

# Samaritans

15 March 2021

Dear Friends

As the Diocesan Chief Executive, it is my pleasure to present you with the latest Connections Newsletter. I have had the unique privilege of overseeing the wonderful work of the Samaritans since October 2020.

Over the last 30 years I have worked in the not-for-profit sector and government and am able to say with confidence that the Samaritans run many unique and important programs supporting the most vulnerable in our community. It is wonderful to be able to share the stories that emerge from this work.

These are stories that could not be told without your support and for this I am so grateful. Thank you.

In 2020, an unprecedented year with the onset of COVID-19, Samaritans supported 24,324 people in need in our communities. Early into 2021 the Samaritans continue to grapple with the challenges of COVID-19 and our staff are adjusting to supporting people in the Hunter and Central Coast region who are finding their way through difficult circumstances.

Samaritans are also bracing for the Federal Government's planned cut to JobSeeker payments which will see families in our region with reduced income and some struggling to find work. We know that the impact of these challenging circumstances can result in increased food insecurity, homelessness, and domestic violence. Our Bishop, the Right Reverend Dr Peter Stuart has made representations to the Federal Government regarding JobSeeker asking that the care of the most vulnerable be uppermost in the mind of decision makers as we all work towards economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

It is your generosity that helps us care for locals who suddenly find themselves in need of support.

Samaritans Foundation  
Diocese of Newcastle

36 Warabrook Boulevard  
Warabrook NSW 2304

PO Box 366, Hunter Region  
Mail Centre NSW 2310

P 02 4960 7100  
F 02 4960 7160

mail@samaritans.org.au  
samaritans.org.au

An agency of the Anglican  
Diocese of Newcastle

ABN 38 574 464 524

# Samaritans

Thank you for your continued support of our work, and I look forward to sharing more stories from Samaritans frontline in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Coralie Nichols'.

**Coralie Nichols**

Diocesan Chief Executive

# Connections

Your Supporter Newsletter · March 2021



## Running for Recovery

**R**esilient. Courageous. Warrior. These are a few words to describe Gary Brown, a Newcastle local who has overcome addiction and the stigma of prison to fight for his recovery.

Gary first came to Samaritans when he was released from prison in 2010. From then to now, he has channelled his focus into become a self-trained marathon runner, and despite a relapse in 2018, is now clean and back fighting fit.

Gary has shared his story in the Big Issue magazine, The Newcastle Herald newspaper and on ABC's Compass program, to name a few.

Here he speaks with us about his latest challenges and what helped him climb out of his relapse and back onto the running track.

### What's one thing you want people to know about you?

That I'm a survivor. I'm a fighter. And I don't let things conquer me.

### Tell us about life after prison.

In 2010 I stayed in Samaritans halfway house – Friendship House in Newcastle – when I got out of prison. They've treated me like family. I haven't been back to prison since then.

I've come from a life of crime and drug use to something beneficial.

I describe Samaritans like the family I didn't have. They've given me help for over 10 years. I got the love that I missed from an actual family. Without them I wouldn't be where I am today. They gave me direction that changed my life.

INSIDE

#### RUNNING FOR RECOVERY

Gary's story continues inside.

#### FROM THE VOLUNTEER FRONTLINE

Rose's story

#### FROM OUR YOUTH SERVICES

Samaritans Youth  
Homelessness Maitland



*Gary's story continued...*

### You have run many marathons. Why do you run?

Running is like a medication for me. It makes me mentally feel better about myself, and it helps my depression, stress and anger.

Addiction is a cycle, it's like a merry-go-round which makes it very hard to get off. I relapsed on October 18, 2018 after five and a half years clean. I didn't get clean until November 17, 2020. I've been clean now for 85 days.

Those two years were hell. I didn't run. I knew I needed to stop using when the last time I used Ice I had a psychotic episode, and I said to myself that I needed to get my life in order.

Everything feels good now; I feel good in myself, my spirit is better, I'm stronger physically and mentally and I'm enjoying life now. It's not a battle anymore.

### What would you say to other people stuck in the cycle of addiction?

I'd tell them to try to get help, to get some counselling to try places like Samaritans and to take up a sport or a hobby.

Replace the drugs with something that's more beneficial. Channel all that negativity and anger into something positive.

Life now is going pretty good. I've had some work grape picking and lawn mowing, and the doors are starting to open up. In the past they were closed. Mentally I wasn't there, I was using drugs and I was trapped. Now the doors are opening up again.

There are still days that worry me but I put things in place to beat the loneliness.

### When is your next run?

I'm doing the Ultimate Trail Australia race in May. It's a 100km event in Katoomba.

