

TOGETHER WE ARE BEYOND BLUE

Beyond

MARCH 2021

HONOURING A LIFE

How a loving husband found purpose and connection in grief

LIFTING THE FOG OF POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

A mum shares how she rediscovered joy and helped others



**Beyond
Blue**

Welcome to Beyond. Thanks for being here.

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It is a pleasure to be joining you from our magazine, *Beyond*, already a quarter of the way through a new year. Twenty-twenty gave us a sudden shock of upheaval and change not seen for generations, and our entry into 2021 has shown we must be ready to adapt at a moment's notice.

This past 12 months has only underscored how much we must listen to and learn from those with lived experience of anxiety, depression and suicide. In times of great upheaval and uncertainty, people who face adversity can be our greatest coaches. And they can also be a source of enormous strength and comfort to others.

From drought and devastating bushfires through to a once-in-a-century global pandemic, people have found comfort and strength in sharing their experiences, often using it to light a path through the dark for others. This was, and continues to be, no more evident than in our online peer support forums.

Our forums are a thriving online community with more than 250,000 unique visitors per month – or 2.9 million a year and climbing. They come to the forums to connect with and talk to others. It is a safe, non-judgemental space built on a foundation of kindness, community and empathy.

No other area of Beyond Blue has grown at such a rate in the past two decades. A small team support the forums, including a community manager, moderators and a passionate group of community champions, each with their own lived experience, who guide conversations and ensure that forum members receive replies to their posts.

We know the social and economic impacts of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing will be long-lasting. We need to be ready for the



task. We need to especially be there for those who have been hit hardest and already face greater adversity – people with existing mental health conditions, those without strong support networks, people under financial pressure, to name just a few.

As we plan for the future, we need to help people to strengthen the things that keep them well. Feeling connected – to friends, family, work, support services, and community – protects our mental health. Feeling connected can make it easier to find a pathway to recovery for those who reach crisis.

That's why connection is at the heart of The Way Back, Beyond Blue's service for people who have attempted suicide or experienced a suicidal crisis. The research shows us that a previous suicide attempt is a strong predictor for another attempt. The Way Back delivers non-clinical, follow-up care and practical support in the community to keep people safe and support them to find a way back to living. You can find out more about The Way Back inside this edition of Beyond.

Many of our stories this month focus on the importance of connection and purpose to our wellbeing. The support we receive through community fundraisers, major donors, trusts and foundations, volunteers and partners – from people like you – is helping to give others that purpose and connection. While the income from fundraising is vital to the ongoing viability of Beyond Blue's services and supports, it's so much more than that. Your contributions help foster community spirit, connection and compassion, at a time we've never needed it more.

Thank you for the role you are playing to help more people in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.

Georgie Harman
CEO

"Our forums are a thriving online community with more than 250,000 unique visitors per month – or 2.9 million a year and climbing."

We are so thankful for your support in helping our mental health professionals be there to answer every call. If you would like to make a donation, simply complete and mail the enclosed coupon, donate online at beyondblue.org.au/ donate or call 03 9810 6100.

Beyond Blue acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land in Melbourne in which our head office is based, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend our respect to all Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.



Staying connected in the country

Having lived with bipolar disorder for much of his life, farmer Rick Hinge cites working the land and connecting with the people in his rural community to stay physically and mentally healthy.

As a fifth-generation farmer, Rick Hinge knows all too well about the hardships of a life on the land.

Rick lives with his wife Lynette in Mundulla, a small town in South Australia. He works in livestock management and for the last few years has also been a wellbeing consultant, checking in on people and offering a sympathetic ear.

“It’s people working in agriculture who often feel the pinch of hard times first,” says Rick. “There’s not a lot protecting them if their crops fail, livestock is lost or prices drop. These difficult

“It’s people working in agriculture who often feel the pinch of hard times first.”

times can make it hard for people to communicate and it puts a strain on relationships.

"However, I've always been amazed by people's capacity to pull together as communities and find ways to carry on. You don't typically see great support until things get difficult, but it's incredible how a crisis brings people together and leads communities forward."

Over the last summer in the aftermath of the bushfires, Rick and Lynette volunteered on Kangaroo Island. "We helped where we could, rolling up damaged fences and what not, but we were also talking to people and seeing how they were travelling," he says.

"Many families went through much trauma with the loss of possessions and livestock, while also dealing with troubling flashbacks. It was devastating for those who left their properties only to return and discover their homes destroyed.

"It's often difficult for rural people to have a sit-down conversation about how they're feeling, but I've found that if you chat and listen while working away at something, conversation flows more easily."

