed away in May 2022.

Val contacted me to offer me a place on the Casting for Recovery (CfR) Marysville Retreat in March 2023 and I jumped at the opportunity to attend, driving from the Mid-North Coast of NSW to Marysville Victoria (dropping in on friends along the way to break the journey).

I was (and am) still very emotional following Keith’s passing, but this CfR event allowed me to open-up on both my own breast cancer journey and Keith’s passing - that was very cathartic. It was fantastic to meet up with the nine other ladies at Marysville who’d all been through breast cancer surgery and treatments - we all bonded SO well with that common diagnosis. Receiving support from my fellow fly-fishos was just amazing - as they ‘get it’. At 70, I was probably one of the older members - but we all clicked and had the most

amazing two and a half days of pampering, fly-tying and trout fishing instruction (both on and off the water) with the most amazing CfR team! Most of us hooked and landed trout (even though I ended up sitting in a chair lakeside on Day 2).

The whole two and a half days with the CfR team was just amazing. Every participant had their own buddy who dedicated their time to up-skilling us in the arts of fly-tying and fly-fishing, making sure we were safe and able when in and by the water. They gave us EVERY opportunity to catch trout. They were ecstatic when we made a good cast, let alone when we hooked a fish! Whenever anyone hooked a fish, a cry went up and all the CfR team descended, taking photos and videos of the captured trout from every angle. Many of us caught fish on a fly we’d tied ourselves. How good was that? Strong friendships were formed with our buddies and the CfR team.

I can thoroughly recommend to any woman who’s had breast cancer, to contact the team and arrange to attend a retreat in 2024 or later as long as they are physically able to.



Hugs from her buddy Louise



CATERING for RECOVERY (aka Mending Cakes)

The Impossible Pie

The magic pie that separates itself conveniently while baking into 3 distinct layers
- crunchy top, custard filling and pastry-like base. Impossible!

Ingredients.

- (1/2 cup) plain flour
- 215g (1 cup) caster sugar
- 85g (1 cup) desiccated coconut
- 4 eggs, lightly whisked
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 125g butter, melted
- 500ml (2 cups) milk
- 385g can of pie-fruit apple slices

Method.

1. Preheat oven to 180C/160C fan-forced. Grease a 5cm deep, 24cm round pie dish.
 2. Whisk the flour, sugar, coconut, eggs, vanilla and butter in a large bowl. Gradually add the milk, whisking constantly, until combined.
 3. Place the apple slices over the base of the prepared dish. Pour egg mixture over the apple slices.
 4. Bake the pie for 1 hour or until set. Test the centre of the pie with a skewer to ensure that the custard is set. Set aside to cool before serving.
-



MENDING DONATIONS

We would like to acknowledge the exceptional contributions made by the following donors and publicly offer our sincere gratitude for their generous support of our programs.

Southern Fly Fishers

6 fly boxes full with approx. 1000 flies all hand tied by SFFC members.

Aussie Angler

A pair of ladies Spotters Polaroid glasses donated by Aussie Angler for the Fishmas auction



Donation of a Primal Mega fly rod for our "12 days of Fishmas" Auction in December.

Peter Morse

6 copies of his book "A Few Great Flies & How to Fish Them".



Jack Sims

A superb Epic 476 Fast-Glass rod built to auction at our Trivia Night.



Nth Qld Saltwater Flies : Fly Tying Team

A big "Thank You" goes out to Dave Little and his team from @nqsaltwaterflies for the dozen filled fly boxes we received that will be used at our next Reel Recovery Australia retreat in Merrijig Victoria.



Generous provision of pro-bono accountancy services and business guidance.



Ongoing assistance with strategic planning, business development, marketing and grants.



Donation of significant in-kind support for our marketing, branding and website development



Financial support to fund up to 3 participants to the November Reel Recovery retreat in Merrijig

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Financial support to fund up to 6 participants from their Men's Shed program to the November Reel Recovery retreat in Merrijig.



Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA)

Stocking of public waters in support of our Casting for Recovery and Reel Recovery retreat fishing days.



