



# CASP Wellbeing Newsletter

April 2022

**Welcome to the first issue of our wellbeing newsletter! This newsletter is designed for frontline workers of the ACT Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP) – which includes volunteers and staff of subcontracted organisations.**

We wanted to provide additional wellbeing support in recognition of the unique challenges faced by frontline workers during the pandemic. We have surveyed workers on their concerns and have worked with local organisations – including Head to Health ACT, Meridian, Parentline and Communities at Work – to create unique and local content. We also have a feature interview with a CASP worker – which we hope will be a regular section in this newsletter.

While aimed at frontline workers, we hope anyone reading this newsletter will be able to find some useful tips to help them through this challenging time.

## **Win a Prize! What does wellbeing mean to you?**

Write to us and let us know what wellbeing means to you and you could win a prize! We have two prizes available. The first is a copy of *The Dreaming Path: Indigenous Thinking to Change your life*. The second is a pack of Aboriginal Ancestral Wisdom cards designed by a Ngannawal artist. So write to us and send your thoughts on wellbeing to [caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au](mailto:caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au)

De-identified answers may be shared in a future CASP Wellbeing Newsletter issue, unless you say you do not want this to happen.



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## Next issue: Call for articles!

### Would you or your team like to contribute to our next newsletter?

We are looking for content on worker wellbeing, including issues affecting First Nations, LGBTQIA+, older workers and workers with disability. Please email [caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au](mailto:caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au) if you have any ideas!



# Switching Off from Work

By Jason McCrae, Clinical Psychologist, Canberra Head to Health

*Jason McCrae is a Clinical Psychologist who works at Canberra Head to Health. Canberra Head to Health is a new, free service providing mental health support to the Canberra community and surrounds. Visit [canberraheadtohealth.com.au](http://canberraheadtohealth.com.au) or call 1800 595 212 to find out what support you can access.*



Being busy supporting others in your day-to-day work can be very demanding. It's challenging, busy and you often need to respond to unexpected requirements of consumers.

When the working day (or night!) is done it can be really hard to 'switch off' work, that is, to stop thinking about the tasks you did that day or the jobs you have to do tomorrow. We can have a sense of always being 'on alert' or as though we never get away from work. This might result in feeling stressed, worried, 'on edge', tired or irritable and these feelings might make it hard to relax, 'wind down' or even make it hard to sleep at night.

The likelihood of these feelings occurring can be reduced with a few simple strategies – although you need to do them regularly for the strategies to work.

Firstly, have a few simple activities that you do between finishing work and getting home. Activities such as going for a walk or some other sort of exercise (e.g. gym, a swim or bike ride), calling a friend on the drive home (hands free of course!) or even stopping at the local supermarket to get milk and bread or whatever is needed at home can just be a good break between work and home.

Secondly, try not to do work tasks once you are home – don't check email, work messages or answer work phone calls. Of course, sometimes we all have to but at least get any work related tasks or communications done as soon as possible once the work day is done. This might also include turning off notifications on your phone – if a notification pops up in the evening related to work, even if it's not important, a little bit of your mind 'switches on' to work.

Finally, try to partake in activities that you find enjoyable and help switch your mind off work. These might include:

- Going for a walk or any form of exercise
- Reading
- Preparing and cooking a meal for yourself and/or your household
- Listening to music
- Listening to an audiobook or a podcast
- Puzzles such as crosswords, sudoku and word searches
- Talking and messaging friends and family.

## Farewell to Bianca, Hello to Emma

It is with sadness that we farewell Bianca. Binaca Williams has been with ACTCOSS since 2020 and has made a valuable contribution to the CASP program, policy work and other programs at ACTCOSS. Bianca is moving to Families Australia so you may well cross paths again with her in the future.

Emma Hawke has joined ACTCOSS as the CASP Development Officer. Emma has had many years of experience in the community development and health promotion fields and her experience includes working at NGOs and local government. She is passionate about creating healthy and well-connected

communities. Emma is excited to be taking on the CASP Development Officer position and working with you all. Please do not hesitate to contact her on [emma.hawke@actcoss.org.au](mailto:emma.hawke@actcoss.org.au)



*Emma Hawke,  
your new CASP  
Development  
Officer*

## CASP Worker Wellbeing Project

It was lovely to get together and meet face to face for the CASP Worker Wellbeing breakfast in March. There was much nattering, catching up, eating and coffee drinking. There were lucky door prizes with Kenneth Feint from Community Options and Chris Aitchison from ACT Health being the lucky winners. Black Magic Coffee attended and supplied beautiful coffee.