Rick believes this method of working and talking has also been helpful for his own mental health.

"I've lived with bipolar disorder for the last 39 years and I find that when I'm well I'm 100 percent and, mostly when unwell, I experience depression and anxiety which can last for six months or so," he says.

"The last time I was down, I rang one of my farming friends and asked him if it would be okay to come over. We went around tending to his livestock and doing farm things. Just spending time with him and hanging about was very therapeutic."

"People in rural communities can easily offer time to each other when things are tough, reach out to someone and ask if they'd like to go for a drive, clean out the troughs or just look at the country."

Volunteering is another way in which Rick suggests communities could remain mentally strong through times of fire and drought. He encourages people to practice being generous.

"The next piece of the puzzle is connectedness through giving," he says.

"Giving takes you outside of yourself, out of your head for a moment. For me, that's really important."

"People in rural communities can easily offer time to each other when things are tough, reach out to someone and ask if they'd like to go for a drive, clean out the troughs or just look at the country."



Finding a way back

When a person attempts to take their own life, they often experience a great deal of distress in the days, weeks and even months that follow. During this period, they are at high risk of attempting again.

In a bid to support people through this critical-risk time, Beyond Blue developed The Way Back Support Service.

What is The Way Back and how does it work?

The Way Back provides practical, non-clinical support to people who have attempted suicide or experienced a suicidal crisis.

The initiative connects individuals with existing community resources and support mechanisms that address their challenges and build resilience.

A key element of The Way Back is its focus on personal connection and one-to-one interaction. This is balanced by a practical design, with an emphasis on education, developing awareness and learning how to navigate hardships.

A person can be referred by a number of different sources, ranging from hospitals, to GPs and local mental health services.

They are then contacted by a Support Coordinator, who meets with them to develop a personalised program that addresses their individual needs. The Support Coordinator may work with them in person, over the phone or via email, or a combination of these methods, for up to three months.

The support is customised to each individual and can include:

- Ongoing emotional support and encouragement
- Developing a safety plan
- Staying connected with support networks
- Maintaining regular contact with GPs and relevant services

Has it been successful?

Beyond Blue recently commissioned an independent evaluation of The Way Back Support Service in the Hunter New England region of New South

Wales. The review was conducted by a combination of Hunter Primary Care, University of Newcastle, Calvary Mater Hospital and Everymind.

The findings of the evaluation were promising:

- 97% of people reported positive progress on their recovery plan
- Psychological distress scores dropped, on average, from severe to mild
- People reported less concern about the issues contributing to their attempt, as well as fewer of those issues

The Way Back has had a busy and productive 12 months, forging agreements with multiple states that will allow the national rollout to accelerate dramatically. Implementation is complete at many sites and well underway at others with the Service due to go from its seven pilot sites in June 2020 to 33 sites projected by early 2021. The Way Back has already received close to 6,000 referrals and we see the expansion as an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many more people who have recently attempted suicide or experienced a suicidal crisis.

These numbers give a glimpse of The Way Back's success from a logistical perspective, but it's the personal stories that show the program's real benefits. The Way Back is built on a philosophy of personalised care – meaning we meet people where they're at. The one-to-one connection people in the program form with their Support Coordinators is a crucial part of helping them find a way back to life.

People like 'R' who, after three months of support following his suicide attempt, was in a place where he was taking his medication daily as prescribed, speaking openly with his family about his thoughts and needs, and reengaging with community

For more information about The Way Back Support Service, visit beyondblue.org.au/thewayback



supports. He'd also addressed many of the issues contributing to his distress, including reducing his alcohol intake, regularly seeing a gambling support worker, gaining full time employment, and paying back many of his debts.

It's stories like these that motivate Beyond Blue to expand and continuously improve The Way Back.

"It saved my life basically. It really did. It was very beneficial to me. I haven't had a drink in eight months. I still get depressed, but I know how to get out of it now. They saved my life. It's been so good."

R, Participant of The Way Back Support Service, Newcastle

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That changed my life: cycling

Justin Lang, is an avid cyclist, self-confessed MAMIL (middle-aged man in lycra) and member of the Fatboys cycling group in Adelaide.

Pure unbridled joy, a sense of freedom, and that buzz you get after a healthy dose of feel-good endorphins, all from pumping away on the pedals – for those who love cycling, these feelings will be wonderfully familiar.

For Lang, cycling has been a constant source of joy in his life, including through some dark times.

