



December 2021

Issue 1

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 

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Mending Casts Inc is a non-profit incorporated organisation that was formed in early 2019 to run free fly-fishing retreats for people with cancer. We are run solely by volunteers and rely exclusively on fundraisers, donations, sponsorships & grants to fund these programs. We cannot operate without public generosity so every dollar received is invested back into our programs and the activities which support them. To underpin this role as a benevolent organisation, we aim to become a registered charity and obtain Deductible Gift Registration status from the ATO soon too.

In the beginning, we were called "Casting for Recovery Victoria" as initially our focus was on running fly-fishing retreats for women with breast cancer. We then changed our name to "Mending Casts Inc" so we could provide both male and female retreat programs. The "Reel Recovery Australia" program for men with any cancer was launched soon after. Mending Casts Inc is the parent organisation, whilst Casting for Recovery Victoria and Reel Recovery Australia are the programs it delivers. More details are available on our website www.mendingcasts.org.



Casting for Recovery

Victoria, Australia



Peter West, Inaugural President Casting for Recovery Victoria

“THE BEGINNING”

My journey with Casting for Recovery (CFR) began in the oncology ward of the St John of God hospital in Geelong while recovering from a T cell lymphoma (cancer).

Most mornings I'd catch up with a group of guys and girls in the sunroom to read the local papers and have a chat. During my five months' stay some of the girls sadly lost their battle, which made an indelible impression on me, as my first experience with breast cancer.

I had already been involved in running a fly-fishing program for our wounded warriors from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam when I first heard of the CFR program run by the ACT Fly Fishers under the direction of Kerryn Milligan and Nick van Weelden. They'd been operating under license from the USA headquarters for a year. I contacted Nick and he was kind enough to give me the contact details of the US head office and with both Kerryn and Nick's encouragement, it was full steam ahead to start up a program in Victoria.

I contacted Head Office and pleaded my case to CEO Whitney Milhoan and successfully obtained a license to start up in Victoria. Our inaugural meeting at the club rooms of Southern Fly Fishers Australia Inc. validated the steering committee and formalised our organisation as Casting for Recovery Victoria.

Your committee members:

- Peter West, President
- Cherrie Ninness, Secretary
- Joanne Dobson, Treasurer
- Val Young, Brenda Galey, Judy Cameron, and Alisa Christie, Committee Members.

Unfortunately, health issues forced me to step aside as President and miss our first retreat at Holmesglen in Eildon. I am now back in the saddle and look forward to developing a successful program.

By Peter West

CFR CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

For over 25 years, women from all walks of life have benefitted from Casting for Recovery's inspiring program model. But don't just take our word for it, read these quotes from past participants:

"An awesome concept, so valuable as an escape from every day and health stresses. Wonderful to connect with others in similar situations. All volunteers were so compassionate and patient and welcoming. I feel very humble to have such beautiful "angels" give up their weekend to share their skills, talents, & hospitality with me. I feel like a "Princess". Thank you. I do so much appreciate this."

Patricia, 2019, Eildon Victoria

"This helped me more than I thought it would. Talking, asking questions, sharing stories, and getting to know so many other women who can relate to my experience gave me the emotional release that I needed."

Participant, Western Pennsylvania USA



Participants at Eildon retreat, Victoria 2019

"A CFR retreat, it's an amazing experience. You learn that you're not the only one dealing with this disease, but you learn it in a beautiful, peaceful setting, surrounded by wonderful, strong women. The best part is that you get the chance to experience a new skill that provides a challenge and hope to move forward. I've thought numerous times about standing in that stream with my river guide trying to cast my line to catch the elusive fish, and the sheer awesomeness of it all. And that gives me hope."

Debbie, 2014, Georgia USA



"I had heard of this program many years ago but assumed it was not for me. I am reserved emotionally. My oncology nurse encouraged me to apply. She had been a participant years ago. If she had not encouraged me, I never would have gone. I am so happy that she did, somehow, she knew that I needed it and that it was the right environment for me."

Participant, Vermont USA,



Fly-tying participant at Eildon retreat, Victoria 2019



REPORT: REEL RECOVERY OMEO RETREAT 2021

The planning for our inaugural Reel Recovery Australia retreat had been underway since 2019, and small window of opportunity arose in the early part of 2021 and we were able to stage the first Reel Recovery Australia retreat at Omeo in Victoria at the end of April. We ran the program with 8 men from all over Australia who were in different stages of their cancer journey. Most had never fly fished before; one had never even been fishing prior to the retreat.

