

Newsletter

Autumn 2021

Lifeboat Geelong

Vision

A just, compassionate and understanding society

Mission

To bring help and hope to adult survivors of Church-related sexual abuse.

Objectives

The Lifeboat program aims to achieve its mission goal by providing assistance in the following ways:

- Offering support and practical help using volunteers.
- Making referrals to appropriate professionals.
- Advocating on behalf of adult survivors of church related sexual abuse.
- Providing information, encouragement and practical support to enable survivors to re-engage into the community.
- Providing opportunities for people to succeed, developing their self-esteem, self-worth and dignity.



Lifeboat Geelong

F O U N D A T I O N



Welcome to the first edition of the Lifeboat Geelong Foundation newsletter. This new quarterly publication will provide survivors of institutional child sexual abuse an opportunity to share their journey and what has worked for them.

In each edition we will include useful resources including Centrelink tips, handy government websites, housing options and financial information.

In this issue, we hear from Pete Rogers, who lives in a remote area where physically meeting with other survivors is not possible. Thank you Pete for telling your story and identifying the need for a newsletter for survivors.

Another survivor, Gareth, has found social media to be an outlet, while Bessie has found a purpose in sewing masks for others. Their stories follow.

Please feel free to share this publication with anyone who would find it beneficial. If you do not wish to receive any future editions, you can easily unsubscribe by contacting Lifeboat Geelong.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and we welcome any ideas for future issues.

REFLECTIONS FROM FR KEVIN DILLON



Over many decades, if not centuries, the life-long trauma of children and also adults who have suffered sexual assault and abuse has been all-too-readily dismissed by those fortunate never to have been affected by crimes that cause damage that is too often permanent and irreparable.

“Why don’t they just get over it and get on with their lives?” is the frequent catch-cry by the many people who “just don’t get it”. How easy it is for the tears and anger of victims who had their childhood and innocence snatched away to be swept aside by others who have no idea of how deep are the wounds.

The awarding of the title of “Australian of the Year” to Tasmanian sexual abuse survivor Grace Tame has focused a new and more focused attention on the suffering that never goes away. Her powerful yet gracious acceptance speech will be read and heard for many years to come.

Grace Tame’s speech was addressed to all Australians, but especially to the many people who have suffered personal damage like our 2021 Australian of the Year. In her speech she said:

"All survivors of child sexual abuse, this is for us".

Yes, discussion of child sexual abuse is uncomfortable. But nothing is more uncomfortable than the abuse itself. So let us redirect this discomfort to where it belongs: at the feet of perpetrators of these crimes."

"Together we can redefine what it means to be a survivor."

"Together we can end child sexual abuse; survivors be proud, our voices are changing history."

PETE’S JOURNEY

Pete Rogers finds peace and stress relief through his artwork and practicing alternative therapies.

Pete is a survivor who spent years feeling unsettled and unsafe. When he joined a monastery at the age of 50, the suppressed memories of the abuse that happened while serving as an altar boy came flooding back. Following this and the tragic loss of one of his sons, he left the seminary and continued his search for contentment.

Discovering he needs the balance of yoga, meditation and mindfulness to help him body, soul and spirit has been life changing for Pete. He regularly undertakes a number of alternative therapies including yoga, Bowen, kinesiology, art therapy and somatic counselling.

Pete finds that creativity cannot be forced, and he only does his art when he is in the mood.

“Art is transformative. It takes you out of yourself and into what you are creating,” he says.

“It energises yourself. You don’t have to be on a high to be creative. If you are in a low period, art brings you out because you are expressing that emotion in what you are doing, even if you’re not conscious of it.”

When Pete draws, especially with his non-dominant hand, it changes his mood.

“If you stay still, you become stuck,” he says. “To get out of ‘stuckness’ you have to try anything.”

Pete and his partner, Judy, live on the coast in Western Australia. He now feels settled in his life, with his creative and balancing outlets, home surroundings and partner giving him the feeling of safety and protection that he had never before experienced.

More of Pete's beautiful artwork and photography will be featured in future editions of this newsletter.



Pete has found Art Therapy stimulates his creativity and helps him to deal with his stress. The dot painting below starts with Pete painting dots until he creates a picture with a story.

Pete also paints with pastels using his non-dominant hand so that his work is less controlled by his hand and more from within. Pete says:

'It's me in the Womb if you turn it up the other way you see me upside down'.