“Around eight years ago I separated from my wife and went through a very difficult chapter,” he recalls.

“I remember thinking to myself: ‘I’m probably not going to be around next Christmas’. But then I thought: ‘I’ll see

through to late January because I’m going to do this big (bicycle) ride!’”

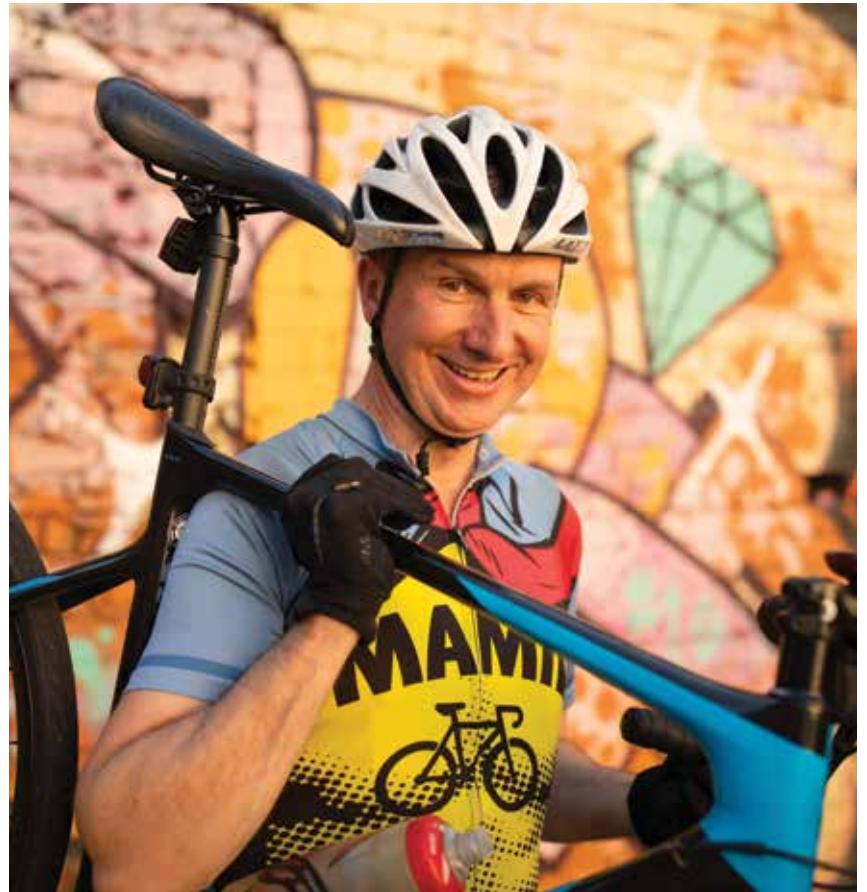
“At the time, the Fatboys were training for the Adelaide to Canberra ride. It’s seven days a week, averaging 180k a day, so it’s a big challenge,” says Lang.

“I decided to go for it and said to myself: ‘I’ll give it another couple of months, then I’ll check and see how I feel!’”

Thanks to all the training, Lang felt good physically. After a while he started to feel better mentally, too.

“Once I’d trained and completed the ride, I felt miles better. Cycling gave me something to live for, no doubt about it.”

“Stick at it and just enjoy the ride.”



Bikes, banter and bonhomie

Aside from experiencing first-hand how exercise and goal-setting can do wonders for both physical and mental health, Lang credits friendship, banter, and post-ride coffee chats as other key reasons as to why he found solace in the saddle.

“I don’t think there’s anything quite like riding up in the hills on a perfect spring day, particularly when you’re out with guys you’ve ridden with for ages,” says Lang.

“They’re a great bunch, my cycling buddies. We all bounce off each other and enjoy a bit of a laugh. That’s probably the main highlight from my perspective.”

“There’s also strong peace of mind when you go out on your bike with people you ride with regularly, especially when they’re excellent cyclists. It’s an easier ride. You’re not on edge, waiting for something to happen, you’re just out there riding and enjoying the day – the friendly banter, the feel-good endorphins, feeling totally alive – there’s nothing quite like it.”

Checking in

On top of enjoying the comradery of a tight-knit cycling group and a satisfying sense of achievement after finishing a challenging ride, Lang knows the

importance of having open, honest conversations with people you can trust.

“When we stop for a coffee break it’s a great opportunity to sit and really chat and blow off steam. We talk about all kinds of different things. If anyone’s having a hard time, you talk about it – or you listen. It’s not a formal thing, but things inevitably come up. When I was having a hard time, I had a couple of guys check in with me who knew I wasn’t in a good headspace.”

