

BRAIN INJURY MATTERS NEWSLETTER

MEET ABIGAIL FORSYTHE



1. How long ago did you acquire your injury?

When I was 5 years old (in 2007), I had a stroke (Arterial Venous Malformation), where a blood vessel in my brain burst.

2. What is your greatest achievement since your injury?

I learnt how to talk again via singing.

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

I want to have a singing and acting career and more work experience. I also want to make more friends.

4. What do you find your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge is staying home alone, because I have high anxiety.

5. What is your favourite food?

Lasagne, meatloaf and chicken parmigiana.

6. What is your favourite movie?

Five Feet Apart - I like teen romance!

7. What is your favourite hobby?

I'm writing a fantasy novel at the moment. I also like chess, reading, word searches and sudoku.

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

Friendships, because I find it difficult to meet people.

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

Don't stress! There's always something to do to work around problems. All the doors aren't closed.

10. What does Brain Injury Matters mean to you?

We're all different and we all have a purpose.

Table of Contents

Meet a BIM Member.....	1
Regular things happening at BIM.....	3
Committee of Management Report.....	4
Lauren's Office Report.....	5
Disability Commissioner Visit.....	6
Job Ad.....	7
ILC Project Report / PSG Photos.....	8
Gisborne Support Group.....	12
Annual Needs Survey Results.....	14
Adrian's Contribution.....	16
Adrian's Movie Recommendation.....	17
Transition to My Home.....	18
Neighbourhood House Trivia Night Ad.....	20

REGULAR THINGS HAPPENING AT BIM

ONLINE COFFEE MORNINGS

Mondays at 11am

Open to anyone with a brain injury.

A fun way to start the week includes jokes, quizzes, and conversation starters.

Contact office@braininjurymatters.org to receive the Zoom link.



PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Small groups of people with brain injury meet weekly to catch up, learn from each other and have some fun.

Current groups:

- **Northcote** - Tuesdays at 10am
- **Frankston** - Tuesday at 10am
- **Online only** - Wednesdays at 10am
- **Ringwood** - Thursdays at 10:30am
- **Footscray** - Thursdays at 10am
- **Gisborne** - Last Wednesday of the month
- **AWSABI (Albury-Wodonga Stroke & Brain Injury Inc)**
- 4th Thursday of the month 10:30am



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

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE, ABI WISE APP, FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM

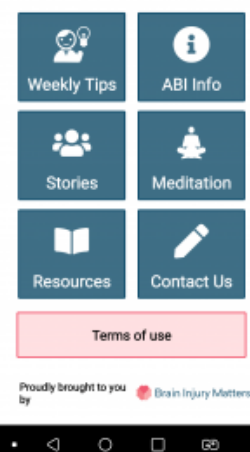
<https://www.braininjurymatters.org>

ABIWise App is free to download from GooglePlay and the App Store



WANTED - TECH SAVVY VOLUNTEERS

If you have time and tech skills, we are looking for people to volunteer to help keep our website and ABI Wise app updated. Please contact office@braininjurymatters.org if you are interested.



COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT REPORT

Greetings BIMcats

The Annual Needs Survey has been conducted for the fourth year. I want to thank those who took the time to complete the survey. The results confirm for us the importance and the impact of peer support groups. We also note that increased cost of living is causing financial problems for a significant number of people. If you want to read more about the survey, there is a summary of the results elsewhere in the newsletter.

Speaking of peer support groups; a new group is being developed at the Bendigo Neighbourhood Hub. The first meeting of this new group is on Thursday, 20th of April.

Our research project collaboration with Melbourne University, on the impact of the peer support groups, continues to make progress. There will be 15-18 in-depth interviews of people, who are members of peer support groups. The interview questions have been piloted and are now being finalised.

That's it for now. Talk with you next month. In the meantime, stay well.

Brent Alford

Chairperson
Brain Injury Matters



LAUREN'S OFFICE REPORT

This month, the BIM office is getting another makeover. We have new staff starting work with us soon. The office is very small. We can't all work there at once. I work from home mostly. Making more room is a juggle. Ross House is helping by removing old furniture. Also, we no longer share the office with United Brains, who have ceased to exist as an organisation. We are condensing paper records and rearranging the best we can. BIG thanks to Susan Blackburn, our project support worker, who is getting me organised (ha ha – a big task!)

