

July 2021

BRAIN INJURY MATTERS

NEWSLETTER

Meet Sonia Marcon

Sonia is employed as a Peer Project Coordinator at Brain Injury Matters. She currently facilitates two Peer Support Groups.

1. How long ago did you acquire your injury?

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2002 when I was 21. I know, based on symptoms, that I have had it since I was 16.

2. What is your greatest achievement since your injury?

I am employed in two professions. I support people with ABI and I am an actor.

3. What do you want to achieve in the near future?

I want to be able to keep doing what I'm doing now.

4. What do you find your biggest challenge?

Finding the best treatment to keep my MS stable.



5. What is your favourite food? Vegan curry, extra spicy.

6. What is your favourite movie? Mary Poppins or The Exorcist.

7. What is your favourite hobby? Acting on the stage.

8. What do you want to achieve through Brain Injury Matters?

I want to use all the experience I have gained to keep supporting others with brain injury.

9. What advice would you give to a person with a new brain injury?

It's not the end of your life. It could be the beginning, like it was for me.

10. What does Brain Injury Matters mean to you?

Everything. It is education and support. It is friendship and collaboration. It shows how good people with brain injury can be.

Results of BIM Annual Needs Survey

Brain Injury Matters (BIM) recently held our annual survey about what is important to people with brain injury. We asked people with brain injury to identify the most important of their support needs, the barriers to participation that they face, and the areas of work which BIM needs to focus on. Some of the key findings are:



- **Addressing social isolation** continues to be the most important support area identified by people living with ABI. **Relationships** and **Health** as the second and third most important areas in 2021, which may also reflect people's increased desire for connection during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- The top three barriers hindering the participation of people with ABI in the community remained **Lack of confidence**, **Lack of knowledge of where to find help** and **Poor attitudes of people in the community**.
- People answering the survey wanted the core foci of BIM to be **Raising awareness** of ABI in the community, **Providing information** to people with ABI about available services and supports and **Being a voice** for people with a disability.
- People were most likely to seek information about brain injury from BIM. The internet and talking with peers were the next most important sources of information.
- Those surveyed continued to want to receive information from BIM in a variety of formats. **Email newsletters** remain the most popular format, followed by written information on the **website** and **on-line meetings**.

To see survey results, go to www.braininjurymatters.org/publications/

July 2021

Things happening at BIM:

New Website is live!

Check it out at
<https://www.braininjurymatters.org/>

By Accident Workshops

Next series of By Accident workshops is running online July 1, 8 and 15.

Contact office@braininjurymatters.org

Online Coffee Mornings

Mondays at 11am

Contact office@braininjurymatters.org to receive the link

Peer Support Groups

Current groups:

- Tuesdays at 10am (Northern Metro),
- Wednesdays at 10am (online),
- Thursdays at 10:30am (Eastern Metro).

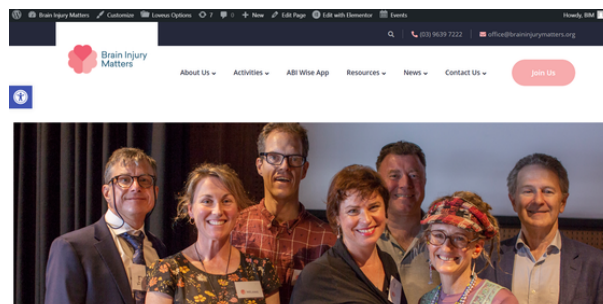
New groups starting soon in Southern Metro and Western Metro.

Contact office@braininjurymatters.org if you are interested in joining a group

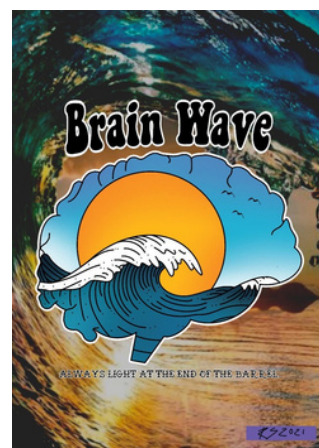
ABI Wise App

The ABI Wise App subcommittee has vacancies for new members. We'd love new people to come on board and help shape the App.

We are also in need of new ABI Wise weekly tips. Please share any tips that you have found useful in living life with ABI to office@braininjurymatters.org



By Accident



Updates

Peer Support Groups

Get-A-Head (Tuesdays at 10am) have been alternating between meeting at a Neighbourhood House and a coffee shop. (Photo: Get-A-Head meeting for coffee.)



Brainwave (Wednesdays at 10am) recently made a video to be played at the Brain Injury Australia conference. A number of members also went to see Sonia Marcon in a play called The Regina Monologues. (See photo.)



