

FLIPSIDE

The Association of Participating Service Users



This one goes out to the ones we loved

No. 40 Winter 2015

INSIDE

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With you always

Art:

Front cover: street art by Banksy.

All other illustrations are photographs of street art around Melbourne taken by APSU, unless stated otherwise.

If the stories in this issue cause you distress, please contact one of these support services:

Lifeline 13 11 14

MensLine 1300 78 99 78

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

Family Drug Help 1300 660 068

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The views and opinions expressed within Flipside do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of APSU.

If you have any original articles, poems or artwork that you would like to see in Flipside you may submit them to:

apsu@sharc.org.au

or **APSU 140 Grange Road Carnegie VIC 3163**

phone: **(03) 9573 1776**

ABN: 18052525948

Editorial

It is difficult to define exactly what deaths are drug-related. Sometimes it is obvious, like in case of an overdose or drug poisoning. It becomes more difficult when we talk about ill health resulting from drug use, suicide or crime. Because of this difficulty of definition, we do not have the complete statistics of drug-related deaths.

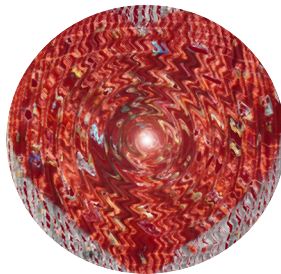
We know that approximately 4 Australians every day die from overdose.¹

We know that approximately 7 Australians every day die by suicide.²

We know that around 350,000 people internationally die from hepatitis C related diseases every year.³

Behind each number in these statistics there is a story of much pain and many fond memories. Some of those stories have been generously shared in this issue. As someone wrote on an Irish tombstone

“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
love leaves a memory no one can steal.”



References

1) International Overdose Awareness Day <http://www.overdoseday.com/resources/facts-stats/>

2) Lifeline <https://www.lifeline.org.au/About-Lifeline/Media-Centre/Suicide-Statistics-in-Australia/Suicide-Statistics>

3) Hepatitis Australia <http://www.hepatitisaustralia.com/information-for-journalists/>



Sarah Cafferkey

My daughter was 22years old when she was murdered: Sarah Cafferkey murdered by Steven Hunter, who is now serving a life sentence with no parole. This man befriended her on Facebook through an ex boyfriend who she was trying to break up from.

He then sent this man to scare her but instead he groomed her and supplied her with ICE. This happened two months after Sarah got out of detox. She was clean for about a month then started using again because it was always there available. Sarah was booked in for detox again on the 13th November 2012 three days after she was murdered.

Whilst Sarah was in detox she wrote a lot on how she was feeling. I have pages and pages of writing. This song was the last thing written in her detox diary.

Noelle, Sarah's mum

Can I have her back now???

written by Sarah Cafferkey whilst in detox August 2012

When you can say no you don't want to & when you want to say no you can't, believe me when I say that is no measurement of the heart. You fake it till you make it in that lifestyle it's an art, the only art surrendering your soul into the dark.

Begins with blissful ignorance you're blind to your behaviour, no sense of responsibility & lack of human nature, helpless like a child just waiting for a saviour.

A clouded conscious state of mind replaced one wise & clear, abandoning her moral grounds with hopes of no more tears. As Fearless as a coward none of this feels right throwing so much energy into a self destructive life.

How did the darkness overwhelm such a beautiful sparkling light, what happened to that little girl, so determined why not fight?

Alone, analytical and just too young to listen her thoughts became possessive, her life a demolition.

What happened to that little girl with an amazing contagious smile?? Burdened by the world around, delusional & in denial. Specific date of when & why suddenly become irrelevant, the line has been crossed it's all a blur, it's now just for the hell of it.

What happened to the motivation, the glimmer in her eye?? A longing to escape reality, with a forgetting sense of why.

A compass pointing North with all senses screaming south, the constant battle in her head looking to get out.

Soul searching scorned by an insecure perspective becoming more lost became her one and only objective.

The world won't stop spinning for a poor tortured soul. Shovel in hand, covered in dirt she dug her own hole.

