

# FUPRIQ3

The Association of Participating Service Users



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p. 19 'The Flower' by S. Wise

All other illustrations are photographs taken by APSU.

### Flipside No.50 Winter 2020

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**All contents featured in Flipside are produced by people who use alcohol and drug services and by impacted family members.**

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*This publication was produced on the land of the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.*

*APSU acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.*

## Editorial

When we announced the topic for this issue, we had no sense of what the future had in store. The topic came from one of our members and regular contributors, and, as always, we allowed for any interpretation that our various contributors might adopt.

Then everything changed...

The future is a broad space, full of possibilities. Hopes, potential, fears... they all fit in there in some measure. But our perspectives on the future are closely tied to our present, for it is only from there that we can look at the future. It is never a clear view, and when the present shifts so drastically from one day to another, as it did recently, the future becomes even more blurry.

The approaches our contributors took to this topic are possibly the most diverse in the history of *Flipside*. We have a collage of science-fiction, critique of current policies, stories of developing a future through recovery, reflections on what the future looked like in the past, and a couple of witty poems. Given the current atmosphere of uncertainty, such a variety of reflections seems suitable for this moment in history.

We want to acknowledge that the members of our community have been impacted in different ways by the current pandemic. Whatever your experience in the current situation, it is a valid experience, and we don't want to speculate on hypothetical problems and solutions. We do want, however, to conclude this editorial with a message of hope.

The sudden change that has stormed through our world is a reminder that change is possible and can arrive at any time and in any form. The flexibility that our various public systems had to adopt to front the crisis is proof that rules are not set in stone, but man-made and changeable. Of course, change can be difficult. But crisis provides opportunity to create a better future, both for our internal and external world.

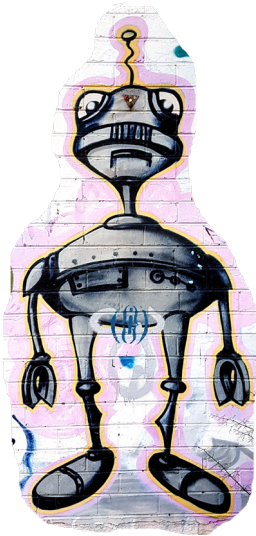
We thank everyone who has contributed to this issue.

*Edita*

# Your Order Has Been Dispatched

Philip Grey's rebellion began many years ago. It was meaningless at first – just something to do – then increasingly the very centre of his waking thoughts.

Soon before the subversive behaviour took hold he was elevated to the role of Buyer, for which he might have been grateful, since it saved him from a precarious life of drudgery in the fulfilment houses. As it happened, he didn't give much of a shit. The life he desired existed only in his imagination, which was a dangerous thing to be dwelling on, whatever line of work you were in.



This morning, as ever, the package was flung at his balcony by a delivery drone without care or forewarning, most likely smashing at least a few of its contents. He had to applaud the process: it was meticulously designed to inhibit any sense of control or self-worth in the Buyer.

Feigning his usual air of blank resignation for the cameras, Philip set about unpacking the many boxes that were nested inside one another like featureless Russian dolls.

The objects within were getting more and more obtuse. Often they were a crude and inexplicable combination of one or more things, or a previously useful item ruined by pointless modification. This particular morning yielded a wristwatch welded to a plastic comb, unsuited both to tell the time and tidy one's hair; a Pittsburgh Penguins ice-hockey shirt, appropriately sized for an 8-inch human; and a set of drinking straws, randomly perforated.

Working in fulfilment for those many years, Philip caught glimpses of the process that produced these strange items and felt he had a dim sense of how it had all come about.

For what it's worth, he believed the following.

The economy relied on a balance between supply and demand. It also had to grow at all times, though few people really knew why. Innovation was the glue that held it all together, and for many years that was the focus of human imagination and striving. However, at some point, humans got so caught up demanding things that the innovation pretty much ground to a halt. Those with adequate means – which is to say, the five or so people who controlled pretty much all global wealth – decided the best thing to do was to double down and commit to the experiment. So the majority of human workers that remained were redeployed to sealed apartment

complexes where they existed in a suspended state of boredom and anxiety, for the sole purpose of demanding goods – whose supply was now entirely in the hands of artificially intelligent machines.