Ross House is a great venue for the BIM CoM meeting. For this month's meeting (11th April 2023), Dan Stubbs, the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner and the head of the Commission, has been invited to address the CoM. He will talk about his role and how BIM members can report 'behaviours of concern' displayed by Disability Support Workers. Here is a link, and we will write a story for next month's newsletter about his visit.

<https://www.vdwc.vic.gov.au/about/commissioner#:~:text=Dan%20Stubbs%20is%20the%20Victorian,the%20head%20of%20the%20Commission>

The TAC Relationships project continues to go well. Part one of the project is almost completed, the basis of the Workshops has been co-designed, and applications for the paid roles for people with ABI are starting to be received. Short listing and interviews will happen in May. Eli from Monash University has been an amazing facilitator of the co-design process, and the BIM Project Reference Group have contributed outstanding 'lived experience' material.

We have a new ABI Wise phone APP Sub-Committee, who had their first meeting last month. Col and Carol have stepped down. Many thanks to them, they made an enormous contribution. Now Brent, Peter L, Nia and Colin have taken on the challenge. Keeping the App operating, adding new content and ensuring it meets the needs of people with ABI, takes lots of time and technical skills. I take minutes in the meetings, I am in awe of the group's skills, ideas and commitment.

BIM is doing HUGE things, whereas we have limited funds. Volunteers and a small staff achieve great things. I love being part of it.



COMMISSIONER OF VDWC VISITS BIM

Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner, Dan Stubbs, visited BIM on the 11th of April, during the monthly committee meeting. He and his colleague came to discuss the Victoria Disability Worker Commission and how to go about lodging complaints about disability workers.



In Photo front left:

Lauren (BIM Support and Co-ordination worker)

Kim (from VDWC)

Adrian (BIM CoM member)

Dan (Commissioner of VDWC)

Brent (BIM Chairperson)

Nia BIM Secretary

Col (BIM Vice-Chairperson)

Anat (BIM CoM member)– on screen via Zoom

Ross (invited guest to CoM meeting).

Roger (BIM Treasurer), Carol (BIM CoM member) and Kelvin (BIM CoM member) also attended the COM meeting and presentation by Dan Stubbs before the photo was taken.



JOB VACANCY

BIM 'Relationships Post ABI' Workshop CO-FACILITATORS (Trainers)

Several co-facilitator jobs are available with BIM, on our Relationships Post ABI Project, to help deliver workshops about Relationship's post ABI at BIM Peer Support Group meetings.

- **Casual work:** between 15 - 45 hours in total, according to availability in locations required.
- **Paid to be trained** by attending 'Train the Trainer' sessions for 6 hours in June 2023.
- **Paid to deliver** Workshops between July to November 2023.
- Support Worker provided.

BIM's Relationships Post ABI Project will deliver training to people living with an ABI about the changes that occur in relationships post ABI and how to best deal with any difficulties that arise and how to make new relationships. The training will cover the areas of intimate relationships, friendships and relationships with families

**To get more information and receive the Position Description,
please email office@braininjurymatters.org**

Applications close 29th April 2023

Interviews will take place in May 2023

ONLY people with an ABI can apply for these positions

ILC PROJECT REPORT

This month's activities in peer support groups have included a visit to the LUME Monet exhibition, a wander through the Frankston Street Art Festival, several games days and discussions on people's hobbies - including fire-twirling and mushroom hunting! Several groups also workshopped a schedule of activities for the next 3 months!

We are very happy with the reach of the groups. In the first couple of months of 2023, we had 100 people come to the groups, with an average of 60 people each week.

Following the development of a peer support group in Bendigo, there has also been good progress on another regional group. We are very much looking forward to making an announcement soon.

Check out the photos below and also an introduction from Carol, the facilitator of the Gisborne group.

Cheers

Andrew, Fiona, Fraser, Nick, Peter L, Peter P, Ryan, Sally and Yannick

WEST METRO PSG - Footscray - *A game of Bingo!*



SOUTH METRO PSG - Frankston (Brain Injury Friends)

The Frankston Street Art Festival



NORTH METRO PSG - Northcote

The LUME Monet Exhibition & Games Day



EAST METRO PSG - Ringwood ***Madeline's Cafe at Jells Park***



GISBORNE ABI SUPPORT GROUP

The Brain Injury Matters peer support groups are an important, and much-needed, connection for our members.

I am proud to be the facilitator for the Gisborne ABI Support Group (GASG) and wanted to tell you a little more about the group.