Why can't she see the effect of her embrace, the power she had to put a smile on the sourest face.

Why did she leave us & where did she go???

With her presence still here but her soul a no show.

Not a minute more will I let her back down

Seriously Sarah, can we have you back now?????????

Carol

I had known Carol five years but it may well have been a lifetime. The things we shared went deeper than most would contemplate discussing with others. From entrenched embarrassments as a child to the regretful mistakes in adulthood. We shared. We were sharing as recovering addicts. Hours and hours on the phone, at dinner, over coffee - arguing playfully, laughing and crying, often at the same time.

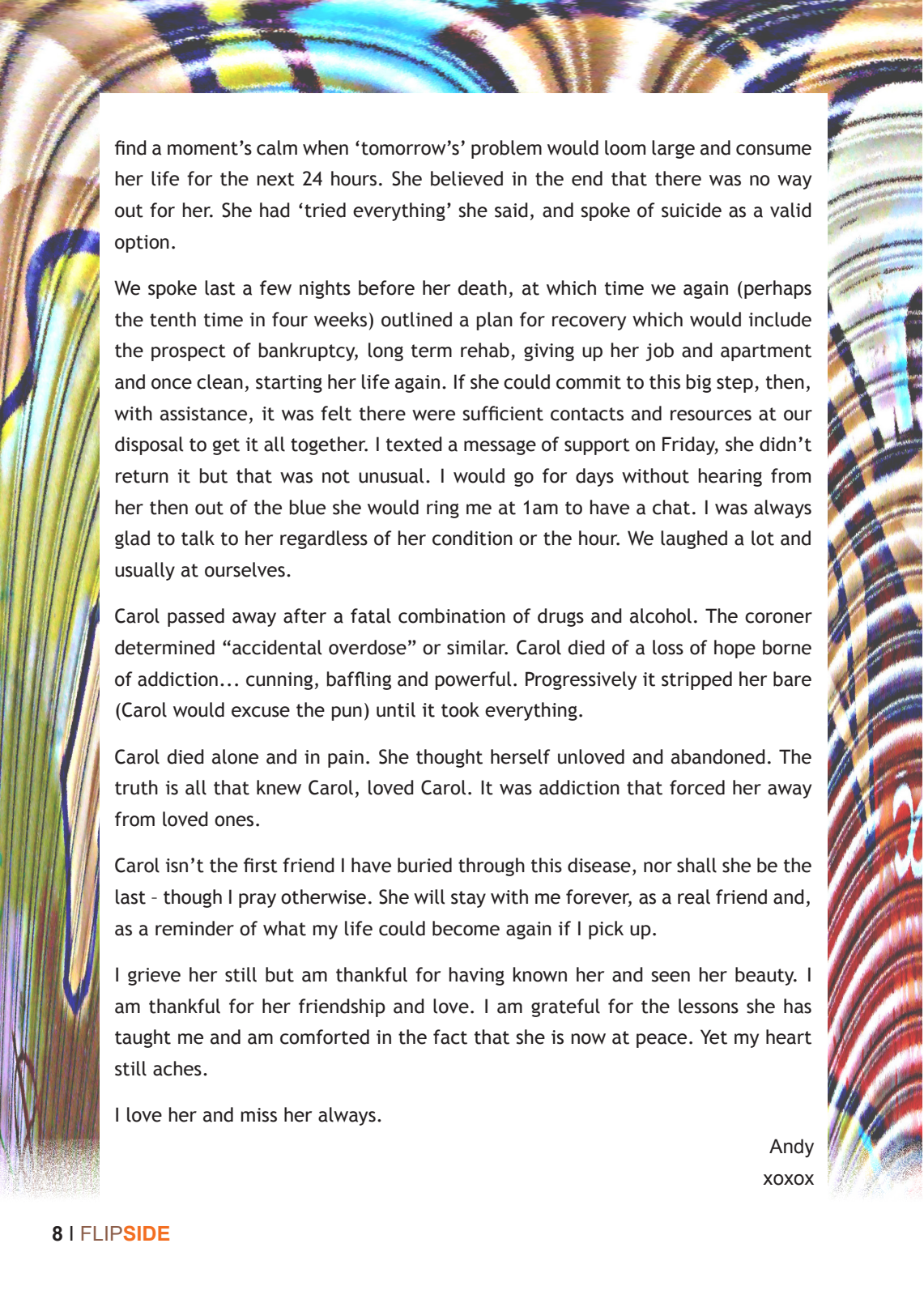
Carol had the disease of addiction, and once established it takes a hold of mind, body and soul. Addicts suffer an allergy to our drug and this is coupled with a mental obsession that overtakes and replaces all of life pleasures and becomes all consuming. We lose our friends, families and jobs after reprimands, counselling and ultimatums because of it. We lie, steal and cheat to get our fix. Personal degradation, self loathing and hatred takes hold until we no longer care for anyone or anything. Physically we deteriorate and the body starts to rot. Mental diseases occur and are exacerbated until any semblance of good judgement we once had completely dissolves.