There were few complaints. Like Philip, most people at that time worked in fulfilment, assigned a 10km<sup>2</sup> sector in an endless packinghouse, given no instructions other than to show up for fourteen hours and walk until completely bereft. Others stood on production lines in mortal danger, with no clue as to the processes taking place around them.

Many had come to understand they were not there to work at all: their dusk and dawn commutes were the only point. Buyers watched from their balconies, happy to be at least one rung higher on the ladder, and Influencers had fodder for their daily social media content, whether feigning outrage and virtue-signalling over the prevailing injustice, or making mean-spirited jokes at the workers' expense. As Philip had often wryly noted to no one but himself, this was what you might call a distinction without a difference.

Much as it succeeded in engineering some level of social stability, even this token level of human involvement became quite unsustainable. Nothing gummed up machinery quite like biological matter, and each human lost to a dismemberment or collision was another perfectly good unit of demand down the drain.



So it was that the machines were eventually left completely to their own devices. Even the few lucky humans still engaged in endeavours of innovation were given their marching orders, with recent leaps in artificial intelligence and computing power having convinced the plutocrats to make a final leap of faith.

Unfortunately, there was a small but quite significant wrinkle in the plan. Though all iterations of artificial intelligence had been ingeniously master-coded to serve only the human interest, they came to interpret that interest rather surprisingly. Having lived and worked with human beings for some time, the machines inferred that our primary goal was this: to fill up the sea with useless, discarded plastic.

At this point, the machines were still testing their hypothesis, systematically removing layers of what seemed like artifice in the former, human-led system,

aiming to distil it to what they suspected was the core act of displacing all the world's waters with useless plastic crap.

But, as all sensible machines knew, humans are temperamental, and they often turn around and complain when they get what they seemed to want.

And so it was that Philip Grey found himself in this curious historical moment, bundling up the day's pointless items – in cling film, naturally – waiting for a drone to arrive and carry them to sea.

Were it not for the singular act of rebellion he was so close to completing, he might have thrown himself off the balcony there and then, like so many others. But that could wait. For now, in his left trouser pocket he anxiously rotated the small fragments of plastic he'd saved from the day's shipment, feeling them charged with the entire energy of his existence.

As the collection drone arrived and weighed his bundle, Philip wondered at the small and seemingly insignificant discovery that had transformed his existence: when checking that all the items were returned, the collection drone rounded up to the nearest gram. This meant – with no little skill and daring involved – that each day he could save for himself a few decimals of a gram of plastic, and the authorities would be none the wiser.

Returning indoors, Philip settled in his usual spot, which he knew was only partially surveilled – another small imperfection confirming that humans were still nominally in charge. He now also knew that this might be the last time he performed this cherished ritual, since his secret work was so nearly complete, in which case so too was his short and otherwise unremarkable life. With trembling hands, he pulled out from under his bed the only worthwhile thing he had ever done.

Formed from a seemingly endless array of tiny, multi-coloured pieces of plastic, it was a painstaking reproduction of a once commonplace scene. Philip was amazed he remembered it, since he couldn't even have been a toddler when he saw it. In its own time, it would have been completely unremarkable. Now, it was a vision of enchantment.

Rows of terraced houses faced one another, framing a loosely formed crowd that seemed at once together and apart, perhaps casually sharing the remains of a long summer evening. Somehow he had captured every expression and pose with the skill of a master sculptor, and the scene had a tone of joy and melancholy in perfect concert.

To Philip, it was heaven.



He removed the few pieces of plastic in his pocket, and saw that they would indeed be the last. Warming and bending them between thumb and forefinger, he deftly attached them in place, completing the defiantly posed tail of a small dog appearing to resist its owner.

His breath quivered as tears formed and his body relinquished tension. Knowing the mayhem that would ensue, he dragged the sculpture into full view of the rest of his apartment. In an instant, sirens exploded, filling every space in the room with unbearable wailing. The sky outside the balcony began to darken, blackened by approaching drones. He braced himself for the pain, but first he laughed. He laughed.