Last year, with Lauren's help (thankyou Lauren!), we applied for a grant to start the Gisborne group. We were successful and the group started up in July, 2022.

We are located North West of the Melbourne metro area, not quite as far as Bendigo but still a fair to journey to the city. Gisborne is classed as a regional area.

The Department of Family, Fairness and Housing grant allows us to connect in person once a month at the Gisborne Community Centre. Outings and other activities are also being planned for the rest of the year.

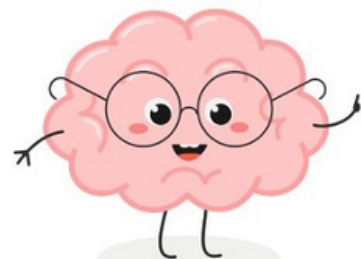
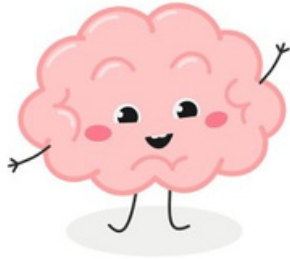
GASG is a small, very friendly group. We'd welcome any BIM members, who would like to join us at any of our meetings. If any members of the other peer support groups journey up our way, please come join us for a meeting and we'll extend some country hospitality.

Carol Franklin
gisborneBIM@braininjurymatters.org



GISBORNE ABI SUPPORT GROUP

North West Region



Do you have an ABI (Acquired Brain Injury)?

Come join us at the Gisborne ABI Self-help Group!

We are a friendly, small group of people who live with ABI who meet up once a month to connect.

1.30pm till 3.30pm the last Wednesday of the month

At the Gisborne Community Centre

The group is funded by the Victorian Government DFFH and supported by Brain Injury Matters.

There are no costs to attend. Light refreshments provided.

Please contact us if you require assistance with transport costs.

Please email me if you have any questions or if you'd like to attend!

Carol Franklin

gisborneBIM@braininjurymatters.org

Brain Injury Matters

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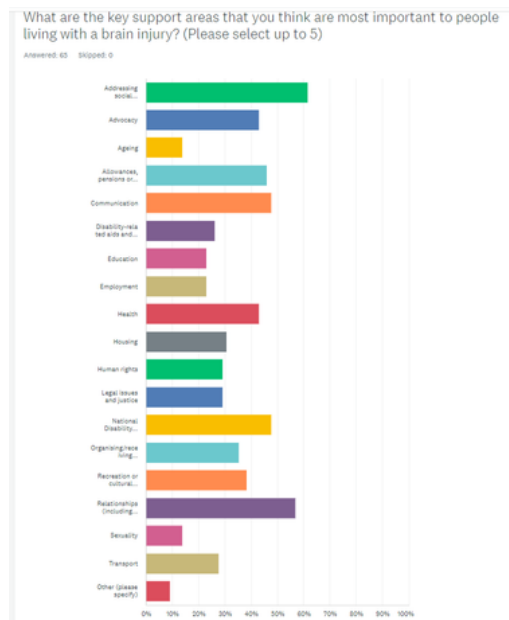
BIM ANNUAL NEEDS SURVEY

2023 RESULTS

The Brain Injury Matters 2023 Annual Needs Survey was completed by 65 people, 85% of whom have acquired brain injury (ABI). Other respondents were friends and family of people with ABI or worked with them in a paid capacity.

The top three **key support areas seen as most important to people with ABI** were:

1. **addressing social isolation** (62%);
2. **relationships** (57%); and
3. **allowances, pensions, and other income** (46%).



The top three **barriers to participation in community** identified were:

1. **lack of money/personal income** (52%);
2. **lack of confidence** (50%); and
3. **poor attitudes of people in the community** (47%).

Over the last 3 years, social isolation and relationships continue to be identified as key issues for people with ABI. While allowances, pensions or other income have previously been of some concern, this year it was identified as the third most important issue by survey respondents. For the first time, lack of money/personal income was identified as the main barrier to participation in community.