Often opportunity for recovery is missed, this is what happened to my friend.

Carol was beautiful; an exotic dancer, but she dreamed of meeting the right man, having a family and a career in real estate. She could have done it too - she was intelligent, likable and outgoing. We mutually agreed that we were two of the sexiest, most intelligent, kind, loving and exciting Virgos that God ever consented to put on this earth. And who's to say we weren't?

Carol told me that she fell into drugs at an early age and marijuana became her drug of choice, then dependence. She tried to 'get the program' for years attending support meetings and a psychiatrist but managed only limited success; she maintained 'the delusion of manageability' she said.

Carol and I became firm friends through her patchy recovery, however she couldn't stay committed. Progressively she escalated from marijuana to amphetamines and cocaine then finally opiates. Carol wanted someone to save her and no amount of reaching out was ever going to be sufficient whilst she was relying on someone else to get her clean and straighten out her life. She never quite came to grips with the fact that she would have to do the work on herself, for herself and for a large part,



find a moment's calm when 'tomorrow's' problem would loom large and consume her life for the next 24 hours. She believed in the end that there was no way out for her. She had 'tried everything' she said, and spoke of suicide as a valid option.

We spoke last a few nights before her death, at which time we again (perhaps the tenth time in four weeks) outlined a plan for recovery which would include the prospect of bankruptcy, long term rehab, giving up her job and apartment and once clean, starting her life again. If she could commit to this big step, then, with assistance, it was felt there were sufficient contacts and resources at our disposal to get it all together. I texted a message of support on Friday, she didn't return it but that was not unusual. I would go for days without hearing from her then out of the blue she would ring me at 1am to have a chat. I was always glad to talk to her regardless of her condition or the hour. We laughed a lot and usually at ourselves.

Carol passed away after a fatal combination of drugs and alcohol. The coroner determined "accidental overdose" or similar. Carol died of a loss of hope borne of addiction... cunning, baffling and powerful. Progressively it stripped her bare (Carol would excuse the pun) until it took everything.

Carol died alone and in pain. She thought herself unloved and abandoned. The truth is all that knew Carol, loved Carol. It was addiction that forced her away from loved ones.

Carol isn't the first friend I have buried through this disease, nor shall she be the last - though I pray otherwise. She will stay with me forever, as a real friend and, as a reminder of what my life could become again if I pick up.

I grieve her still but am thankful for having known her and seen her beauty. I am thankful for her friendship and love. I am grateful for the lessons she has taught me and am comforted in the fact that she is now at peace. Yet my heart still aches.

I love her and miss her always.