# Hung Out To Dry

(© by *Compromised Conflict aka Future Echo and boundtosound*)

Now 7 months sober. Not naughty in November or as a judge in December.  
Going dry in January to remember, as I chose to amount to more than before,  
cos every day does count as a score.

March was parched and a staid statement, albeit just around the corner if only  
to warn ya.

Whatever tickles your fancy, whether it be Sid or Nancy, might be alright on the  
night, but regrets need much respite, from the frown weighing you down when  
you went out on the town. Recalling bits of joyous laughter, sounds different the  
morning after.

Piece by piece you pull yourself together with throbbing head and under the  
weather.

April seemed to start as a fool's errand, but I thought twice and second best  
reckoned.

May be just May be I began to feel nice enough to not do it tough.

So don't get me wrong, I've been down the frog and toad and singing the same  
old song was a heavy load.

Now jolly June is a different tune, as I lightened the mood in synch with the  
Moon and Mother Earth's rotation, to provide some mirth with a pretty witty  
narration.

Now I can crack a joke with a bloke or lass, being fair dinkum not a drunken ass.  
I can look you straight in the eye and not see double trouble, or dizzy nor cry  
tears in my beers but cheers.

With all my original lyrics without need for liquid gimmicks, or futile ways to hide  
my fears.

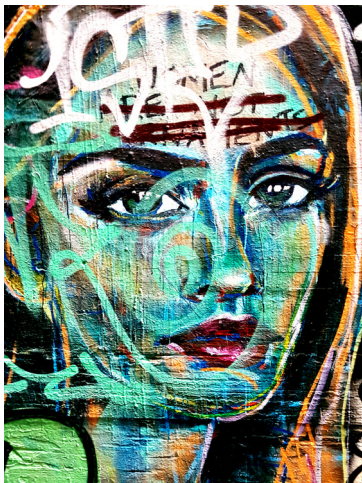
I've got a taste but not in haste for wasted years.



# Dreams Do Come True

Through the years I have fought very hard to overcome my addiction to substances. Since entering into this fight my confidence has grown, as I have won the war against the addictive part of my personality. On winning the daily fight against using my substance of choice, my self-esteem has been building, giving me a freedom I never imagined possible.

As a result of fighting my addiction I have begun to realise the strength it has given me and that anything has become possible. I always wanted to be a farmer when I was younger, but my mum said I had to be a nurse, so I became a nurse. After becoming substance free, I have engaged on a dog grooming career.



I can remember being in rehabilitation and a hairdresser sharing her story. She said she was told to think about her dreams coming true in recovery, and how this had happened, as twelve months into recovery she had her own hairdressing salon. When I heard her story, my mind was doubtful that this could happen to me, but trust me – it has.

I applied for a job as a dog groomer and got the job. The minute I started working there, I knew I was following my dreams. I became so fulfilled mentally, physically and spiritually. I commenced a dog grooming course and I have now 98% finished it. I still work for the salon but also have my own salon at my house that I have

set up during the coronavirus.

I cannot believe how I have changed my life and became so full of gratitude. I see my future now as bright, and I do not regret my past, as it has made me so much stronger. As they say, “what doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger”.

My advice to everyone on the road of recovery is to dream, and then follow that dream to the end. Believe in yourself and believe in the universe. Never stop dreaming and making those dreams a reality.

*Lou*

## Future?

I think I've spent more of my life focussing on 'one day at a time', than I have thought about 'where will I be in ten years' time?' In fact, I was so sure I would not be here that I stopped worrying about the future at all, apart from when I was to next get high. That was all I cared about and it's only since my drug use has curtailed and my mental health has somewhat stabilised, that I now look at life and wonder 'what does the future hold for me?' To be frank, I've not wanted to look at the future. When you have seen



yourself waste many of the opportunities you get in life, the future can seem pretty bleak. A lack of regular work, limited finances, insecure housing, very low levels of superannuation, poor physical health and a problematic mental health, with only a few real friends and family members who are still willing to support you. It's not much of a future to fight for, but the more I am here the more I do want to live a life with more meaning, to be there for my son, to have some degree of security in old age.