This retreat was an outstanding success in no small part due to the support provided by the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club through the provision of the fishing venue on the Mitta Mitta River and also experienced fishing buddies to support the participants.

It is very fulfilling for all involved in these retreats to see the impact the programs have on the participants and to see some go on to take up fly fishing as part of their personal journey. We are truly grateful to our sponsors, partners and especially Stan Golub and the team at Reel Recovery HQ, for helping us launch this wonderful program in Australia. Be Well; Fish On! It is apt that we leave a parting word to one of our Omeo retreat participants.

“I had given up, and wanted the cancer to take me. This experience has been life changing and I don't want to be isolated anymore. I have rediscovered myself through fly-fishing and want to keep going.” – Alan



“I have rediscovered myself through fly-fishing and want to keep going.”



UPCOMING EVENTS*

1 Dec. 2021 Peter Mac Men's Shed launch

1 - 5 Dec. 2021 Online Fishmus Auction

4 - 6 Apr. 2022 Casting for Recovery Victoria
For women with breast cancer

7 - 9 Nov. 2022 Reel for Recovery Australia
For men with cancer

Both will be based in Ballarat and we are very fortunate that they will include 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.

[\(http://www.millbrooklakes.com.au/\)](http://www.millbrooklakes.com.au/)



Some of the 2021 Mending Casts team

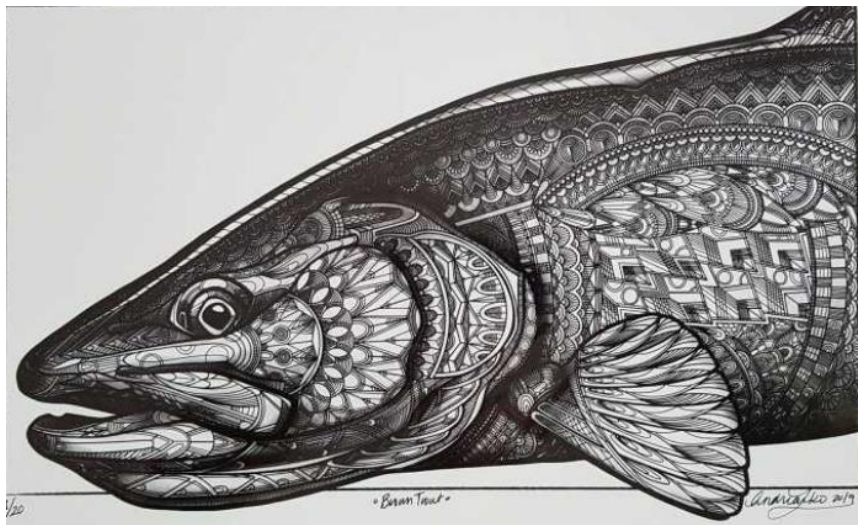


12 DAYS OF FISHMUS ONLINE AUCTION

This is one of our major fundraisers for the year. Up for auction December 1st - 5th are a glorious bespoke CfR 25yr anniversary fly rod & reel combo, 5 piece limited edition trout artwork, a hand-built timber fly tying caddy plus several fly & fly box sets, and a heap of other great items. Please get involved and bid generously.

Check here for more details:

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



A TIMELY REMINDER

Ok so it's now November, did you remember to check your breasts in October, breast cancer awareness month? And if not, why not? You can do it now; it really only takes 3 minutes. And this includes you men. It is estimated that 164 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia this year. Nowhere near the estimated 19,866 women but every person is still someone's brother, partner, father, or son. How can men get breast cancer when they don't have breasts? Everyone has breast tissue but men don't produce as much of the breast-stimulating hormone so they usually stay flat chested. Some medications or varying hormone levels can mean that some men develop visible breast gland tissue.

Things to look out for in both men and women are:

- A lump in the breast, such as a painless lump close to the nipple.
- A change in the skin colour, texture, and/or appearance of the breast, such as thickening, swelling or dimpling of the skin
- A change in the shape and appearance of the nipple or pectorals (muscles at the front of the chest)
- Discharge from the nipple (blood or clear)
- Pain in the breast region
- Swollen lymph nodes (glands) under the arm

An early diagnosis can make a life-saving difference. So, please visit your GP—sooner rather than later—if you detect any persistent changes during your regular self-breast examinations.

It's also been well documented that men can often put off visiting the GP. A man diagnosed with breast cancer can feel embarrassed because it's often perceived as a women's disease. They may also feel surprised, anxious, depressed and angry, just like most women who are diagnosed. While there are many support services and advice out there for women, men can feel isolated and find it difficult to connect with other men in similar situations. The Cancer Council and Breast Cancer Network Australia have great resources to provide emotional and practical support, as well as personal stories about both men and women diagnosed with breast cancer.

