



CASP Wellbeing Newsletter

May 2022

Welcome to the second 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. In this issue we have partnered with other organisations – including Head to Health ACT, Community Options, the ANU and Landcare ACT to create unique and local content.

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! Send a photo of something that makes you happy

Send us a photo of what makes you happy 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 send us your photo of what makes you happy by 3 June to caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au. Photos (let us know if you want them to be de-identified) 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.



Dealing with Compassion Fatigue

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 or call 1800 595 212 to find out what support you can access.



Frontline carers and support workers are amongst a large group of jobs and professions whose main role is to help others in distress – be that financial, emotional, psychological or physical distress. Such jobs and professions regularly require us to be empathic, caring and help people who are in difficult, and sometimes confronting, situations.

The challenges that our consumers are facing might also be challenges that we can't resolve, at least not quickly. As frontline carers and support workers we might finish our working day or week knowing that, despite our efforts, some of our individual consumers will continue to experience this distress. Undertaking such work over a period of time can be draining and has led to the concept of Compassion Fatigue.

Compassion Fatigue is the idea that we have tired of being compassionate, of being empathic, of putting others first. It doesn't mean we've stopped doing these things, or the tasks that require these qualities, just that maybe doing our job has required more effort or we haven't been quite as compassionate as we would normally.

Specific symptoms of compassion fatigue might include feelings of exhaustion, disrupted sleep, difficulty concentrating, low mood, anxiety, a sense of numbness or perhaps feelings of "just going through the motions" when it comes to work or even personal life.

If you can identify with some of these symptoms or the concept of compassion fatigue, then the positive thing is you can do something about it. In particular it can be a time for some self-care – exercise, healthy eating or spending time doing your own hobbies/interests can be important for countering compassion fatigue. Switching off from work, the subject of the last newsletter article, can also help. It can also be important to take regular leave – if that sense of compassion fatigue has set in recently it may be time to take, or at least plan to take, a break and refresh.

HEAD TO HEALTH

CASP Worker Wellbeing Nature Walk and Talk – 9 June

We have a new date for the Nature Walk and Talk! Join Ngunnawal elder Wally Bell, and Wellbeing through Nature program Coordinator Sally Holliday from Landcare ACT, for a cultural walk and talk at the foothill of Black Mountain. Experience Welcome to Country, learn about the cultural significance of this place and identify native plants on a gentle meander through bushland. This walk is about deepening our connection with nature by slowing down, activating our senses and appreciating our surroundings and learning to just be. Come along, spend some time in nature and connect with other CASP frontline workers.

This is not a strenuous walk and the walk itself will be about 40 minutes around the base of Black Mountain – we are not trekking uphill!

Stay on afterwards for afternoon tea and conversation with other CASP workers

Date: Thursday
9 June 2022

Time: 1.30pm
to 3.30pm
followed by
afternoon tea

Where: Black Mountain. Meet at Black Mountain Reserve carpark, access off Caswell Drive southbound

Please register by Thursday 2 June 2022
casp-wellbeing-walk.eventbrite.com.au

Please wear comfortable enclosed shoes. Be sun wise and bring a water bottle to keep hydrated.



CASP Worker Profile

Kenneth Feint, Community Options

We caught up Kenneth Feint, the Service Coordinator at Community Options. He tells us how he as a frontline CASP worker during the COVID-19 pandemic has found ways to find the brightness in the challenges.



How long have you been in your role at Community Options?

Since March 2021.

What do you like about your role?

I really enjoy the flexibility of CASP and how we can better support each client individually. Previously working in the NDIS space was very much about participant plans and funding, whereas CASP is more how the client can benefit with short term assistance until longer term goals have been established.

What has changed about your role since the pandemic?

During the pandemic my CASP role had changed from working fulltime in the office to working fulltime at home with no face-to-face meetings with clients. Having the whole state being in lockdown had put already vulnerable clients at risk of being isolated from loved ones and connections within the community or suffering from poor mental health. During the lockdown Community Options had made the decision to contact all clients on a weekly basis to ensure clients had all supplies needed while in isolation as well as someone to talk to during this difficult unforeseen time. During this time, it had also connected clients to coordinators on a deeper level while going through the same thing together. Overall, I think the lockdown

during the pandemic has had a positive outcome being well connected with all my clients as well as having that support from my organisation to ensure I can do the best that I can each day.