These days, Lang continues to enjoy being part of a cycling group and the sense of community and support it gives him.

When asked what advice he’d offer anyone thinking of getting into cycling he simply replies:

“Do it, stick at it, and just enjoy the ride.”

Wise words indeed.

To talk things through please contact the Beyond Blue Support Service 1300 22 4636 or go to beyondblue.org.au/getsupport.

For immediate support call Lifeline on 13 11 14 and in an emergency, always call triple zero (000).

“Cycling gave me something to live for.”



Brooke's story. Making lemonade from lemons: lifting the fog of postnatal depression.

Three months after the birth of her second child, Brooke Schuberg found herself in a severe postnatal depression. She shares her road to recovery and how she participated in the Virtual Sydney Coastrek 2020 to raise awareness and over \$3,000 for the Beyond Blue Support Service.

My story starts off like any other new mum's – gorgeous newborn, night feeds, sleep deprivation. All pretty normal for the first three months. Then my partner had to work away for five weeks. That's when I believe my postnatal depression began.

Sleep deprivation was a huge contributing factor, and I had no support system. It was just me and my older son with the baby. I started crying in public all the time and flew off the handle easily. I felt like the most awful mother in the world. Nothing I did felt good enough.

Why was I being this way? Why wasn't I coping? I began to hate myself. Then the suicidal thoughts started. After one particularly horrific night with the baby, I handed him to my older son, and like a zombie, crawled into the bathtub and curled into the foetal position. The bath was empty.

I finally dragged myself to my doctor and told her something was wrong. It was the best decision I've ever made. She diagnosed me with severe postnatal depression and wanted me to stay in a special postnatal depression ward with my baby for treatment. It would have helped me so much, but

"I finally dragged myself to my doctor and told her something was wrong. It was the best decision I'd ever made."

if I stayed there, who would help care for my other son? Feeling trapped with no way out I went home and made a suicide note in the form of a video on my phone. I'd had enough. Luckily, my doctor had organised support for me in the form of visits from 3Bridges, an organisation that helps families through transitions, including having a child. Every week, two women came to spend time with me. They talked to me and let me sleep while they took the baby out for a walk. To say they helped would be a serious understatement.

Slowly, the fog lifted, and I felt more like myself. Then one day, I saw that an event called Coastrek was raising funds for Beyond Blue. I trusted Beyond Blue as an organisation and had used the Support Service before to talk things through. To me, their name was synonymous with mental health and I knew I had to be a part of the Coastrek to raise money for them. It was time I made lemonade from my lemons!

I rounded up my mother-in-law, sister and friends, and told them we had to do this. To raise funds, we held a Variety Show Night for family and friends, with a performance by my muso mates. It was a fabulous and successful night, and I was proud of myself knowing I was raising awareness for postnatal depression, which can be terrifying and often stigmatised.

One of the most upsetting aspects of being diagnosed with postnatal depression was sometimes, when I told people about my diagnosis, their reply was: 'I thought you did, but I didn't want to say anything', like it was

something embarrassing or shameful. Women need support through postnatal depression, not pressure to hide it. It's exhausting enough without pretending you're okay for fear of judgement.

By raising funds for Beyond Blue, I'm hoping to help open doors for improved support, so people don't fall between the cracks in our mental health system. If we're physically unwell, we go to hospital. It's my vision that when we're mentally unwell, we all have somewhere to turn to like Beyond Blue.

These days, things have improved. A pivotal moment in my recovery was reminding and promising myself: 'This won't be forever – you'll find joy again'. Exercising has really helped, too. Every day, I look forward to putting on my headphones and take bubs for a walk while blasting my favourite music.

These little things have made the biggest difference. One day I realised I hadn't cried in public for a while. I looked at my baby with new eyes and we started truly connecting. I remember crying out of happiness, saying to myself: 'Finally, thank God, I feel like he's mine now'. It was the most beautiful feeling.

I want my story to give hope to any mums out there in the grips of postnatal depression. Know that the darkness WILL lift, and you will feel happiness and joy again. Be gentle with yourself and keep pushing through. Your 'I'm-not-crying-in-public-anymore' moment will come.

"Finally, thank God, I feel like he's mine now."

Go to beyondblue.org.au/coastrek to learn more about how you can become a Coastrek fundraiser too.



From Bondi to Byron for Beyond Blue

After walking the 80km from Bondi to Manly during a global pandemic, a group of Sydney-based cycling friends were inspired to take on an even bigger challenge to help raise funds and awareness for Beyond Blue. Teammate Rupert shares their journey.

