



Providing Heartstrength  
to Adult Survivors of  
Childhood Sexual Abuse

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# Heart to Hearts

Issue 50

November 2019

## A Message from our CEO...

Welcome to our last edition for 2019! Congratulations to you, our dear reader on supporting a newsletter that empowers adult survivors to become the best version of themselves. In this issue we celebrate the amazing people who have helped us along the way and we say a heartfelt thank you to those who have engaged in our services. Firstly, it is with great pride that I announce our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, the Governor of NSW. Her Excellency and Mr Dennis Wilson made a special visit to Heartfelt House in September. The Vice Regal couple spent time with past participants and their partners, where stories of abuse were shared, as well as hope, healing and resilience. Thank you to those who attended.



Her Excellency and CEO, Kate Loubet at the Lismore Vice Regal Reception, September 2019

Welcome Vanessa Lingard, our new Program Development Facilitator. Vanessa brings with her a wealth of experience working with at-risk and vulnerable children. She is currently undertaking her Masters in Social Work. Vanessa will be coordinating our group programs for 2020.

Welcome Toni Steenson our Volunteer Student who is learning fast and helping us with group programming.

Group 43, Dancing Topaz are just a few weeks away from completing their program. They have shown great resilience as they overcome the effects of their

abuse and seek to find new pathways toward healing.

In the last few months I have been seeking mentoring for the launch of our corporate fundraiser called '100 Hearts'. Thank you to these beautiful minds for their in-kind support: Jane Laverty, Regional Manager, NSW Business Chamber, Emily Berry, Executive Officer, Northern Rivers Community Fund (NRCF), Shanti Des Fours at Changemakers Institute, Byron Bay, David Hancock, Consultant and Anne Deane, Communication & Leadership Consultant.

Thank you to Natasha Kolas our Lead Group Facilitator, who brings with her a kind and gentle nature. Natasha is a skilled helper who has brought new approaches to group therapy particularly in the fields of mindfulness and post-traumatic growth.

Thank you to Beth Cronin, our staff supervisor, who is an endless source of sunshine, wisdom and heartfelt support.

Until next time in 2020!

## Heartfelt House contact details...

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Phone: 02 6628 8940

Email: [info@heartfelthouse.org.au](mailto:info@heartfelthouse.org.au)

**Website: [www.heartfelthouse.org.au](http://www.heartfelthouse.org.au)**

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8am-3pm



Lismore Theatre Company presents



## THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES



Heartfelt House fundraiser

For tickets, contact:

66288940 or [info@heartfelthouse.org.au](mailto:info@heartfelthouse.org.au)

# 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER

ROCHDALE THEATRE, GOONELLABAH  
[lismoretheatrecompany.org.au](http://lismoretheatrecompany.org.au)

[To all the beautiful people who are Heartfelt House.](#)

Thank-you very deeply for allowing a space for me to heal, grow and develop compassion for myself.

From the beautiful gardens as we walk to the door, the amazing cakes and chocolates and fruit that greet us each week.

The warming candles as we wander through the house.

The crocheted blankets we wrap ourselves in when feeling vulnerable.

The kind and caring facilitators who help us grow.

The people who keep the space clean and fresh.

The silent team of people looking after the administration side of Heartfelt House.

To you all I offer my heartfelt thanks for your contribution to the physical space and the program itself. With love Lisa x.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

For the caring thoughts and unique touch that make this journey a Heartfelt House!

For the love and contributions that creates this place of healing.

The word gratitude does not express the feeling adequately!!

The light that fires a universe of candles and hope, thank you love A.





Welcome to our family of strong, brave, courageous women! You have already made the decision to heal and over the next eighteen weeks you will come to understand what that means. So walk into Heartfelt House each week with confidence knowing that the choice for positive change has been made and there's no going back, there's nothing to go back to. Each step you take from this point is forward, even when you think you've slipped back you will find that is not the case, the change happens almost without you noticing, but

your loving group will be sure to remind you of how far you have come. All you need to do is just show up. In whatever state you are in - happy, angry, a broken mess that can barely get out of bed...go in your pj's if that's all you can manage. Every session is so so valuable it would be a disservice to yourself if any are missed. Put your trust in the staff, you won't regret it. They are safe and extremely skilful in the work they do. Make the most of this opportunity to fully commit to yourself to healing. You are the most important person in your life. We are powerful creatures, when we heal ourselves we heal one another. So thank you for embarking on this challenging journey, you are helping to heal the world one heart at a time and we are all with you every step of the way. Michelle, Group 40

### More than 'feel good' – workplace giving matters

Businesses and companies face many challenges – not least of which is the need to competitively guard customer loyalty and reputations in the era of lightening fast social media shock waves, fake news, celebrity and cynicism.