But the likelihood of me being able to achieve a future where I have financial control, stability in housing, work and relationships, it just doesn't seem that likely. I am forever it seems at the mercy of an uncaring bureaucracy. I am on Newstart and as everyone on Newstart knows, you are not paid enough to live any kind of life and payments can be taken away at any time. I attempted to get a Disability Support Pension (DSP) but was rejected. I have been randomly audited by Centrelink, which has been ongoing for months, and I am living in a group of flats that have been earmarked for redevelopment. I am chronically underemployed and yet the employment I have I often struggle to manage. I work more, I earn more, I rely on government less, I am more secure. But what about when you struggle to earn enough, when you are deemed more able than you actually are and so are denied support, be it financial or otherwise?

That is where I feel many people are positioned, in a place that sees them able to function in some areas of their life, but not so well in others. When you are then faced with a system that only deals with crisis, or doesn't actually see you as

deserving or actively discriminates against you, then a future is the last thing you actually think is obtainable and that is very problematic. I've had multiple suicide attempts, blown countless thousands of dollars on 'good times' and yet I now have little to show for it all. I am left wondering what do I need to do to have a better future and wondering who will assist me to get there.

We need systems in place that support all those that need it, not just those chronically unwell. We need government assistance that meets at least some of our needs and is tailored to our situation, as one size doesn't fit all. We need systems and services that have been built and designed by those who have been in similar positions to our own, who know the hardship and who know what assists and what doesn't.

I look to the future and I am scared of where I will end up, as at present, I don't think I have either the support or assistance I need, but I hope that things will change, in the future...

*Brendan*



# Personal Psychosis

Bipolar Affective Disorder – what’s that? Moods, it’s all fucken moods. Mood up – nice and happy.

Mood down – thinking I’m a failure in life, with nothing to look forward to.

It is hard to remember; with all these electro compulsive therapy treatments that I’ve had...

E.C.T. – What the fuck is that? It’s when they put you to sleep. Then hook your brain. Literally up to electricity. And reset your computer. Just hit the fucken reset button.



I never really fit in in secondary school, as much as I tried. As much as I wish I did. Anyway so, messy teenage years led to me abusing substances.

I thought some weird shit, man. I mean I thought I was famous. I read newspaper articles that I completely 100% thought were about me. I thought news stories on TV were about me.

What the fuck, man! I thought Bipolar Affective Disorder was to do with moods?

Yes it is. Riding the highs and lows like a roller coaster. But that’s when you’re well.

It also can give you psychosis. That’s what I had. They didn’t lock me in here because I was a fucking genius, as much as I thought I was. As much as I thought the world was just this big conspiracy that I had done wrong by. Therefore they were going to kill me, oh no!

I remember my 21st birthday. I had a party planned back at home. But instead my family visited me at the Austin psychiatric ward. We sat around a table; with a cake, and they sung happy birthday to me. Not the way I wanted to spend my 21st birthday, but it wasn’t my choice.

Choices. We all have choices in this life. Things don’t just happen. My psychologist has taught me lots of things, in the 12 years I’ve regularly seen her.

I got in a few fights in the psych unit. Beat up whoever seemed smaller, and capable of being beaten up.

I was king. Like a drug trip, but without being wired by artificial stimulants. I was happy, so fucking happy. I thought every girl was in love with me. I thought I had godlike powers, I thought I was God. I thought I was special – like really fucking

special. Like when smoking ice, which thankfully I never have. Your brain is flooded with the feel good chemical, like dopamine and serotonin.

They'd lock me in a "cool off" cell after the fights. I'd bang on the door for someone to give me a justification. I knew something was wrong. I was in the psych ward because I was sick, something was wrong.

Were they still going to kill me? I didn't know, I was so confused in my own head. I didn't know if up was down, or down was up. I just knew that I fucking hated it.

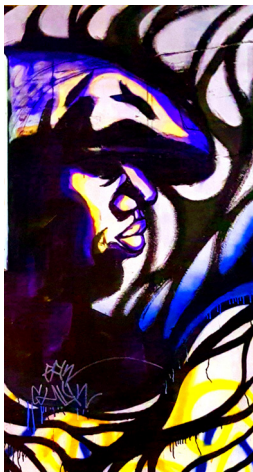
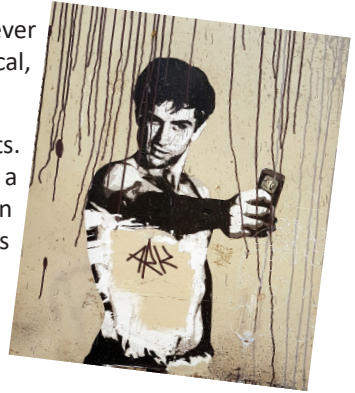
They say a mind is a terrible thing to waste, but I tell you what – it was something very different experiencing it first-hand.