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

It was great to be able to make a difference to people's lives and to find support for people who are socially isolated during the pandemic. I found it very rewarding.

What are some of the coping strategies you used during the pandemic?

It was great to have a really supportive team that I could debrief with and having the flexibility to be able to go for a quick walk to clear my mind.

What kept you smiling in the last lockdown?

Watching the comedian Gabriel Iglesias is always a great laugh.

What is an Inspirational quote you like?

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity.

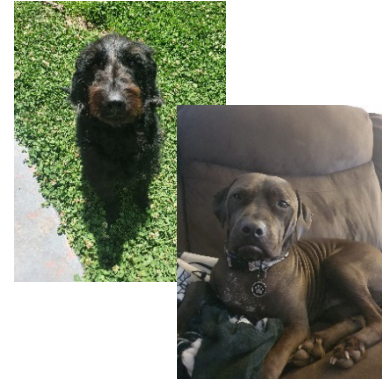
- Mr. John Muir

What is your favourite food?

Chicken Tacos!

What are your hobbies?

I love gardening and taking my two fur babies for adventures. Dobby and Rufus.



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

Community Options is a great organisation to work for with very flexible work from home options and is very encouraging and supportive of attending wellbeing and networking events to support personal development.

Do you know someone in your organisation that could be featured in our CASP Worker Profile? We would love to highlight all the great work being done!

Email us at caspwellbeing@actcoss.org.au



Landcare volunteer, Grant Battersby, shares his experience in caring for Jerrabomberra Wetlands (image supplied by Landcare ACT).

Nature Walks for Wellbeing

By Sally Holliday, Wellbeing Coordinator with Landcare ACT

Sally is relatively new to the Landcare family, joining the team in November last year (2021). She sometimes refers to herself as the baby grasshopper at Landcare ACT, having much yet to learn from Landcare members and their wealth of experience caring for land and waterways. Sally is excited to have stepped into the newly created position of Wellbeing Coordinator with Landcare ACT which facilitates the Wellbeing through Nature program (supported by an ACT Healthy Canberra Grant). The program includes guided walks in nature, conservation activities with Landcare groups, and therapeutic horticulture sessions.

We can all use more time in nature. As a society we have become disconnected from the environment. We often see ourselves as separate from, rather than part of nature. However, growing international experience and research show that active participation in nature-based activities is clearly associated with reduced prevalence of depression, anxiety and other health problems. Spending time in nature can improve mood, decrease stress, lower blood pressure, and improve cognitive function. There are myriad benefits for body, mind and soul. The wellbeing walks I am guide are not about getting from A to B. Instead, we explore ways to "be" present in nature.

Simple recommendations for people wanting to start incorporating more nature walks into their life

- Try a "curiosity walk" in your local neighborhood whereby you don't set out with a fixed destination or trail, but you make it up as you go. Let your feet wander wherever your attention takes you.

- Connect with your senses. Make it your mission to notice as much detail as you can – all the different shades of green, all the variations in foliage and texture of the vegetation.
- Crush some leaves between your fingers and breathe in the aroma.
- Stop by a tree and take it in. Come into close proximity with it and have a conversation (silently or out loud, up to you). You might like to place a hand on the trunk surface or look up into the canopy.
- Consider what's happening under your feet. Tread lightly and mindfully rather than pounding the pavement.
- If bringing your phone, turn it on silent or better yet, airplane mode. Each time our technology pings with a notification, we lose our focus of attention and this constant state of being "switched on" makes for little time to defrag and decompress.
- That being said, I do like to use my phone to take nature photos when I'm out and about. It can help you look more closely and appreciate beauty in the details.
- If you're planning to go further afield, it's a good idea to go with a buddy or tell someone where you're going.
- Check the weather and dress appropriately (sun smart and layers for warmth).
- Take some snacks and plenty of water to keep hydrated.



Come along to a Wellbeing through Nature guided walk! All the details are on the Landcare ACT website calendar: www.landcareact.org.au/wellbeing-calendar

What is cultural wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Written by Dr Raymond Lovett BN, RN, BHSc, MAE, PhD who is a Senior Research Fellow with the Epidemiology for Policy and Practice group at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, The Australian National University. He also holds an adjunct Fellowship at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in the Indigenous Social and Cultural Wellbeing group. Ray is an Aboriginal (Ngiyampaa/Wongaibon) epidemiologist with extensive experience in health services research, large scale data analysis for public health policy development and evaluation.