Andy
xoxox





APSU is a service of sharec

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APSU believes that people who use alcohol and other drug treatment services are the reason the system exists; their needs, strengths and expertise should drive the system. APSU is run by service users for service users and has an active member base. We invite you to join us in having a say. APSU membership is free, confidential and open to anyone interested in voicing their opinions and ideas on the issues facing service users today. We need your help to give us all a fair go. To become a member please fill out the form below and post to: **140 Grange Road, Carnegie VIC 3163** or fax to: **03 9572 3498** or go to: **www.apsuonline.org.au** to register online.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I wish to become a member of APSU and I would like to:

Receive the quarterly APSU FLIPSIDE magazine

Be sent information on how to become involved

I am a: Service user

Service provider

Family member

Other

How did you find out about APSU? _____

How did you find out about APSU? _____

Language spoken at home: _____

Cultural identity: _____

Age: 16-25 25-35 36-45 46-65 over 65

Other issues: Physical disability Mental health Visual Hearing

Speech Acquired brain injury

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT: All personal details obtained by APSU will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes outlined above.

Preparing the final goodbye

I am not writing as an addict or someone who has had a family member addicted to ice, but as a professional who deals with the absolute devastation that ice does and the pain that it leaves behind. I am a funeral director and I deal with the hard facts of this drug on a daily basis.

I have been the person who gets out of bed in the middle of the night to go to a call out to pick up the lifeless body of an overdose victim, or to pick up the body of an innocent person who has been beaten to death by someone who has gone into a fit of rage, because they have flipped out while being on it or hanging out for it.

I have been the one to dress the cold lifeless bodies of the deceased and I fix their blank cold horrified faces to give them the “sleeping peacefully” look that families want to see when they come and say goodbye.

I am the one who stands beside a weeping mother or father the day they bury their child or loved one, I try my best to offer words of comfort and support during one of the hardest times of someone’s life. But what words can you offer to someone who has their life torn apart by a substance?

To see how this drug rips lives apart in the worst sense is so heart wrenching. I do hope that giving just a very small insight to what I see in my job might be able to help some people realize that it’s not just them who are suffering with this epidemic.

It’s the parents, the aunts and uncles, the brothers and sisters it’s everybody who has ever loved somebody, who has been affected by this horrendous substance.... The mind altering life changing substance that grabs hold of you with its bare hands and squeezes every inch of life out of you, while your family sit back and watch you change, and become a different person barely surviving in the shell of a body that was once their very much loved family member, friend or colleague.

And the future for everyone involved is unknown, but please just take a moment to have a think about how hard it is for someone like me, a mother with children of my own, when I get the phone call at 2am from a hysterical parent that their child, who they brought into this world with every intention to give them the wonderful life this precious new born deserves, has been ripped away from them by the unseen devil, from something that is so commonly sold that it may as well be handed out at a milk bar.

Just have a think about how many people in the chain of life that it affects, and destroys before it comes to that phone call that changes people’s lives forever, to have to call me to organise your final goodbye.

I see this time and time again, at least on a weekly basis. I might not be able to save everyone’s life but if I can help just one person survive the devils vice and not enter the doors of my work in the morgue then my job on earth is done.

Anonymous

From Darkness to Light

A story about my big brother Jo

On the night of the 1st of August 2005, my family was struck down by the evils of drug addiction and suicide. Never could I have imagined the impact this night would have on the shaping of my life. It quickly became apparent how I would handle being faced with serious grief for the first time in my life. For many months after the passing of Jo I tackled grief the same way I believe many 14 year old young men would, I acted out, I disrupted myself and disrupted others around me. I had never experienced so many mixed emotions that were being lead by anger and confusion, how could this have happened to the person I looked at as invincible, the same person who was supposed to continue guiding me through my walks of life. This is where the darkness of the story is most apparent, my brother's battle with addiction was something my parents chose to keep from me. Not until after Jo passed did I become aware of the ongoing issues he was having with drug abuse and the continuous battle he was having with his mental health, the same battle that would ultimately take his life. Amongst all the confusion I found myself thinking, was my parents' decision to keep me in the dark the right decision? I struggled to find the answer, I transitioned from being angry at them, to trying to understand why they made that decision. Ultimately I settled on appreciating what my parents had done, I have no idea how I would have handled myself knowing the pain my big brother was experiencing. I can see that my parents were only trying to protect me and were also trying to protect Jo.