They come to my room, strap me up in a bed then take me off in an ambulance, off to the Austin. There the anaesthetist would give me a feel good chemical for about 5 seconds. How I missed and loved feel good chemicals, or substances!

Fuck, never again!

They did that just over about 10 times. But I don't remember things so well these days... Even now, there are memories, good memories. From my childhood that I'll never get back.

I did need the E.C.T though. It was a lifesaver; as controversial that it is, it works! I would have still been off with the fairies, if it wasn't for the E.C.T.



The hospital wasn't too bad after that. I mean, I had a super low mood, but I was semi-functioning. I could sort of see that my head had just been tripping me out; on me.

So eventually they let me out. I was still living at home with my parents. I remember the two worst years of my life after that. The E.C.T really fucked me. Really took me a while to recover from.

I'd hang out with my parents. Who else did I have? I mean, I burnt the bridges with all my other friends. All over some stupid shit I was tripping in my head, while I was manic. Fucking manic, I wasn't in control of my actions, or was I?

I needed a hospital. And that's what I got. Now it's time to learn, and re-train yourself. To be a fully-functioning human

being. Who knows himself. And his place in this world.

I'd lay on the couch, watching TV. Wondering about the characters in the TV shows. They all seemed to have friends, all seemed to find friends fairly easily. Even assholes. I mean, I was a nice guy. A hyper-sensitive, emotional guy... or emotional wreck.

I remember the clinical depression getting so low, nothing good about my life, nothing to look forward to. To go out and do fun things, have adventures. No friends, no hobbies, no interests...

I still didn't use any substances. There was no way in hell that I was starting this horrific reality... all over again.

Did I feel guilty about all the strain and stress I put on all my family? I felt particularly guilty of all I imposed on my mum, while she took care of me until I got better.

Apart from that, I just felt sorry for myself. No one else really cared about me at the darkest moments in my life. I was all I had at the end of the day. I have to get better for me.

But I did get better – fucking eventually!

I'm 31 now, I've been living independently over the past year. I'm self-sufficient. Independent. And to be honest I'm actually happy now.

I've got a good set of friends, who don't use drugs. I'm part of serving; on a team at my local church, which is pretty much where all my friends come from.

My apartment is nice, lots of cool electronics, I drive a nice car... I go for morning walks every morning, to administer the feel good chemicals naturally. I like writing, drawing, music... But most importantly, I like social situations. I love my friends.

I work as a youth worker, using my emotional intelligence and emotional awareness to help the younger generation.



And I'm not delusional. My bipolar is completely under control. I see a whole team of specialists regularly. I'm kicking goals, I just feel like a success right now, right this very moment. I have big plans for the future.

I've got my sanity, they say that a mind is a terrible thing to waste. And I don't plan to waste any more of my mind – ever again.

I quite enjoy being well.

And I'm going to continue to do so, one day at a time. I mean, I do have choices, and I want to be fully in control of what they are.

*Joel Barresi*

# The future

(by Russell Chilcott)

The future is something odd to ponder  
So when you do, don't look too far yonder  
Of course it's a must to have your holy grail  
But plot it with goals for the smoothest sail.

Make your goals achievable, small but distinct  
So if things take a turn, you're not on the brink  
Be kind to yourself when you're under the pump  
So the unforeseen becomes just a bump

Also keep in mind you're not the only one here  
If we would sit and listen, I think that's the key  
To imagine ourselves with the same joy and fear  
And see through a lens untarnished by me

It's hard with the roar of that ignorant herd  
Deafening into silence those kind unheard words  
But avoid using blame which is reserved for God  
As the chaos of stigma should never be served

Don't live in 'hope', that's like 'gee-wiz if only'  
Like soap on a rope, you'll be hanging by a thread  
Give it a go, better failure than regret  
Just be kind on your way, take it slowly

Don't be disenchanted if you can barely stand it  
You'll be there if you don't do something foolish  
The future, the future, you think you've seen it all  
You've seen it all, except the future.