The idea for our fundraising trip started earlier this year when Jimmy and I, along with a few mates, took on the 80km Bondi to Manly walk during the COVID-19 pandemic. After that, our thoughts naturally turned to the next big challenge: why not a cycling trip? Sure, most of us had little to no experience cycling. Sure, most of us didn't even own bikes or proper cycling gear, but what was a challenge without a steep learning curve?

Next, we had to find a route. Bondi to Byron had a nice ring to it so that's how we decided on the route. There was, however, one thing we knew from the beginning – we would raise money for Beyond Blue. Many of us have family and friends who have been affected by mental health issues, some had taken their own lives. We were therefore determined to do our bit to help raise awareness for those affected by anxiety and depression in Australia.

At first, we believed that seven or eight of us would take on the challenge. But our excitement about our new challenge spread the word about our ride and cause, and before we knew it, a whopping 22 lads had signed up. We knew, however, that the ride would not be possible without a van and a support driver. We were delighted when our mate Mike signed up to help us and support us all the way there. Without him the trip would not have been possible, and we are extremely grateful.

The trip took us six days and around 850km of cycling, with every member of our team making it safely to Byron Bay. The part we're most proud about? We raised over \$52,000 for Beyond Blue.

We'd recommend anyone to take on a challenge of this magnitude, not only to raise money for charity, but for the huge mental health benefits the trip provided for all involved.

If you would like to fundraise for Beyond Blue, please go to beyondblue.org.au or call us on 03 9810 6100.





A private man. A life-changing choice

Highly respected dermatologist Dr Brian Entwisle was so intensely private that not even his closest friends knew he'd struggled with his mental health. In a final act of generosity, Brian left a gift in his Will to Beyond Blue that will provide a lifeline to thousands of people in Australia.

Close friend and second cousin of Brian, Iain Entwisle misses him dearly.

"Even after having Brian in my life for the last 40 years, I had no idea he had difficulties with his mental health until around five years ago when he told me he'd had some real issues with anxiety."

Iain says Brian was very private and not inclined to express his personal feelings, even though they were friends for so long.

"I also think that back then, there was more stigma around having a mental health issue, so he kept it to himself."

"He probably suffered in silence much more than I knew."

Iain says if there's one thing he knows about Brian, it's that he never made

a decision without considering it very carefully.

"He would have included Beyond Blue in his Will for a very personal reason, knowing it would be important. I think he hoped there'd be care available for other people in the same situation, so they didn't have to go through what he did," says Iain.

Brian's gift is going towards the Beyond Blue Support Service, which provides immediate counselling, information and advice with trained mental health professionals, who can then point people in the right direction to seek further support.

"If anyone is considering leaving a gift in their Will to Beyond Blue, they can take great comfort from our experience, knowing that their loved ones and their gift will be treated well," says Iain. "Brian would be very happy with this outcome."

During the last financial year the Beyond Blue Support Service received 273,845 requests for support via calls, emails and webchats. This service is funded entirely by donations from the community. We're seeing more people turn to Beyond Blue than ever before. Thanks to gifts from donors like Brian, we'll be there for them.

If you'd like to learn more about leaving a gift in your Will to Beyond Blue, please contact Linda Ball, Gifts in Wills Manager, on (03) 9892 6985 or visit our website beyondblue.org.au/wills





Grief, purpose and a lasting love story

When Noel Braun lost his wife of 42 years to suicide, all colour in his life seemed to evaporate. But in the midst of despair, he has found purpose.

Noel will never forget the first time he saw Maris.

It was at the Heidelberg Town Hall in Melbourne's north. The year was 1958. And the band had just started up a Foxtrot.

"I saw this tall, dark-haired girl on the opposite side of the hall," he said. "And I noticed she was knocking back the boys."

Eventually, Noel summoned his courage.

"Would you care to have this dance?"

She hesitated for a moment, and then agreed.

As they swayed to the music, Noel made the conversation. He told her he was 26, studying psychology at the University of Melbourne. Maris was 21 and had just commenced her midwifery certificate. She was from a tiny country town near the Victoria / New South Wales border and this was her first night in the big smoke.

"I noticed you were knocking back some of the boys," Noel said.

"I was waiting for the fellow who had taken me out for a drink at the milk bar to return from moving his car, but by the

time you arrived, I decided I'd been stood up," she replied.

Right place, right time, Noel thought as they danced away for the rest of the night.