Personal Donations:

- Ken Moran - 4 vests, 3 rods, 2 nets, 6 full fly boxes 3 reels, tools & assorted gear
- Joe Brooks - copy of "Finding Joe Brooks" DVD
- Rob Brownbill - \$2000
- Anon Donor - \$2500
- Bild Group - \$2000
- Jack Gunther - \$1000
- Mark Wearn - \$1000
- Jennifer Wearn - \$500
- Mark Kelly - \$500
- Madeline Howell - \$500

Thank You

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH (October):

Call Breast Cancer Network Australia helpline on 1800 500 258

I can't believe it's October already! This may not be one of the more exciting articles in the newsletter but it is one of the most important!

Many of you will be aware **October is Breast Cancer Awareness month.**

In Australia breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer for women aged 40-59 and the second highest for all other age groups. Around 28% of the estimated cancers diagnosed in females will be breast cancer. This doesn't sound like much but it equates to over 20,000 women's lives turned upside down and that doesn't include the impact on family and friends. The expected death rate from breast cancer in 2023 is 3300.

Many people are surprised to learn that **men can develop breast cancer.** Fortunately, breast cancer in men is rare and it accounts for less than 1% of all cancers in men. The good news is that most men survive breast cancer. In Australia 87% of men diagnosed with breast cancer are alive five years later. Most men fully recover, and the breast cancer does not return. Men of all ages can be affected by breast cancer however the average age of diagnosis is 71.

There are two types of breast cancer: Invasive and Non-invasive.

Invasive breast cancers have spread outside the ducts or lobules of the breast into surrounding breast tissue. If not treated early they have the potential to spread into the lymph nodes and other organs.

Non-invasive breast cancers are abnormal cells that are contained within the milk ducts or lobules in the breast. They have not grown into or invaded normal breast tissue. Non-invasive cancers are called "carcinoma-in-situ" and are sometimes referred to as "pre-cancers".



Symptoms

Not everyone who is diagnosed with breast cancer has symptoms. Breast changes may not mean cancer but see a doctor if you have:

- a lump, lumpiness or thickening especially in just one breast
- a change in the size or shape of the breast or swelling
- a change to the nipple – changes in shape, crusting, sores or ulcers, redness, pain, a clear or bloody discharge or a nipple that turns in (inverted) when it used to stick out
- a change in the skin – dimpling or indentation, a rash or itchiness, a scaly appearance, unusual redness or other colour changes
- swelling or discomfort in the armpit or near the collarbone
- ongoing, unusual pain not related to your monthly menstrual cycle that remains after your period and is in one breast only..

This October, Get involved. Get screened. Take action !!!

Check out the Cancer Council, Breast Care Network Australia and the many other helpful cancer websites for more information. Most hospitals that offer cancer treatment will have a Wellness Centre or similar with rafters full of information and support.

OUR WISH LIST

As a not-for-profit charity run by volunteers, Mending Casts is always on the lookout for assistance in securing a range of items which are needed for its day-to-day activities. Some of the major items required at the moment are listed below. The majority of funds raised by Mending Casts is directed toward paying for accommodation, meals and other items at retreats. Sponsorship of retreat participants by companies, individuals or other organisations is high on our Wishlist and would enable us to expand our retreat program. Currently (Oct 2023) the direct cost for one participant to attend a two-and-a-half-day retreat is around \$1300.

MATERIAL GOODS:

- ◆ 240V petrol generator with a minimum 2kW continuous output.
- ◆ Portable data projector for use at retreats and presentations.



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.

MENDING MEMBERS:

Mending Casts is also seeking to add several additional members to its Committee who have skills in the IT and Marketing areas and possess “Can Do” attitudes. A love of fly-fishing is preferred but not essential, however you must be someone of the highest personal and professional integrity.

Anyone with these skills and attributes who is interested in joining a dedicated committee of volunteers should apply by submitting an application with references. Please email us at admin@mendingcasts.org for more information.