So, get feeling, get diagnosed, get informed.

Oh, and go fishing, it's great for your mental health after a diagnosis (or at any time!).

References:

*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare,
Breast Care Network Australia,
Cancer Council, National Breast Cancer Foundation*



COVID-19 UPDATE

As with the rest of the world Mending Cast's activities have been significantly impacted by the spread of Covid-19 resulting in the necessary postponement of several events and a review of how future retreats will be conducted.

As cancer patients, the health challenges facing our participants are significant, so it's paramount that we do everything we can to prevent any potential infection or spread of Covid-19 at any of our events. This includes keeping our

Mending Casts has developed a robust Covid-19 policy that will help to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of our participants and all support staff is not compromised.

We adhere to Federal and State Government directives, as well as guidelines from our program advisors in the USA. Further individualized counter-measures are implemented at each retreat venue. All are designed to help guarantee we remain Covid-19 free at our retreats.

“We adhere to Federal and State Government directives as well as guidelines from our program advisors in the USA

FUNDRAISERS

As a registered non-profit organisation run by unpaid volunteers, we require independent funding to be able to provide our programs and services. Our fund-raising 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.

Our next major fundraising event will be an online auction run in December 2021. It will feature a range of sponsored and donated products with the main item being a wonderful custom CFR 25-year celebratory 4wt Rod & Reel set, provided by Tony Liparota (HardCoreElement) and Ashleigh Dunsmore (Harfin Fly Reels). This bespoke combo is aesthetically beautiful and casts like a dream, so it won't last long! Other items will be added to the auction soon, so please keep an eye on our website

www.mendingcasts.org and Facebook page [\(https://www.facebook.com/mendingcasts/\)](https://www.facebook.com/mendingcasts/) for details as soon as they are announced.



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MEMBER PROFILE: VAL YOUNG - RETIRING VICE PRESIDENT



“Little did I know where this interest would take me.”

As a keen fly fisher and organiser of Millbrook Lakes girl's weekends and Girls Gone Fly Fishing events, I developed an interest in the Casting for Recovery program for women affected by breast cancer. Little did I know where this interest would take me.

I'd been aware of it for some time, and hoped that one day I could be involved in this wonderful program. I had followed the regular retreats run by the ACT Fly Fishers and was impressed by the effects the program had on the participants. Learning how to cast and tie flies and then putting these new-found skills into practice was a new experience for most of the women. This, combined with the freedom to share life stories with others in similar positions, was extremely beneficial to the healing process.

I was thrilled when Peter West announced that Casting for Recovery Victoria was to be launched and immediately contacted him to see if I could join the team. Cherrie was also interested in helping out and between us we managed to recruit a few more eager friends, a mix of experienced fly fishers to novices. Mending Casts Inc. was formed in 2019 to run both Casting for Recovery retreats for women and Reel Recovery Australia retreats for men with any form of cancer.

Our first Casting for Recovery retreat was held at Holmesglen at Eildon. It was an emotional few days for both participants and helpers, creating many happy memories to be shared and stories to be told. For some, it was the first time they had ever discussed the challenges they'd faced and their hopes for the future with anyone other than family.

A Reel Recovery retreat was held earlier this year at Omeo. The Bairnsdale Fly Fishers were actively involved as 'buddies' for the participants and they provided their wonderful lodge on the Mitta Mitta River. This was an equally emotional time and was felt to be life-changing for several participants. It also profoundly affected us as organisers.

By Val Young



Val is a qualified Reiki Practitioner

HOW I GOT HOOKED ON FLY FISHING

As a young girl growing up in Hobart, I spent many weekends in the summer months with my grandfather fishing for flathead and this is ultimately where my love for fishing started. I'll never forget the time a barbed hook went through my finger that resulted in a session with his pliers which not surprisingly required a few quick stitches by the family doctor on the way home. But what I really remember quite vividly is the adrenalin rush that came from landing my first fish, albeit some 40 years later, it was catch of the day in my book, but in all honesty, it was probably no more than the length of my hand—small in other words given I was probably only seven years' old at the time! Some of the best memories I have from those fishing adventures was the feeling of calm, of not having a care in the world and more than anything being out in nature and feeling instantly relaxed.

So, what's the connection to fly fishing? I moved to Melbourne a few years ago for work and didn't know anyone except for a few office colleagues and so I needed to re-establish my social networks and meet some new friends. I'd had this burning desire to try fly fishing for the last 20 odd years so I booked a 'Learn to fly fish' weekend course up at the Howqua River.