A few months later, Noel asked Maris to be his wife. This time she didn't hesitate before saying yes.

Despite a few complications with pregnancies, married life was everything Noel had hoped for. After all, he had Maris.

Together they raised four children. Noel often found himself in awe of Maris' selflessness in all aspects of her life.

"She was very compassionate, very caring," he said. "She felt with the heart."

The family were active members of the local church and community. Noel and Maris would go along to as many Sydney Swans games as they could, dissecting the team's performance on the train ride home.

In his later years, Noel volunteered on the phones with Lifeline, a crisis support service.

At home, Maris was beginning to experience her own mental health issues. Depression would come in waves and

"Maris' death is part of my life."



Noel found himself wondering if he would ever have to use the techniques he'd developed at Lifeline with his wife.

2004 was a particularly bad year for Maris.

"It (her depression) was getting worse," Noel said. "The periods would expand over the years. One time it was two or three weeks, but then it got longer. And in the middle of the year, she decided she should see a psychiatrist."

On the morning of October 30, 2004, Maris was more distressed than usual. Eventually she got out of bed and told Noel she was meeting up with a friend to exchange some books. As Noel saw the car leave the driveway, a feeling of dread took over.

In 42 years of marriage, he says it is the first time that she ever lied to him.

What followed was the longest morning of Noel's life. Eventually a car did come back into the driveway, but it wasn't Maris'. It was a police car. They asked Noel to come to the hospital.

She had taken her own life.

In a blur of grief, anger and guilt, Noel had never felt more alone.

"I realised that night would be the first on my own," he said. "Maris would never share the bed with me again. I stood in the doorway staring at the bed. Despite her anguish that morning, she had made it neatly as she did every morning. It looked so ordinary."

Life in the years that followed would be anything but ordinary. Noel found grief to be a constant companion.

"As soon I came back home, back to the empty house... Bang, there was the grief just waiting."

"I visited Maris' grave daily," he said. "I would say, 'There's space for me in the grave, I'll join you.' But I could hear her saying, 'Not yet.'"

Eventually, Noel made a decision. If he couldn't live out his days with Maris, he would live out his days in honour of her. He had always admired her selflessness and ability to put others first.

"Instead of just thinking, how's it going to affect me all the time, which I think I tended to do, I'm going to try and reach out to others in the same way that Maris would reach out."

Noel began facilitating groups for people bereaved by suicide. He also began writing about his journey with grief. He has now authored several books, seeking to spread his message that hope can arise from tragedy.

Noel has found a passion in undertaking pilgrimages such as the famous Camino de Santiago, a series of walking routes throughout Europe that wind their way to the Cathedral of St James in Galicia, Spain.

Despite reaching an age where many would consider putting their feet up, Noel continues to open doors to new challenges and experiences.

"Admittedly they might be different doors to what you would open when you were younger," he said. "But there are still doors to be opened for you to undertake new challenges, to constantly be prepared to accept risk and to take challenges."

Noel still talks to Maris.

He will often light a candle and feel her presence.

He still wears his wedding ring.

And he still misses her dearly.

"I can't say that I will ever stop grieving for Maris. I have just got used to the idea of her not being around," he said.

"Maris' death is part of my life and I have arrived at a more or less peaceful acceptance."

On the eve of his 88th birthday, he is still driven by a purpose he found in her passing. To talk openly about his experiences. To ensure depression and suicide are not met with silence. And to live a life in her honour.

It's a love story that started in 1958 at the Heidelberg Town Hall and continues to this day.

"I think that's my purpose - as a model," he said. "And to give hope to people. I don't expect I'll solve their problems in any way, but just by my contact and perhaps by my example, if that gives them a little bit of encouragement to keep pressing on."

"Just after she died, I saw nothing positive. But now 15 years later I can look back and see, Maris' dying opened up many, many opportunities which I would never have thought about or considered."

"Instead of just thinking, how's it going to affect me all the time, which I think I tended to do, I'm going to try and reach out to others in the same way that Maris would reach out."

Noel's story was featured on Beyond Blue's podcast, *Not Alone*. You can listen to his episode at beyondblue.org.au/purpose. Noel has also written several books on his personal journey of grief and finding purpose. Visit booktopia.com and search Noel Braun.

Beyond Blue simply couldn't achieve our vision without the generous support of people like you.



Together we're creating
a mentally healthier
Australia.

Together we are
Beyond Blue.

Thank you.

If you need to talk it
through with someone,
get in touch. We'll point
you in the right direction.

 1300 22 4636

 beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