The other side of this is growing interest from both consumers and businesses in corporate social responsibility – looking beyond the commercial bottom line to how companies large and small can make a difference to community wellbeing. It generally happens through the combined interests of employees and employers joining together to support an activity that brings members of the workplace together and aligns with the values of the team.

This can happen in many ways: from decisions to reduce the environmental impact of a business through to backing of local sports teams, out of hours team volunteering at community events, sponsorships and corporate giving programs.

Heartfelt House was on the receiving end of just such a contribution a year or so ago. Unbeknown to us, employees of a local bank were making regular deductions from each fortnightly pay into a dedicated corporate giving account. At the end of the year the group decided which charity they wanted to support. That \$10,000 cheque made an incredible difference to us in more ways than those kind donors could have imagined.

Is your business thinking of making a difference in a similar way? Workplace giving is a joint relationship between employers, employees and the charities they support. There's a tax advantage for those involved. It's relatively simple and anyone can do it. It doesn't matter who you are, what you know about the community sector or how much money you have to invest. If you'd like to find out more about it, we hope you find the following information helpful here are some links you can follow:

Workplace giving Australia: <https://workplacegivingaustralia.org.au/get-involved/why-workplace-giving/> formerly the Australian Charities Foundation, is a not for profit social enterprise, thought leader and driver of workplace giving.

One Million donors: <https://www.1mdonors.org.au/#learn> is the campaign to get one million Australians donating to charities through their workplaces. [http://www.womendonors.org.au/giving\\_circles.html](http://www.womendonors.org.au/giving_circles.html)

- ♥ **If you'd like to become a corporate supporter of Heartfelt House, through either a regular monthly or annual donation, call us to learn about our "100 Hearts" corporate sponsorship campaign.**

## A survivor's story

Dear adult survivor of child sexual abuse,

One day will come when you will be ready to deal with your childhood traumas, only you will know when that time comes, age is not a consideration, just the feeling will come when you decide enough is enough, I need to put some finalising and understanding to why I feel like I do.

Remember this programme at Heartfelt House is aptly called the First Steps because it is. But the very first one is a huge step into the unknown, a leap of faith in oneself is required, but again only you will know when you are ready to do that.

The explorations of issues that I have been dealing with all my life to just survive without even knowing I was doing them or without any understanding of why I acted or behaved or re-acted or felt or not felt to situations in my daily life as an adult are now all awakened. I became aware of why I have these problems or maybe not, as I was in denial too; but I can now deal with them. The process has been difficult and literally physically painful, mentally draining, but truly worth it. I could write a thesis on this now for you to read, but I truly believe that doing the HFH programme is far more enlightening and life changing than reading here. Doing the programme is exactly that, changing feelings about myself, to free myself from a black hole to understanding intrinsically about myself, thus leading to my first small steps of healing.

It may be like me, you will find other problems or issues in your life that will also need to be dealt with. For me, it was finding that I am living with a perpetrator again, repeating the same abusive patterns as my childhood perpetrator but in a slightly different format. Yet both with the same devastating outcomes which have torn my soul and heart, which I need to address further again.

Hence for me now I am going into my second set of steps of dealing with my domestic violence. I am frightened but I know like the first steps I had a successful outcome, that the second steps will also be successful in due time. I am prepared, stronger and more able to deal with these traumas. I have learnt not to beat myself up, not to blame myself, but to learn to explore, discover and change my inner self and heal from my traumas.

Life can only get better from now on; the worst has occurred. I am now not that child but a mature adult tackling life and making it how I want it to be, not to be dictated.

Best wishes to you, I know this programme will help you.