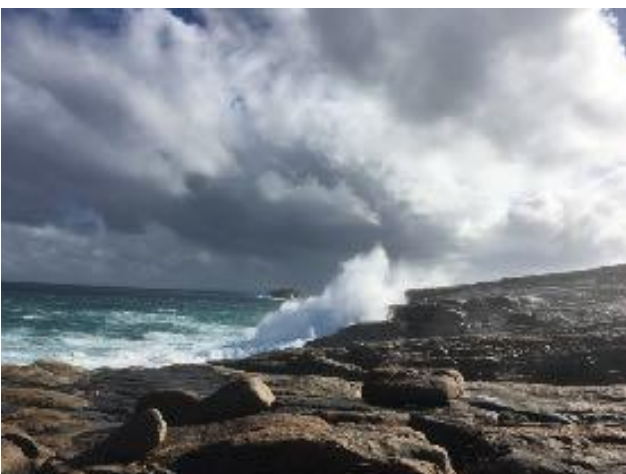
'I was a Forceps Delivery Child. I do many womb drawings. The Womb for any child is a safe place. Being Sexually Abused you are always look for a safe place; you can add in Abandonment also'.



EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

By Pete Rogers

It was a wild day in Albany. I was sitting in my caravan at the caravan park. I had started taking photos again this time with my iPhone.



Only a fifteen minute drive from the caravan park took me to the Rocky Outcrops of the Ocean. It was blowing a gale this day. I parked the car and walked to the lighthouse, rain jacket on and beanie. It was a ten minute walk to get to where the rocks began, I looked at the ocean the waves were pounding the edges of the rocks and fine salt spray was covering me. The ocean looked Wild and Exciting and I was keen to capture the approaching storm and pounding waves breaking on the rocks and the heights the spray was hitting.

As I walked towards the edge of the rocks for this shot I could feel the tension in my body, it was affecting my ability to keep steady and I wanted to get as close as I could to get the best shot.

As the stress continued I had difficulty trying to focus on this particular shot I wanted. I thought it would be a good opportunity to stop and sit with the anxiety to see what was causing it and the panic that came with it.

I sat at a distance from the edge of the water where it felt safe. I sat and began to sense my body to feel where the anxiety was and to scan through my body.

The more I got out of my head and stayed with the feelings. Two memories stirred from the past.

The first was when I was in my twenties we were fishing at Kilcunda not far from the mouth of the Powlett River on the rocks. It could get rough there and one particular day a large wave swamped us. I remember the Panic in me and grasping the rocks to hold on to for life, then saying to myself I will never do that again.

The second memory was of the same experience but at the Nobbies at Phillip Island a much more dangerous place to rock fish.

After the Insight I was able to let go of the Fear and Trauma I had been holding for so many years. I then calmly walked to capture this shot.

MAKING MASKS TO COMBAT COVID19



Since Bessie* dusted off the sewing machine and began to make masks for others, she has found a purpose for each day. She says that she likes to help others and feels like she has achieved something. Bessie finds that keeping busy, whether it is painting furniture or sewing, is the best way for her to find peace and fulfillment.

Bessie's masks are much more comfortable than disposable masks, cheaper, better for the environment and look better too. Her taxi driver has even asked for one. Another of Lifeboat's clients, the grateful recipient of one of Bessie's masks, agreed to model it for the picture above.

If you are crafty, you can find the pattern for the fitted masks on the [Craft Passion](#) website. To make a pleated rectangle mask go to [Pleated Face Mask Pattern](#). Bessie thinks the fitted masks look better but the rectangle masks are quicker to make and more comfortable.

(*not her real name)

HABBATRON

Gareth Haeberle, or Habbatron as he is more widely known, has 36,000 followers on Instagram. Gareth is a talented surfer and a lover of nature. One of his very funny posts demonstrates how to spit the dummy after being given out at cricket without damaging your bat. He is a chicken parmigiana connoisseur and will make you want to eat one every time you see him sampling one. He has just posted a parmigiana rating with Grace Tame in Hobart.

Gareth has spoken freely about his battles with mental illness and substance abuse. A few months ago he opened up about the cause of his problems; the abuse he received at school. The response and support he received on Instagram was phenomenal. Gareth is passionate about helping others with their battles.

In this video link [The truth will set you free](#), Gareth interviews Jake, a fellow survivor who discusses how talking about what has happened to him has helped in the healing process.

Visit Gareth's [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) profiles to follow him.

INTRODUCING PATRICK CARUANA

Lifeboat Geelong Housing Project Worker

Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997

At the end of March 2021 a number of significant changes will be made to The Residential Tenancies Act 1997. These changes are designed to modernise the act and make it more equitable. The changes will encompass Residential Housing, Rooming Houses and Caravan Parks.