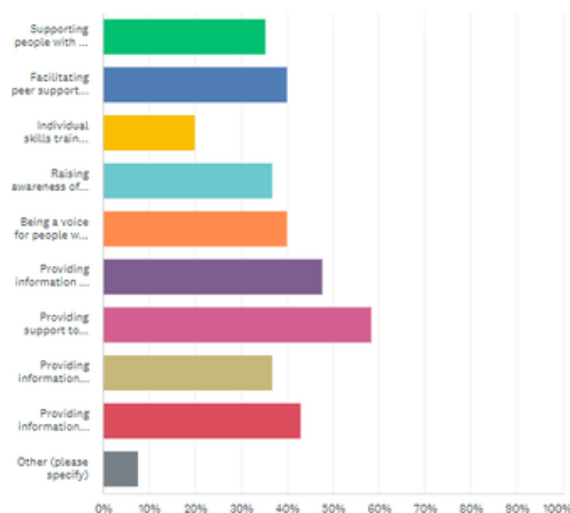
These financial concerns reflect rising inflation without similar rises in income, and possibly also cuts to NDIS plans. Lack of confidence and poor attitudes of people in the community continue to be seen as the main barriers faced by people with brain injury.

The top three responses to “**What should be the main focus of BIM?**” were:

1. **providing support to reduce the isolation and marginalisation experienced by people living with ABI (58%);**
2. **providing information to people with ABI about available services and supports (48%); and**
3. **providing information about opportunities for people with ABI to participate in the community (43%)**

What do you think should be the core focus of the organisation Brain Injury Matters? (Please select up to 3)

Answered: 65 Skipped: 0



BIM has been focusing on our Peer Support Groups, as a key way to reduce isolation and connect our members with each other. We now have over 100 people with brain injury as members of our groups. The survey shows that over 80% of survey respondents, who are in a peer support group, say it has had a positive, or very positive, impact on their lives.

As they grow in confidence, our members may now be seeking support from BIM as they explore how to participate in the broader community, access relevant information and find useful services.

CONTRIBUTION FROM ADRIAN

In My Opinion...

How much do you WANT to contribute?

Anything is possible. Just because I don't know how to do it at the moment, doesn't mean I CAN'T do it. Saying 'can't' limits options: which is the last thing I need. To achieve what I want, I need to consider all options- even unpalatable ones. Someone once suggested that it impossible to fly. I disagree: although it may be the last thing I do! Which brings me to another point: how much am I willing to contribute and how much do I want to achieve it?

OK, that is what is POSSIBLE. Now, I'd like to talk about what's PROBABLE. It's possible to achieve all that, but it takes a long time. In the short-term (meaning start TODAY, not TOMORROW!), I like to start where I am and what I can improve.

Currently one of my goals is to go to the gym 3 times/week. I HAVEN'T been doing this regularly, but that doesn't mean that I CAN'T- I just haven't been WILLING. I will keep trying to improve.

The other day I went for a walk around the Botanic Gardens, with some friends. They are fitter than me, so after a few kms, I found that I found it challenging to keep pace with them. I thought of stopping, but I kept on walking, albeit at a slower pace. I finished the 5km and next week I'll try again. And I'll improve. In fact, my AIM is to participate in 'The Bloody Long Walk' in October. It's 35 km (which is a bloody long way!). I have a goal of walking at least 5 km/week. I don't know if I'll complete the walk in October, I'm focusing on my goals- what I know I can do. And my goals are to go to the gym 3/week and walk at least 5km.

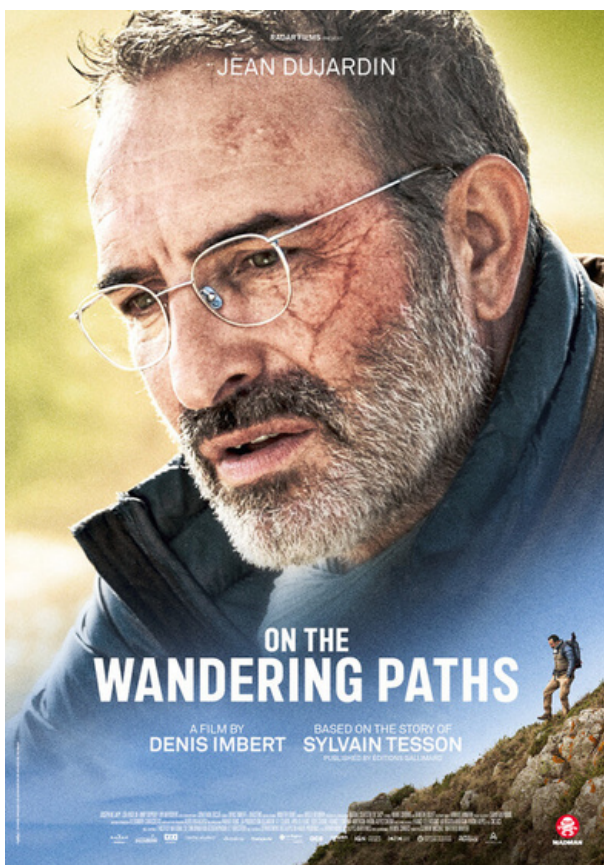
A.B.I.- Always Be Improving!