Brainstormers (Thursdays 10:30am) recently went ten-pin bowling. (See photo of our champion Cameron). Brainstormers is next planning to go and see Fast & Furious 9 at the the movies.



Updates continued...

From the Committee of Management

The BIM Committee of Management (CoM) met last month by ZOOM, following the latest lockdown. The Committee continues to be concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on people with ABI and people with disability more broadly. It reinforces our focus on peer support groups and the important role they play in addressing social isolation and making connections between people. I am hoping that I can present at the Brain Injury Australia conference in Sydney late July, on our first peer support group.

We are also pleased that our membership continues to grow as does the reach of our social media platforms – our total membership and followers is 3,353! (See BIM statistics in image below from our website)

Disappointingly we have not heard back from the NDIS, in response to the concerns we raised about considering excluding people with ABI from the Scheme. We met with the Office of the Public Advocate, and discussed amongst other things, our concern about the lack of ongoing core funding for self-advocacy groups.

Importantly, we have finalised the 2021 BIM Needs Survey and released the results. It did confirm that social isolation continues to be the key issue for people with brain injury. And if you haven't already, please go and have a look at our new website! We love it.

Brent Alford, Chairperson

3353

Members and Followers

21

Years of Operation

15

Projects Completed

858

Our App Downloads

Updates continued...

Report from the Office - Lauren

BIM continues to have a presence at Ross House. The building is closed to the public due to Covid restrictions, however staff can still use the 4th floor office. Most staff combine working from home and going into the office as required. A re-arrangement of furniture was done to ensure social distancing. Members will be pleased to know we retained the much-loved blue couches. A maximum of three people can be in the office at once.

Dozens of zoom meetings have occurred.

Brent, Peter and I met on zoom with John Chesterman from the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) <https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/>. John commented on the findings from the BIM annual survey and said how impressed he was with the Peer Support Groups. Brent asked John about possible ways to get more funding for BIM and John has emailed some supporting documentation.

DHHS continues to provide the core funding to run the office. Ashley and Paul are BIMs contacts in the department and are a great source of information and ideas.

However, members continue to be the source of the best ideas. People with a brain injury who have the lived experience contribute the most.

Recently Anat suggested getting the SBS Insight program to interview BIM members on their show. SBS has been approached and we are waiting to hear back. Here is a link to other topics on the show.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/topic/insight-articles>

Updates continued...

From the BIM ILC Project

The focus of the Brain Injury Matters project is to develop and support peer support groups. Our Coffee Morning Peer Support Group is going well, with over 20 people coming along some weeks. There are people across Melbourne and the State getting on ZOOM, every Monday morning to start the week! They are great fun.

The 4 peer support groups that have been set up – one in the Northern suburbs, one in the Eastern suburbs and two run by ZOOM – continue to consolidate, with new people joining and the groups developing their own rhythm. Progress continues towards setting up two more groups that we hope will be starting soon – one in the Southern suburbs (exploring the option of the Seaford Neighbourhood House) and one in the Western suburbs (looking at the West Footscray neighbourhood House). Please get in contact if you want to come along! The groups provide opportunities to share information, ideas and experiences and discuss practical ways to manage living with brain injury. We continue to explore the idea of setting up a group in Shepparton, though the continual yo-yo in and out of lockdown makes it tough.

Coffee Mornings

Our online coffee mornings have been well attended. Here's one of our recent discussion questions:

"What are some fun and interesting alternatives to war that countries could settle their differences with?"

Some of the answers included: drawing straws; nude pillow fighting; chess; dance off; pie eating contest; fake alien attack; sport/olympics; 3 legged race and sumo wrestling (in inflatable suits); feeding everyone and solving world poverty.





Quiz Questions

See if you learn something from these Coffee Morning quiz questions!

1. Coprastastaphobia is a fear of what?
2. What does a funambulist walk on?
3. True or False: An eggplant is a vegetable?
4. True or false: The colour orange is named after the fruit?
5. Which is the only edible food that never goes bad?
6. Which animal can be seen on the Porsche logo?
7. Who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize (in 1903)?
8. What is rarest M&M colour?
9. What is a group of ravens known as?
10. What is the fear of long words known as?

Jokes/Riddles



a) There is a rooster sitting on top of a barn. If it laid an egg, which way would it roll?

b) If you're American when you go in the bathroom...

... and American when you come out, what are you in the bathroom?

Quiz - Answers

1. Constipation
2. A tight rope
3. False
4. True
5. Honey
6. Horse
7. Marie Curie
8. Brown
9. Unkindness
10. Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia

Jokes/Riddles - Answers

- a) Roosters don't lay eggs!
- b) European

Newsletter Contributions Welcome

Contributions by BIM members to our newsletter are always welcome. If you have any tips, stories or experiences that would be of interest to others, please contact office@braininjurymatters.org