In this short article I will highlight four key changes. These changes will apply to residential housing.

- **PETS.** From the end of March a tenant will need to lodge a written request to keep a pet with the landlord. The request may be made through a real estate agent, however the agent has no authority to either approve or reject your request. The landlord cannot refuse a reasonable request. Should they wish to do so they have 14 days to seek a hearing at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). The hearing will be before a member and they will have to produce compelling evidence for the member to refuse your request. The landlord cannot object to an assistance animal.
- **THE NOTICE TO VACATE FOR NO SPECIFIED REASON HAS BEEN ABOLISHED.**
- **THERE ARE CHANGES TO THE RENTAL ARREARS NOTICE TO VACATE PROCESS.** When a renter is 14 days in arrears and a notice is issued to them and the renter pays some rent bringing the arrears under the 14 day threshold, the case is no longer automatically dismissed at the Tribunal. Now the member will still hear the case and make a determination. A new “3 strike” process has been created. Should a renter receive four notices in a twelve month period for Rental Arrears the fifth notice will be heard even if the arrears are reduced and the referee can issue a determination the Residential Rental Provider (Landlord) be granted possession of the property.
- **A NON COMPLIANCE REGISTER OR “BLACKLIST” FOR RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROVIDERS AND REAL ESTATE AGENTS WILL BE CREATED.** Should they breach the act and a Member makes an order against them at VCAT they can then be listed on the register. Penalties for Residential Rental Providers non-compliance with the Act have been increased by 2.5 times.

In general however I would like all renters to be aware that just receiving a Notice to Vacate is not an eviction notice. You may choose to leave but you are not compelled to. You may seek a hearing and receive a determination at that hearing. As a renter unless you have been threatening or violent a member will not generally give an order of immediate possession. You would generally have a month to find a new home should the order go against you.

Furthermore be aware that any claims against your bond must be heard in VCAT. Unless there is damage that it is clearly done by you or your guests in the house do not consent to your bond money being withheld. For a landlord to do that they must go to VCAT and seek a determination and order. They must produce evidence of the cost of any repairs. This evidence must include receipts for any monies paid to tradesperson. The member will also take into account depreciation scales as per the Australian Taxation Office schedules and also fair wear and tear. If for example a carpet is stained the member will want to know proof of age of the carpet and determine an estimated value and an estimate of what that stain is worth in relation to the carpet.

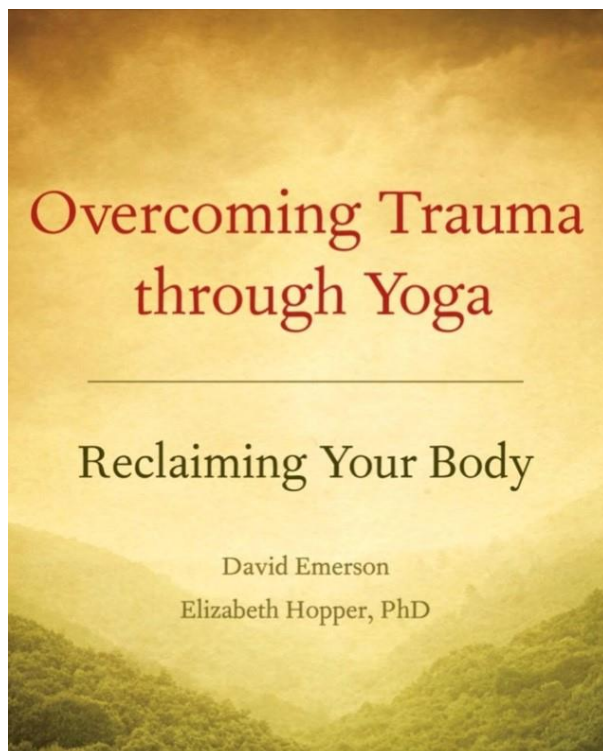
Please contact me via Lifeboat Geelong should you have any issues in relation to your housing. My email is patrick@lifeboatgeelong.com.au

Also you can seek advice from the following agencies.