Connection to Country links an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person to their land or island and community in a deeply cultural and spiritual way. Culturally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people describe themselves as being “of country” with identity, cultural practices, systems of authority and social control, traditions and spirituality all tied to country.

Cultural Beliefs and Knowledge such as the Dreaming or dreaming stories, tell the story of creation and informs a way of living and being. Dreaming stories are reproduced through storytelling, art, ceremony, song and dance. Ancestral Creators are spirits who formed the mountains, rivers and other features of the landscape. Other spirits exist alongside humans taking the form of animals, plants, landmarks, water or whirlwinds and mists.

Language Learning and speaking language is associated with many health benefits including improved physical health and social and emotional wellbeing, healing from intergenerational trauma, community interconnectedness and cultural continuity and higher traditional food consumption.

Family, Kinship and Community: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity is not necessarily connected to descent and country or island of origin. Identity is about knowing and being part of a community and seeing yourself as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander societies are constructed around communities with strong kinship and family ties. Kinship has had positive effects on maintaining cultural knowledge, and on the overall health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly children.

Cultural Expression and Continuity: Culture means connection to Country and community, respect for Elders, kinship and family connections, gender and age roles, identity, language, art, ceremony; spirituality and storytelling. Due to the holistic nature of wellbeing, culture, empowerment and community are essential for education, work, health and wellbeing. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture is recognised as the dominant social determinant of their health. Colonisation, including racism, the forcible removal of children and intergenerational trauma has had negative effects on health and social and emotional wellbeing for people, families and communities. We note that resistance is as much part of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity as are the effects of colonisation.

Self-determination and Leadership: Self-determination and involvement in decision-making and control is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples wellbeing. The loss of self-determination through dispossession and colonisation has resulted in harm to patterns of individual, family and community life.

Reference: Salmon, M., Doery, K., Dance, P., Chapman, J., Gilbert, R., Williams, R. & Lovett, R. 2019, *Defining the Indefinable: Descriptors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Cultures and Their Links to Health and Wellbeing*, Research School of Population Health, The Australian National University,

Canberra: online:

https://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Image/Defining_Indefinable_report_FINAL_WEB.pdf

Links to the Mayi Kuwayu Study:

www.mkstudy.com.au

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Locally Designed Mindfulness Colouring In

Colouring in has the ability to induce the same state as meditating by reducing the thoughts of a restless mind. This generates mindfulness and quietness, which allows your mind to get some rest after a long day at work. Give it a go! You could even win a prize! See next page – Kristie Peters has designed a beautiful piece of Indigenous art for CASP workers to colour in and enjoy.

Kristie Peters is a Wiradjuri woman from NSW living in Ngunnawal country and in 2018 she founded Yarrudhamarra Creations, an Aboriginal owned and family operated business that is passionate about Reconciliation between the broader community and our Nations First People. Yarrudhamarra is taken from the Wiradjuri language meaning "Dream" that captures the true essence of Yarrudhamarra Creations, which underpins their mission to make dreams into reality by connecting people through Aboriginal Art and Culture. They endeavour to uplift, inspire and bring light that holds an enduring message for Reconciliation for past, present and the future where we can meet collaborate and grow.





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Want to win a prize?

Please send a photo of your completed colouring page to caspswellbeing@actcoss.org.au by 3 June 2022 to go in the running for a prize.

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**
- **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**
- **1800 Respect on 1800 737 732**
- **Q Life on 1300 555 727**
- **Brother to Brother on 1800 435 799**

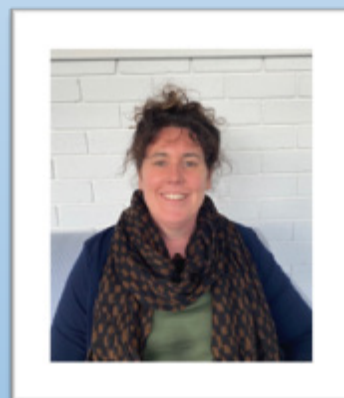
Wellbeing tip

Develop a 'Don't Do' list. Free up space for the things that matter in your life and removing those that steal your energy. Look at what drags you down – how can you do less of that?

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 or call 02 6202 7200.



Emma Hawke, CASP Development Officer

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.

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

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

This project is supported by funding from the ACT Health Directorate.

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