Through darkness comes light, as my parents and I struggled through this tragic time our immediate family unit grew stronger and stronger. Without subconsciously supporting each other but simply by being in each others presence, reflecting and celebrating the life of Jo. This is now where the light of the story is most apparent, I have felt how easy it could have been to continue down a destructive path and allowing grief to lead me down that path. However I have also felt the love and support from my parents, and most importantly from my big brother Jo. I now let that love and those memories of Jo lead my path as I know he continues to watch over me and I continuously strive to make him proud. If anything I hope these reflections on my experiences can help people identify that in the face of grief and loss we must celebrate the lives of our loved ones, we must reflect on all the great memories we shared and we must remember that from darkness there can always be light. Surround yourself with positivity and positives can be taken from any negative situation.

“Every step I take, every move I make, I'll be missing you.”

A story for Jo and a story for all loved ones lost.

Hope

They said that you were a hopeless case; that's just how you were.
But they didn't see what I saw; a wounded heart, a lost soul, in need of hope,
light; a new horizon.

Yes you were angry, don't they know you were in pain, yes you were sad, don't
they know you were hurting, yes you were demanding, don't they know you
were alone.

All you wanted was to be heard; have someone sit with you in pain, anger and
sadness.

All you wanted was 10 minutes of someone's time to say 'hi how are you', to feel
connected to another human being; to feel seen!

Could they not see this, did they not care or is it simply becoming human nature
to avoid another's pain?

I need to understand did they not look in your eyes, those beautiful blue eyes, so
child like, full of so much life, hope, desperation and pain!

Your eyes cried out "help", but your body cried out "get me my fix!" You
desperately wanted to quit, it was a battle of demons, monsters and at times
angels; boy did you battle!

But you kept hearing 'not again', 'you're a hopeless case', 'you're weak', 'just say
no'; 'what's wrong with you! '

You held on, you kept fighting, you were desperate for people to see beyond the
'drug', the 'mess', to see you, to see how hard you were fighting to keep alive.

The last door shut, the last hope, the light faded, you were tired; you were alone

"I need someone to hold hope for me", "I'm tired, please, please"

But it was too late the last door shut...

You had finally believed after all this battle 'you were a hopeless case'.

Big and small

Oh mate.....That's what you said to me when I first met you. I was hurting and these were your words to me consistently. There is some kind of comfort I feel when I hear those words now.

I watched and heard you through all your successes and challenges, and I never thought any different of you. In fact, I believed that that's how we recover. You had that "I'm ok" feel about you and I wanted some of that in every area of my life.

You never knew that I watched how you were a dad with your kids. I followed that example with my son. I watched how you related to your mates. That's how I made friends. I felt how you shook my hand and gave me hugs. That's how I greet and comfort others. I was empowered by how you worked. I followed in your footsteps. I loved the way you laugh. I find myself laughing exactly like that sometimes too. I loved how such inappropriate humour could find its way into words and brighten up my face. I can assure you I'll keep that tradition going.

So here I sit thinking about how I thought you had that "I'm ok" feel about you and wonder how I could have helped. I wonder if I had hugged you one second longer could that have made a difference. I think of all those times that I thought I should call you and I didn't. Now I'm left wondering if there was anything I could have done at all.

The last time I saw you, you made me smile with your random humour and I was assured that all was well. It seems I keep learning from you, Bloke. I'll never take for granted the moments I share with friends, never forget the things I am inspired by, and always take the time to call when the thought is there.

You're in my heart, Big Matt. You've left a mark everywhere you've been. I'm not going to forget you mate.

Oh mate.....

Small Matt

With You Always

I dedicate this poem to all the women, girls and my sisters who I lost to overdose, suicide, drugs and alcohol, and to my Aunty who drank herself to death. I pay my respects and live to honour you all. Thank you for all the inspiration, pride, courage, strength and determination you gave to me. Thank you for letting me walk with you all. I wish you all were here to see me own it, cos I'd give my life to bring any one of you back. I want you all back with me more than I want life, and I thank you all for being there for me. R.I.P. my sisters and my Aunty Cindy, you're all my heroes and will be painfully missed, you will all be locked in my heart always.