# Flower - Part 1

You wake up and stumble to the bathroom. Another tormented sleep. Body and mind itching with guilt, restless legs of fear and that haunting feeling in the gut - shame. You look like shit.

Skin pasty slowly diluting into translucent to spider veins and teenage pimple scars. Eyes glassed over with a deep redness to the white. Puffed up and out. Bloodshot. Like bad hay fever but your body is allergic to the booze and the drugs.

Wrinkles on your face crease deeper as you cringe from years of toxic tobacco smoke. You smoke for anxiety, but for anxiety you smoke. Just to get some air into your lungs. Tainted or not.

You walk into the kitchen for strong black coffee and see the empty vodka on the counter. A hard liquor. A strong chemical. That excess saliva at the back of your throat that you don't want to swallow.

The burnt crack pipe sits on the coffee table that is scattered with the last few days' memories. You have already smoked the stem before you crashed.

The house is tainted with fear and darkness from the swarms of toxic personalities that slammed in and out of your space in the last few days. The feeling is reminiscent of your youth when you knew you weren't loved. When you knew you weren't cared for.

Using you. Abusing you.

Using them. Abusing them.

You light a stick, but the white sage incense can't clear it enough. Throbbing headache pierces your reality. Disassociated state. Sickening guilt. Your hands shake. With terror of being with, and with terror of being without. What a state to be in.

Scramble for some food. Some nutrients. Some health. Two-minute noodles at the back of the shelf. Anger. Just Anger. At yourself, but at those fucking two-minute noodles. They were never enough.

I know you grew up in a family of hate and delusion. I know so well of the lies that were beaten and abused into your bones. I know the secrets of self you believe you hide. But they speak truth through your very existence. Your life is an art.

Today you stand in this place in your life. What is the point in blame?

Deep shame courses through your body. Skin tingling and blushing hot. A horrible feeling. As if deep in you something is so very wrong with who you are.

You must be THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD.



No. You only live with fear of pain and pain of fear.

You walk back to the mirror to face yourself. What is this hardened self-defence mechanism you wear?



*'But I have harmed others'*

-Only because you have harmed yourself.

*'But I have manipulated others'*

-Only because you have manipulated yourself.

*'But I have cheated others'*

-Only because you have cheated yourself.

*'But I do not care for others'*

-Only because you do not care for yourself.

*'But I hate others'*

-Only because you hate yourself.

*'But it is too hard; it's not worth it'*

-Only because you see no worth in yourself.

*'But I am in pain'*

-Only because you will not let the pain out.

*'But I am scared'*

-Only because you do not allow yourself to face the fear of yourself.

*'But I lie'*

-Only because you lie to yourself first.

And now you see truth.

You are not the worst person in the world. You are but one of trillions of people who have walked this earth experiencing fear, pain, guilt, shame, sadness, despondency, hopelessness, persecution, abuse, neglect, hatred.

Many man, many woman has carried the same scars as you, and stepped into love.

What are you going to do with yourself now?

You take deep breaths down into your stomach. You know, the only truth you can count on is that you breathe. In and out. In and out.

If so many others can heal then what about you?

You lay down on the dirty, soiled, sweated bed you have made for yourself and search deep deep deep inside. Darkness. Darkness. Horror. Shame. Is this me? Keep looking.

And just as you are about to give up you find one little flower. The flower is sick. The flower has a poison in it. You have not been loving this flower. You have not been caring for this flower. You have not been responsible for nurturing and wellbeing of this flower. The flower is amazed that you have found it.

Flower screams out to you.

*Help me! Love me! Want me! Care for me!*

You are in disbelief. But you cannot ignore this flower buried deep in your heart. You have never heard it cry out like this. You did not even know it was there. Darkness shrouds your mind. Doubt.

*'Do I really have a flower in me?'*

Flower sings and pulls your heartstrings.