THE NUMBER CRUNCH by Jonathan Myers

Hello..... I am a recent addition to the Mending Casts crew and feel privileged to be so. Having volunteered, I wasn't at all clear exactly what I could do to help but unexpectedly my long lost (and happily abandoned) accounting training has given me an opportunity. So with some trepidation and plenty of caveats to my fellow committee members about my credentials (or lack thereof) I have jumped into the Treasurers role. While it may not be the most obvious source of excitement to most people I find there is plenty to enjoy (who knew?).

Firstly I am pleased to report that following all the hard work of the team (not by me) we have gained official Charity status with Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). This includes registration with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) meaning donors can get a tax benefit from any donation (of goods, services or cash) they make to our charity. This has had an immediately beneficial effect on our ability to raise funds.



Australian Government
Australian Taxation Office

Notice of endorsement as a deductible gift recipient

Endorsement as a deductible gift recipient under Subdivision 30-BA of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* is provided as detailed below.

Name	MENDING CASTS INCORPORATED
Australian business number	53 801 034 308
Endorsement date of effect	1 August 2019
Provision for gift deductibility	Item 1 of the table in section 30-15 of the <i>Income Tax Assessment Act 1997</i>
Item(s) in Subdivision 30-B of the <i>Income Tax Assessment Act 1997</i>	1.1.6 registered health promotion charity

Your organisation's endorsement as a deductible gift recipient together with the date or period of effect, is entered in the public register maintained by the Australian Business Registrar at www.abr.business.gov.au

Your organisation must notify us in writing if it ceases to be entitled to endorsement.

Chris Jordan
Commissioner of Taxation and
Registrar of the Australian Business Register

Secondly one of our amazing supporters, Stephen Barnes (www.byronvaleadvisors.com), has helped us to register for GST and thereby claim a refund of more than \$5,000 to boost the coffers. In addition, he has generously donated a subscription to a bookkeeping software system.

This makes the accounting process much easier, not only for future GST claims but also to ensure we prepare thorough financial statements and have full accountability and transparency which will again benefit grant applications and any future audits from both ATO or ACNC. It also means we are no longer dependent on my somewhat dubious spreadsheeting skills to monitor day to day cashflow and budgets.

We have also enrolled as a Registered Charity on Facebook which will allow users of the platform to nominate us for fund-raising activities.



Cheerio – Jonathan

"THANK YOU" to all our Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the help and support of the following organisations (see <https://www.mendingcasts.org/sponsors>)



VALE FIONA (NONI) WILSON

19/10/1961 – 30/3/2023



Sadly, we lost one of our own in March this year. Noni passed away peacefully at the ONJ Wellness Centre after short but intense treatment for uterine cancer.

Noni was a shining angel whose cheeky smile, wicked sense of humour and flowing golden hair meant she'd light up a room and brighten the day of everyone she met. A kind, caring and generous person who was taken way too soon by the very disease that she devoted so much of her life to helping others overcome.

She was a loved and devoted Mending Casts committee member having volunteered at all but one of our cancer retreats up until her passing. A qualified pharmacologist, she also worked tirelessly in the background to help with our planning, administration and in support of our events and fund-raising activities.

Noni was also a popular volunteer at our retreats as participants warmed to her engaging personality and gentle demeanour, which made them feel at ease and trusted in her presence. She would effortlessly strike up conversations with people to help them feel comfortable and supported during the retreat and talk openly about her experiences with pharmacology and alternate medicines, fly-fishing adventures and her love of painting.

The organisation has become what it is today thanks to her involvement and we have far more enriched lives for having known her. In our grief we vow to continue our work as part of Noni's legacy and in honour of her memory.... our Volunteer of the Year award has been retitled in her name.

RIP Noni we will never forget you XXXX



CONTACT US

Mending Casts Inc,
PO Box 256
Montmorency,
VIC, Australia

www.mendingcasts.org

admin@mendingcasts.org

Committee Executive 2023/24

President:	John Billing
Vice President:	Bob Young
Treasurer:	Jonathan Myers
Secretary:	Cherrie Ninness
Newsletter	
Editor:	Val Young