- Barwon Housing and Homeless Support Services 1800 993 093 Tenants Victoria www.tenantsvictoria.org.au
- General Advice Line. 03) 9416 2577
- Social Housing Tenants 1800 068 860
- Community Worker Line 03) 9411 1444

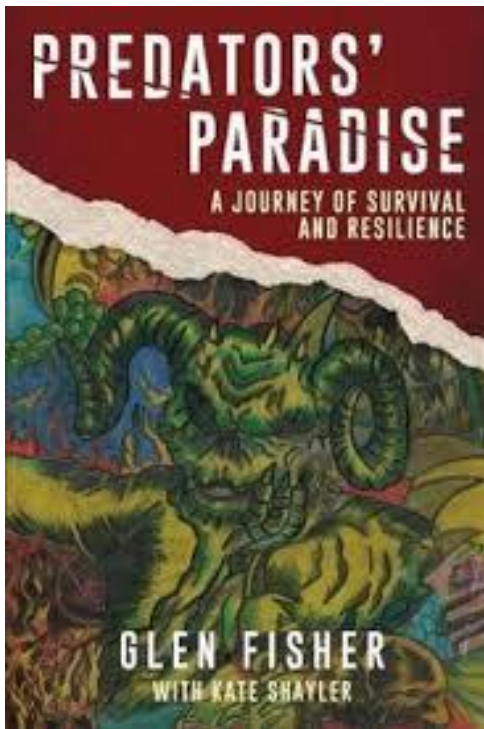
Please do not hesitate to ask for help.

BOOK REVIEWS



Since finding benefits in practicing yoga, Pete Rogers recommends the book, 'Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming your Body' by David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, PhD.

"Survivors of trauma—whether abuse, accidents, or war—can end up profoundly wounded, betrayed by their bodies that failed to get them to safety and that are a source of pain. In order to fully heal from trauma, a connection must be made with oneself, including one's body. The trauma-sensitive yoga described in this book moves beyond traditional talk therapies that focus on the mind, by bringing the body actively into the healing process. This allows trauma survivors to cultivate a more positive relationship to their body through gentle breath, mindfulness, and movement practices."
(Amazon review)



Predators' Paradise is a raw, honest account of Glen's life. He was born into violence and addiction. His mother was addicted to drugs and alcohol and had mental health issues as well as a propensity to violence with her husband and children. The father was arrested and the parents did not reunite after his release. Shunted between his parents and care homes, the violence and cruelty inflicted on Glen left him broken and untrusting. His determination to survive is remarkable.
(Amazon Review)

If you have found a book or article that has been useful to you, please let us know. We would love to share it in the Lifeboat Geelong Foundation newsletter.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Many survivors are currently in the middle of legal action and are likely to receive compensation that needs to last them a lifetime. Without proper planning, this money can disappear quickly. Professional advice can help you to maximise your compensation.

Financial counsellors are nonjudgmental, qualified professionals who provide information, support and advocacy to people to protect their Centrelink payments. Based in community organisations, financial counselling services are free, independent and confidential.

Click on this link to find more information about how a [Financial Counsellor](#) can help you.

Click on this link to find a [Financial Counsellor near you](#).

Financial planners work with people who have money to invest, and charge a fee or commission. They will identify your goals and design a financial plan.

For people receiving large amounts of money, contacting a Financial Planner may be a wise course of action. The first visit is usually free. The Money Smart website provides information on [choosing a financial planner](#).

Click on this link to find a [Financial Planner near you](#).

The Money Smart website also provide a [budget planner](#) to help you to monitor your spending.

CENTRELINK TIPS

Not only does Centrelink deliver social security payments to Australians, it offers a variety of services that you may find useful.

- [The Financial Information Services Officer](#) is available (whether or not you are a Centrelink client) to help you find out if you are still entitled to benefits after you receive a lump sum. He/she can also help you understand various types of investments, how to go about buying a house, get a home loan, etc.
- A special 'Redress Officer?' is available to help those entitled to any redress payments.
- [CentrePay](#) allows you to pay your bills on a fortnightly installment plan directly from your benefits. This includes all utilities and rent.
- Centrelink will help you to apply for [Utility Relief Grants](#) for your outstanding bills to catch up on arrears. You may be entitled to up to \$650 every 2 years for each of your utility accounts, e.g. water, gas, electricity.

'MELBOURNE RESPONSE' DISMANTLED

In a landmark ruling in early October 2020, The Supreme Court overturned the deed of release in the 'Melbourne Response' program. This has cleared the way for survivors who settled for a small financial payment under this scheme to sue the Catholic Church for damages. Michael Magazanik, from Rightside Legal, said that "*The legal lay of the land has shifted. Once abuse survivors were completely legally powerless - now they can fight on a level playing field.*" (The Age, 1/10/20).

An appeal against this judgment was resoundingly rejected just before Christmas. There are over 500 survivors who accepted compensation through the Melbourne Response program that may be able to pursue a more just compensation.

Please contact Lifeboat if you would like support and information to pursue your claims against sexual perpetrators.

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