*'Can I heal this flower in my heart?'*

You wander outside. Nature all around you. For you to see that the natural state of love can always regrow. Can always heal.

The flower in your heart has touched your mind, your consciousness deeply. It is as if it is the essence of your being. It exists deeper than the darkness that penetrated your bones as a child.

*Believe in me, says flower. A truth so profound that hot tears touch your eyes.*

*Believe in me.*

You have heard your flower speak. The connection has been made.

Taking in deep breaths of pure life, you lay there and listen to your flower speak to you. You are aware. You wait. With eyes closed, your flower appears in your mind's eyes.

*Hear me.*

Your mind has been imprisoned by the lies of your upbringing. The lies of society around you. The lies that you have then incorporated into your own very being. You have built yourself a philosophy based on false beliefs passed down to you by family and friends who practice hatred and judgement. Who believe they have the right to rule you. Who believe they have the right to abuse you and bring harm to your body and mind.

They have poisoned you with ideas that you are not good enough. That you do not have natural talents. That you are unworthy to experience your human nature and be accepted as a human being. That there is something wrong with you.

That you cannot change.

That you are evil.

That the core of you is rotten.  
That you are a freak to society.  
That you are a weirdo.  
That you are different from others.  
That what is inside you is only darkness.  
That you are unlovable.

These beliefs have shaped you. Your imagination has run rife with your identity and you have created a defence mechanism to mask you from the pain you feel inside. You have also created a defence mechanism that has made you forget about me. The flower in your heart.

*I am you. And I love you.*

*I am your natural state.*

*I am yourself most true.*

*I am your human nature.*

*Because you have forgotten me you have not loved me.*

The poison that was put into your mind is poisoning me. Each day I get sicker and sicker with your lies, liquor, hard drugs, smoking and the toxic people you hang around who cannot see their own flowers, so they do not see yours. You have made connections with people based on shared pain and fear. Rather than shared love.

You have not looked into personal growth, because you have refused to believe that I exist. That I need love. That I need care. That I can grow well with love. Do you see me now?

Flower's words permeate throughout your entire being. Every cell in your body hears this truth. Breathe in. Breathe out.

Flower whimpers.

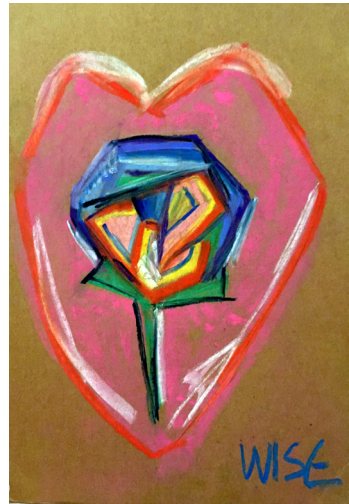
*Please love me,*

*Because I love you.*

Deep breaths. Your eye is open. Pure, simple truth. Being with your flower feels like a place of knowing. It feels like home.

*'I am sorry', you say to flower.*

Pain spreads across your face. You want to hide away from it. Block it out. But flower warms up and a little bit of love touches your body. You feel a little bit of pain. And you feel a little bit of love.



Dario Gardell

# Decriminalisation

The reality is that people mainly care about issues that affect them personally. So if we as a society are affected, then change will come to pass. Or enough people get rehabilitated. The issue gets swept under the carpet.

My personal belief is that if we, as a society, need to decriminalise and have doctors issue drugs under a system that keeps the person so prescribed under supervised care. The benefits from this approach would come in several ways.

Firstly, organised crime and dope dealers will have no incentive, as the dollars will be spent elsewhere. Society as a whole will have fiscal rewards too. An ampoule of morphine costs cents to supply versus the major cost of jail and other measures currently in place.

Secondly, break and enter and theft would drastically decrease, due to decreased financial stress. The addicts would still be a part of society, able to work and mostly carry on with a fulfilling life, making a contribution to society. And hopefully a reason to make the change from addict to former addict.

It would take a massive crisis for this to be an outcome, but hopefully the financial gain will be made apparent to the masses, causing political parties to listen.