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION FROM ADRIAN

A few weeks ago, I saw a movie called 'On the Wandering Path'. It was part of the French Film Festival and it was mesmerising. It was all about a man's recovery from an accident which left him with an acquired brain injury. The film was in French (with English subtitles, luckily!) and the story wasn't told in a linear fashion. It started with him walking across France, all by himself, using wooden sticks. Most of the film was about this journey, showing the struggles that he went through and how much he appreciated the beauty of the landscape. I think his journey through France is a perfect analogy of his journey through recovery. It illustrates the highs and lows and the people he meets - some who help him and some who do not. Then they showed his accident (falling off a balcony at a party), and the early part of his recovery. This is a film that we all can relate to, to some degree. I really enjoyed it and I highly recommend that others watch it, too.

Everyone who sees this film will take away something, whether it is positive or negative. I have taken away something positive- I am now working on my fitness. My aim is to walk 5km each week and going to the gym 3 times per week- improving both incrementally.

Adrian in the gym



TRANSITION TO MY HOME

BY ANAT BIGOS

It seems ludicrous to feel so worried about moving back to my home, at the age of 43! The truth is that I had already moved out quite recently, so this is definitely not a completely new experience for me. Also, I remember feeling a similar sensation the last time that I moved out, when I had to stop living here, straight after breaking my foot. So, I currently feel a little freaked out, while I'm simultaneously tremendously excited!

The issue is that I've become completely accustomed to allowing my mother to do so many things for me. In no way am I blaming mum for my reliance on her, it's just the way that things have panned out after my accident. Moving out will also help me to organise my day-to-day activities.

I'm moving out extremely slowly, in a calm and measured way, so I'm quite sure that nothing major will happen now - I'm just a little worried to have officially started this journey!

I realise that, apart from me, nobody is aware of my day to day necessities like my mum. It's true that my situation isn't the easiest, yet luckily I have so much support!

Lately, I was quite unsure about how my beloved mum would be feeling. I know that she has quite a few friends around her, who I assume would be caring for her, while I've got quite a few support workers, therapists and night-time carers helping me.

Mum had told me that I shouldn't be worried about the fact I have a disability, yet I feel that my disability has really held me back from where I think I should be.

But for now, I want to start the journey and see where it takes me!

Although this move worries me a little, in the end it's going to help me to become more independent. Also, it will give me the opportunity to learn new skills, such as cooking, washing, purchasing groceries, organising and making my own decisions.

TRANSITION TO MY HOME CONTINUED

I'm also glad that my parents can feel more relaxed and confident that I'll be fine, because I realise that in the end of the day, all parents are most satisfied, when they see that their children are completely independent and luckily I'm a happy girl 😊! I see my future sorting itself out more regularly than I had previously expected!

One of my friends read my writing, commenting that it's really great that I'm finally making this transition in such a slow & extremely well thought-out manner. It is true that I'm feeling even more nervous now, than how I initially felt moving out of home, considering my additional challenges. Yet, I'm feeling really awesome that I now have this opportunity to conquer this mountain!

I'm often hearing uncertainty about how I'll manage, although I am quite aware of what I have survived up until now, so luckily I'm sure that what is to come I will also meet with gusto.

I understand that things can be very difficult in life, yet it's so exciting to think of this move and this change. I am so accustomed to allowing my mum to do so much for me, but I can also do a lot for myself. I will adapt with things as they occur and I will learn from each day, and each challenge. I do not expect everything to be easy, but I know that life is not easy, so that's ok.

The wonderful thing about life, and indeed my life, is that I am able to find joy and appreciation in many daily occurrences that one may otherwise overlook: for this I feel very lucky.

I am sure that as time goes on, I will learn new ways of being independent within my own space, which will provide me with a greater feeling of not only confidence but overall contentment.

WATSONIA NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE ONLINE TRIVIA NIGHT

ABOUT

Join us for a fun night of trivia. Suitable for all trivia abilities.

DATE

Tuesday 2 May 2023 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (UTC+10)

LOCATION

Online event access details will be provided by the event organiser

CONTACT EVENT ORGANISER

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=1044052&>



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

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