### Next wellbeing activity: Nature walk

Spending time in nature has been linked to multiple health benefits. It can simultaneously lift our mood and lower our blood pressure and many of you in the survey we conducted asked for an activity involving a nature or bush walk. So for our next wellbeing activity, we have organised a **CASP Worker Wellbeing Nature Walk and Talk** led by Ngunnawal Elder and Traditional Custodian, Wally Bell. Come along, spend some time in nature and connect with other CASP frontline workers.

**Date:** Wednesday 27 April 2022

**Time:** 1.30pm to 3.30pm followed by afternoon tea

**Where:** Black Mountain, meeting point TBC

**Please register** by Friday 22 April:  
[casp-wellbeing-walk.eventbrite.com.au](https://casp-wellbeing-walk.eventbrite.com.au)



## CASP Worker Profile

### Bernard Garin Michaud

*Bernard Garin Michaud is a Community Transport Driver and Seniors Men's Group Facilitator for Communities at Work. He is a mix of cool, calm and collected and funny. His eternal optimism, despite being a frontline CASP worker during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been both reassuring and inspiring to both colleagues and clients alike. We caught up with Bernie to see what makes him tick.*



### How long have you been a transport driver?

Since September 2019.

### What do you like about your role?

The satisfaction that you can go home at the end of the day knowing you are doing a job that is providing a valuable service to the community.

I enjoy the engagement with the clients and getting to know people from all walks of life.

For some clients it might be their only source of socialising, so our role is important. It's not just about driving someone to a destination, it is also about the human interaction involved.

### What has changed about your role since the pandemic?

Since the pandemic there has been a lot of restrictions, we have a lot of additional, but necessary Work Health and Safety steps to follow. It can be time consuming, but we need to mitigate the risk for both the clients and drivers. Sometimes the additional processes can create challenges for clients and staff, such as maintaining safe distances. At times, it is

necessary for us to go close to someone if they need physical assistance but that needs to be timely and measured.

### Was there anything positive about working on the frontline during the pandemic?

During lockdown, I was still working and so I had the ability to go out and not be isolated, so the option of being able to get out of the house gave me some sort of normality. The time and pace of things slowed down which provided space for reflection and thought on what is important in life.

During the pandemic I also started a community art mural which was to commemorate the firefighters during the black summer of 2019. It is still being finalised, but I think it was a good opportunity for our clients to focus on giving back, rather than on the current pandemic.

### What are your coping strategies?

My normal daily habits are meditation and exercise. Just as we brush our teeth twice a day to prevent plaque and rotting, so too should we meditate to clear the mind from stress and junk we accumulate throughout the day. I also



maintain a healthy diet. Meditation, exercise and good eating are habits which form a tripod of living a good life and be able to deal with daily challenges, plus you feel better and more vibrant. I also try to look at the positive side of things of life which I do by joking around a lot and having a laugh. It's even better if I can get a smile or laugh from someone else.

### **What is something you find funny?**

Genuinely having a laugh about some of the things that happen to me. I find that reflecting on my own experiences and sharing them with others lets me take things in life a bit more lightly. Reflecting and sharing my stories – some of which may initially seem to be about a negative experience – can help me reframe them in a new, positive light.

### **What is an inspirational quote you like?**

*Mastering others is strength.  
Mastering yourself is true power.*  
- Lao Tzo

### **What is your favourite food?**

A good hearty roast.

### **What are your hobbies?**

Currently studying 3D modelling.

### **Do you think your employer has had any great initiatives for health and wellbeing?**

Yes, Communities at Work provide employees a subsidy for gym, sporting activities or related programs outside of work every year.

We have an Employee Assistance Program to call upon when we need it. The managers and supervisors are there to support us when employees are facing a personal or work-related crisis. Communities at Work have also provided COVID-19 vaccinations to employees and clients.

### **Do you have something you would like to share with the CASP Wellbeing newsletter?**

Perhaps a skill or some wisdom, a quote or a joke. Email us at [caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au](mailto:caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au)

# Tips for Parents During the Pandemic

By Joanna Szczudlowska, Volunteer Coordinator, Parentline ACT

Parenting is the hardest job under the best of circumstances. When combined with all the pressures and challenges caused by the current pandemic, it grows to truly heroic proportions and leaves one feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, exhausted, and confronted with the ever-uncertain reality... Worries and concerns that are an integral part of raising children seem to pile up dangerously in the time of Covid impacting both parents' and children's mental health. Children and teenagers struggle with their 'difficult' feelings, adversely affected by lockdowns, online education, and the lack of proper social contact with peers (to name just a few common side effects of the pandemic) and are prone to express these feelings through their behaviour which can be perceived by their carers as 'unbearable', 'unacceptable', 'disrespectful' or simply 'naughty'. Feeling overwhelmed by all that is going on around us and finding it often hard to stay in control of our own emotions, we can easily forget that our children need us to be with them in their emotional world, name and normalise their

feelings, and teach them how to self-regulate. So, how can we survive the pandemic, and ensure that our (parents'/carers') and our children's mental health can stay as strong as possible throughout this challenging period? Here are some tips:

- **Consider your daily self-care as essential!**
- **Learn to understand your children's behaviour as a means of communicating their emotional needs, and to validate these emotions through Active Listening**
- **Express your own emotional needs using 'I' statements**
- **Ensure quality/'no problem' time is spent with your children and partner, individually and as a family.**

Others useful hints for parents and carers may be found on the Parentline ACT website: [parentlineact.org.au](http://parentlineact.org.au)

**For more tips on caring for others during the pandemic, also see:**

[Supporting others and their mental health and wellbeing | Health \(act.gov.au\)](#)

# Wellbeing Tips for LGBTQIA+ Folks



## QUEER PRIDE

The greatest way we can take care of ourselves is recognising our worth. Societal norms can make us feel invisible and invaluable. Holding on to our queerness helps us humanise ourselves and appreciate our individuality and uniqueness.



## KEEP SLEEP IN MIND

It is very important for our well being to get 7-8 hours of sleep every night. Getting proper sleep has many health benefits like a healthy immune system, alert mind and feeling good in your body.



## COMMUNITY NETWORKS

There is great power in community healing. Find a support system in the LGBTQIA+ community, in person or online. Supportive networks can be a great way of feeling validated by the community and find healing in meaningful social relations. This not only helps individuals within the community but also the community itself.



## JOY AND EMPOWERMENT

Be intentional about seeking joy and pleasure in life. Do more of the things that bring you joy and set boundaries and say no to people and things that do not affirm nourish and empower you. PRIDE comes from accepting our genuine self and that can be achieved when we learn to take care of our health and individuality and be kind to ourselves.



## SELF CARE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Self-care can look different for different people, so do not hesitate to find a mentor or a trusted friend in the community for guidance and advice and find self-care that works for you.



## LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Physical activity is paramount to a healthy mind-body connection. It helps us to feel grounded and reconnect with our body.



## FOCUS ON THE FABULOUS

Keeping a daily routine can help minimise worrying. Make a list of things you would like to get done each day and strike them off as you complete them. Try and focus on doing things that make you feel good. If you are unable to complete the list, it is okay, there is always tomorrow.



## SELF AWARENESS

Symptoms like disturbed sleep, withdrawing from people and social activities, feeling irritable and stressed and finding hard to concentrate are signs that you might not be doing very well. You should get in touch with a friend, mentor or and LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health therapist.



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Wellbeing Services



# Help and Resources

If you or anyone you know needs help:

- Lifeline on 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800
- Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636
- Headspace on 1800 650 890
- Parentline on 1300 30 1300
- ReachOut at [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)
- Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467
- MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978
- Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) on 1800 008 774
- Head to Health at [headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)
- 1800 Respect on 1800 737 732
- Q Life on 1300 555 727
- Brother to Brother on 1800 435 799

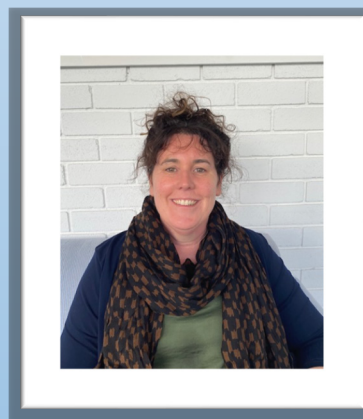
## Wellbeing Tip

Remember to always put on your own oxygen mask before helping others.

## Additional Support for CASP Workers

Emma provides support to the ACT Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP) and also works on policy issues related to disability, health, aging and transport. She understands the unique pressures of frontline work and recognises while frontline work often brings great joy and satisfaction, workers can sometimes put their needs secondary to clients and experience burnout or disillusionment. She is happy to chat to frontline workers and put them in touch with resources.

Reach out to Emma via [emma.hawke@actcoss.org.au](mailto:emma.hawke@actcoss.org.au) or call 02 6202 7234.



*Emma Hawke, CASP Development Officer, Capability Team*

## About ACTCOSS



The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) advocates for social justice in the Australian Capital Territory and represents not-for-profit community organisations.

ACTCOSS acknowledges Canberra has been built on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respects to their Elders and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. We celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contributions to the ACT community.

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## Contact Details

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**Disclaimer:** Views expressed in this newsletter are those of individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy views of ACTCOSS.

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## About the CASP Worker Wellbeing Project

The CASP Worker Wellbeing Project is designed to provide additional wellbeing support to staff during the pandemic, through 4 issues of a wellbeing newsletter and CASP events. To raise any questions or provide feedback, please contact: [caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au](mailto:caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au)

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Supported by



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