Memories of you,
Living our lives, thankfully.
Reminiscing, lost in this dream that's so alive,
We're flying and falling with all that's real.
Singing, loving, connecting and feeling,
Under the sun, bound to this country, inside us.

Stolen; screaming, shouting, howling and crying,
You never got no chance at life, no feeling, no freedom, no way out.
Stolen futures, no future – shoot us all dead.
Lost, doped, tortured, flat-lined, numb... gone.
Searching endlessly; longing for country, for family, for community... nothing
Cos they tortured us so much, they made us need to die.

My memories of you will never fade,
They belong to us and cannot be stolen.
You light up my life to this day,
Give the light that guides me through.
Cos truth is in your heart,
And you have the colour, the spirit, to change everything.

Sometimes it feels like yesterday,
Lost in all the stories we shared.
Knowing you're here with me, proud, believing.
Watching me own it, knowing we've got this.
I close my eyes, giving peace,
But nothing can be the same to me.

Reaching out for you, feeling you're with me.
Cos when your spirit hits, I can't be strong.
Chasing circles,
I need your love to pull me through.
I miss your smile, the way you care,
Why you're gone makes no sense to me at all.

Seeing through each other's eyes,
You were always my river, let the rain fall heavy.
You carried me through all the bullshit,
Pushed through all the mountains,
To find the sea,
To set all our spirits free.

Lost in this pain, locked down, shut down.
Nothing can be the same without you.

You never ever gave a fuck about nothing and no shit.
No one could ever judge you, hurt you or cut you down.
Your light blocked out all the darkness,
For us to see and know the truth.

I imagine now all that could be for real.
We lived proud in the gutters,
Born in the gutters – street lore, street pride.
No matter how many rounds, we never ever went down.
We never owned the streets, we reclaimed them for their true owners.
No fear from where we've come from, nothing to lose.

We were never the girls they wanted us to be.
They never wanted our voices heard, or for us to even speak, let alone speak
out or back.
We could never be silenced or made voiceless,
Or fabricated as crazy and not believed.
We could only speak back and fight back, remaining unheard,
No matter the price paid.





I hear you always, we don't need no sad goodbyes or fake lies.
We knew all along they were dead wrong,
Cos none of them deserved a name, for branding us as numbers aye
I was hoping you found you some day,
Hoping your mind, your heart, your eyes could see all that's real again,
And all that could have been.

We carry the weight of truth on our shoulders,
We speak our minds, always open.
Your voice and your truth had the power to change your Nation,
To change our generation.
How they gonna hear your voice now, or learn your song,
your dance, your pride?
Or know the true histories, from our side?

Gone, but living free from everyone else's thoughts and lies.
Gone with, cos part of me died when you died.
Cut open, cut deep; bleeding out, no time.
Never, could I ever, have seen your fate this way
So why you calling this freedom, when no one else is free?
Cos I can't see in colour, and I told him to take me.

Rolling on, I know you'll always be here with me.
Our stars, our signs, always shining bright.
Cos many couldn't understand the way you thought or taught,
I wish only that they could have seen all that I saw,
And all that could have been,
All that could only, ever now, be in our dreams.

Speaking with you now, your spirit flowing on, released, relieved, lifted.
I'm finally seeing you, you, free from all the pain you fought.
Peace, no violence, no bullshit, no more barely holding on.
You left your heart and this life, to begin.
Always and forever, we're still together, no pain.
Always and forever, in my heart you stay true.

Cina Loren



YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS

Provide feedback by calling one of our volunteers with a lived experience to complete a short survey on

1300 442 552

Leave a message for a call back if engaged or outside 9am-4pm, Mon-Fri.

Or complete the short survey on our website at
<http://sharc.org.au/program/association-of-participating-service-users/short-feedback-survey/>

*This survey is for family members and people who use/have used Victorian AOD services.
This survey is not designed for service providers.



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Self Help Addiction Resource Centre