Love Anna



## TOPIC: RELATIONSHIP WARNING SIGNS

A healthy relationship is what we all strive to achieve. In the early stages of an intimate relationship, it is normal to feel everything is perfect, to see the world through rose coloured glasses. However, for some people, those rose-coloured glasses turn into blinders that prevent them from seeing that a relationship isn't as healthy or respectful as it should be.

A healthy relationship is characterised by the presence of equality. For a relationship to be experienced as equal, the following elements are crucial: mutual trust, respect, effective communication, support, shared responsibility, healthy boundaries, accountability and honesty.

Relationships that become abusive often start out with a shift in power. It is this imbalance of power that guides a relationship that may have started out healthy and respectful, into a toxic or unhealthy relationship. For some relationships the power may start to shift almost immediately, while, for other relationships, there might be a significant period, perhaps years, before the power starts to shift and things start to change.

At all stages of an intimate relationship, it is important to be aware of some common behaviours associated with unhealthy and unsafe relationships. Be mindful of someone that:

- \* Makes you feel guilty if you are unable to spend time with them
- \* Behaves differently around their friends, in comparison to when they are alone with you
- \* Doesn't seem to care about other people's feelings
- \* Makes you or other people feel nervous or scared
- \* Always blames others when things go wrong
- \* Becomes aggressive if they don't get their own way
- \* Does what they want regardless of consequences

These behaviours are warning signs that a power imbalance may be present and are often the early indicators of relationship abuse or domestic violence. The following are five major warning signs:

*Charm* – often abusers are charming, they use their charm to sweep you off your feet, along with your friends and family.

*Control* – is significant. Abusers may want to control almost every aspect of your life, including what you wear, who you see, where you go, even taking control of your finances.

*Emotional abuse* – An abuser will often use threats and humiliation to attack your sense of self and your self-esteem. They may blame you for the abuse that you are suffering.

*Isolation* – as an abuser wants to spend more and more time together, you may become socially isolated from friends and family. However, as they take control over who you see and where you go, you become more and more dependent on the abuser for meeting your social, financial and emotional needs.

*Jealousy* – may be used to control you. They become jealous of who you are with, suddenly you must account for every second of your day.

Everyone has the right to feel safe, there is no place in a healthy relationship for controlling, abusive and violent behaviour. If this article has raised some concerns for you, please note the following services are available to assist:

The Domestic Violence Advice line on 1800 656 463

1800 RESPECT , (1800 737 732) a national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling and support service

Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline 1800 019 123 - Victims Services has a dedicated contact line for Aboriginal victims of crime who would like information on victims' rights, how to access counselling and financial assistance.

Kids helpline 1800 55 1800

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

For life threatening situations call Police on 000

## Board Report

AGM time for all organisations is a period of assessment of happenings and performance over the previous year.

We've hit many goals, running three programs this year, redeveloping the website and of course the wonderful highlight of a visit by Her Excellency the Governor of NSW Margaret Beazley, AO QC and her agreement to become HFH's first patron.

Having the Governor as patron signals many things including respect for and recognition of the vital role we play in the healing journey of those overcoming the aftermath of sexual abuse in childhood. It also demonstrates that especially in regions, small organisations like HFH have a big hand in building community wellbeing.

We've met some challenges along the way, including changes of staff and a knock back from the state government of our application for Victims of Crime funding. But we won't be daunted, we'll be making another pitch for that funding and we'll also be putting efforts into our corporate sponsorship campaign '100 Hearts' so we'll be less exposed to the risk of changes in government funding criteria.

It's a sad time for the board as we say goodbye to two long term members – Tre Rawstone and Sharon Brodie. Both have been involved with the board for well over a decade and Tre was there when the program germinated and nurtured it from its early shoots. Sharon has brought her professional experience and guidance to the development of the service. Their passion, wisdom and commitment will be sorely missed. We offer our deep gratitude for their contributions.



## We Thank YOU!

- |                                   |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ♥ <b>Lions Club of Ballina</b>    | <b>Eber Inc</b>                       |
| ♥ <b>Lismore Theatre Company</b>  | <b>Tintenbar Up Front</b>             |
| ♥ <b>Our loyal private donors</b> | <b>Our beautiful volunteer bakers</b> |