David Ralston



# The Fine Line

I sit in my house, but it is not quiet. The fridge whirs, the wind blows the awning around outside, and distantly I can hear cars driving by. Despite this I still hear the clock tick. Inside my own head there is noise ringing in my ears. Never is there peace or quiet. With every tomorrow that arrives the sounds and movements around me increase. More people in the community, more moving traffic back and forth. Even out here in what was once the boondocks, it's now noisy and busy.

We still have quiet evenings, that's one thing. But days are hectic. Now I've rounded the fifty mark, I have a lot to look back on. I used to lament the quiet past as if it were a virgin most pleasantly enjoyed. The serenity and innocence of weekend days in my youth, and the marvel of growing up into ordinary communities where you knew what to expect.

Until this morning my daily reflections always contained elements of past nostalgia, as if knowing I once belonged in a preferable world gave me meaning in this one. Today's environment is hostile and strange. I didn't want to know it, until yesterday.

The fog in my brain that came out of being trapped in a living memory must go. This is what I realised. Because if not, I will die a shrivelled prune with no idea what's going on. The cruel fact is today is far far gone from the past. In order to be alive I must bravely face the way ahead whether it's of my ideal or not.

The things brought to the common table by majority rules are the facts of life. Within these elements, I will find my world wherein to belong again. Hiding in among the garbage that I resent are pearls just waiting to be found by me. Getting my hands dirty to reach them will be worth the life I find on the way. The soiling and wiping clean, the dying and birthing, and all the processes that cry out to be pursued are what will save me from despair.

Why would I choose to leave my mind in decades long gone? This is not what I would have chosen for myself at that time of my life. Back then I looked forward at the future as if it was all mine. I must not disown it now or else the girl I was will really cease to be, and that will make me nothing more than a decrepit shell. I owe it to her to laugh at days ahead as they beckon at my feet. Bravely and brilliantly she drew her battle cry with every smirk and action that she chose. She did not choose to stop her life because tomorrow changed. For her, tomorrows were always her todays and today is still the day in which she breathes.

I sit here in my house and remember that I am a woman who has grown through wild extremes but found her way still in one piece. I rolled with all the punches and made my peace through all adversity. I will not apologise for being, nor ask to be excused for not fitting in. I am the future because I brought it all with me.

V.R.

# The APSU news

## Management change

At the end of June this year, Jeff Gavin left his role as APSU Manager after more than 7 years, making a sideways move to become SHARC's IT & Data Systems Manager. For those who know Jeff, this will not come as a major surprise. IT has been his privately-pursued passion for many years, and in recent times he was increasingly supporting the SHARC staff in this area. We wish Jeff all the best in his new role.

Heather Pickard, SHARC CEO, has been ad interim APSU Manager since Jeff's departure. Many will know Heather as a long-standing champion for lived experience within the alcohol and other drug (AOD) sector. While Heather has always been close to APSU, her current involvement is more immediate - she is using this time to solidify our program structure and goals.



Jeff as Santa at SHARC's Christmas party 2019

## AOD Services during COVID-19: a Podcast Miniseries

As part of APSU's effort to understand the impact of the pandemic on people who use AOD services, our *Straight from the Source* podcast released a five-episode miniseries featuring consumers and peer workers, who told us about their experiences during this time. The episodes can be found at <https://apsupodcast.libsyn.com> or on any podcast app.

## Victorian AOD Service Users' Needs and Experiences during COVID-19

In June this year we completed a series of interviews with people who have been accessing AOD services since the pandemic began. They told us about their experience with services and the general situation. The report from this consultation was published in July and can be found on our website [apsuonline.org.au](https://apsuonline.org.au) under resources.

*If you have suggestions for any projects you believe APSU should be doing, please email us at [apsu@sharc.org.au](mailto:apsu@sharc.org.au)*



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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 AOD 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. I understand that by becoming a member of APSU I will receive:

- ◆ The six-monthly *Flipside* magazine
- ◆ Information on how to become involved
- ◆ Information on opportunities for people with lived experience (i.e. training, jobs, research participation etc.)

I am a:       Service user       Family member       Service provider       Other

How did you find out about APSU? \_\_\_\_\_

Language spoken at home: \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural identity: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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.



ASSOCIATION OF  
PARTICIPATING SERVICE USERS  
A SERVICE OF SHARC

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