Needless to say, that first morning session up at the Howqua instantly brought back all those childhood memories – there's something about standing in a river with the water rushing through your legs, the chirping sound of the cicadas, the sun on your back, and the smell of the Australian native bush – it was an instant feeling of calm and I felt like that seven-year-old girl again. Just as the light started to fade a small rainbow trout took my fly and I was ecstatic, that feeling of catching my first trout was such an adrenalin rush and the smile didn't leave my face for days. I was hooked.

On returning to Melbourne, I was keen to learn all I could about fly fishing, online searches and a visit to the local fly fishing shop in the city one lunchtime and I was on my way. A few people had mentioned that they'd heard of a women's fly fishing weekend at Millbrook Lakes and being a

newbie, with all the gear and no idea, this sounded daunting to me. I attended my first Millbrook weekend a couple of years ago now and have made lifetime friends. The fly fishing community is tight knit in the best way possible and I've met so many people from all types of backgrounds, I've joined the local fly fishing club (female member numbers have doubled in the last year, we now have two members compared with the 100 or so men!) and what has impressed me the most is that everyone is prepared to give their time to a new starter, provide guidance and answer any questions as outlandish as they may be!

Since that very first weekend up at the Howqua I've gone on to fish several of the local Victorian rivers, Millbrook Lakes a handful of times and the Western Lakes of Tasmania all with varying degrees of success. Being a keen traveller, my next stop will be New Zealand to fly fish the southern rivers around Queenstown, another bucket list item but not one that I'm going to leave another 20 years to tick off the list as life's too short.

By Jo Ellerton

Jo with a magnificent catch





FLY CASTING HINTS

- Every fly-casting stroke should begin with translation (straight line movement of the rod hand) and finish with rotation (moving the rod through an angle) to a crisp stop. Rotate late - remember the rod tip should follow the grip until the end of the stroke.
- Don't pause too long between casting strokes – catch the loop when the fly line has almost unrolled to retain some tension.
- If your loop is unrolling into a moderate to stiff breeze shorten the pause in this direction, but not in the opposite direction.

By Bob Young

Fly Fishers International Master Casting Instructor

SPONSOR IN FOCUS

Each newsletter, we'd like to highlight one of the wonderful sponsors who help us realise these programs. This month it is the VFA.

Since our inception, Mending Casts Inc has been privileged to receive long-term support from the Victorian Fishing Authority (VFA), the state government's independent statutory authority established to effectively manage Victoria's fisheries resources. VFA work closely with many stakeholders to deliver three core outcomes; being sustainable fishing and aquaculture; clear resource access and sharing arrangements; and increased economic, social and cultural value. We therefore share an objective to introduce new people to the health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing. VFA has supported Mending Casts by allowing our regular involvement in their highly respected "Talk Wild Trout" weekends as both presenter and exhibitor. More recently Mending Casts was a grateful recipient of a small grant obtained through the VFA's Recreational Fishing License (RFL) grants program. That money was used to purchase a marquee from [Mountain Shade](#) that will significantly improve the facilities at our retreats and fundraising events. We are truly thankful for the VFAs ongoing support and look forward to it continuing long into the future. For more information on the Victoria Fisheries Authority and its activities visit:

<https://vfa.vic.gov.au/about>

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/).



**MOUNTAIN
SHADE**



VALE CHARLES ENGLANDER

We lost one of our Reel Recovery brothers in September and our heartfelt condolences go out to his wife Julie and their family.

We got to know Charles when he attended the Omeo Reel Recovery fly fishing retreat. Despite the challenges presented by his failing health he enthusiastically embraced the program and quickly made friends. By retreat's end, he had caught his first trout on a fly rod.

The joy he gained from that weekend was so gratifying and his courage in the face of adversity became an inspiration to all those who experienced it. His unflinching positivity and refusal to look backwards were such a motivating force for the other men who participated, so we all left that weekend as close friends and better people to have known him.

His legacy will live on in our thoughts and prayers and through his signature on his fishing vest. He fought the good fight till the end & inspired many others to do the same.



BE WELL ! FISH ON !



SALES MERCHANDISE

Mending Casts has recently launched 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

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

www.mendingcasts.org
admin@mendingcasts.org

Executive Committee 2021/22
President: John Billing
Vice President: Eric Smith
Treasurer: Joanne Dobson
Secretary: Cherrie Ninness

Newsletter
Editor: Fiona Wilson