I've run it once before, in 2018, and it finished in under 16 hours.

### Why are you fundraising for Samaritans?

Samaritans Recovery Point has helped me in the past and I want to give back to them.

They helped me when I was down and now I want to give back so they can support more people who are in a position like I was.

To donate to Gary in his Ultra Trail Australia race to support Samaritans Recovery Point programs, go to [www.chuffed.org/project/running-for-recovery-point](http://www.chuffed.org/project/running-for-recovery-point).



Gary competing in a previous run.



Image source: Newcastle Herald



### Service update: Samaritans Youth Accommodation Maitland (SYAM)

**S**YAM provides short-term accommodation for 12-15 year olds experiencing homelessness with a focus on achieving family restoration. Samaritans received a grant from Maitland Council to paint a series of Aboriginal murals throughout the home to increase cultural safety for the young people, 30% of whom identify as Aboriginal. The artists from Koori Colours are pictured here with the finished artwork.

### From the volunteer frontline: Rose's story

**S**ince retiring from working 17 years on the frontline supporting her community through Centrelink, Rose (pictured) joined Samaritans Emergency Relief as a volunteer to keep in touch with her community.

Rose's role in Samaritans Emergency Relief is to meet people who are struggling to make ends meet and help fulfil not only their immediate needs but help them on a more positive, long-term path as well.

"We help with food parcels and help with power and water bills, but it's not just that. We can refer to other services to get people on a path to help themselves out of their situation," Rose said.

Rose credits her years at Centrelink for helping her lead with understanding and compassion.

"At Centrelink we had to have good ethics, not be judgemental; it's similar at Samaritans. You realise people can get into situations sometimes and they don't know what to do, they don't know where to go, so if you can help them and guide them, that's a good thing," Rose said.

When COVID-19 hit last year, it changed the way Emergency Relief volunteers could do their jobs.

"We suddenly couldn't meet people in person anymore. Everything became over the phone and via email. It's all very COVID-safe and people coming in for help have adapted really well," Rose said.

"The demand during COVID definitely changed. Many more people have been coming in for help with their power bills because they've spent so much extra time at home. Suddenly there's this large bill they can't pay, so we can help and work with the electricity company to make it easier for people and to help educate them on the best use of their power, too," she said.

Outside of her volunteering, Rose has a revved-up hobby that surprises some who meet her.

"I do motor racing, I have an MGF and a Toyota Echo. I do hill climbs mostly," Rose said.

"I won five trophies last year; I race at least every third weekend. It's all age groups, we've got drivers from 17-85 years. There's a camaraderie there. It's a good network to meet up with," she said.

A big thank you to all Samaritans volunteers for your invaluable work!

For more information on becoming a Samaritans volunteer, visit [www.samaritans.org.au](http://www.samaritans.org.au).





## Bishop Peter's Easter message

**E**aster eggs are one of the ways that people celebrate the Christian story of new life. We are used to chocolate eggs but there are other, and more ancient, traditions of painting eggs. New life comes from inside an egg! We celebrate new life every Easter!

Across our region there are children, women and men who feel trapped by their current circumstances. They are held back by poverty or constrained by addiction. People looking to overcome their challenges and get their lives back on track.

As part of Anglican Hunter and Central Coast, Samaritans is committed to making a difference to the people we support. Our professional and volunteer staff make creative partnerships to alleviate human need and address injustice. Each positive change in a person's life is an expression of new life.

Over \$200 million dollars will be spent on Easter eggs in Australia this year. There will be many smiles as people bite into delicious chocolate. The story of Easter is centred on God revealing his love for all people and for all time through Jesus. It is a reminder that love and goodness can prevail, even when things feel dark and distressing.

This Easter, I invite you to do two things –

1. Celebrate new life with someone in your life by giving them an Easter egg!
2. Give at least the same amount to the Samaritans appeal so they can enable new life for someone in need!

With every joy and blessing,

Dr Peter Stuart

**Bishop of Newcastle**

## Give a gift today to make a difference



Three ways to donate

1

Mail this form back to us

2

[samaritans.org.au/donate](https://samaritans.org.au/donate)

3

1300 656 336

### I would like to donate

☐ \$50

☐ \$100

☐ \$150

☐ My choice of \$

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible, your receipt will be mailed to you.

### My details

Name:

Address:

  


Phone:

Email:

### My payment details

☐ Paying by credit card - or -

☐ Paying by cheque/money order  
(payable to Samaritans Foundation)

Card type: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Name on card:

Card number:

   

Card expiry:  /  (MM/YY)

I/we hereby authorise Samaritans to debit the selected credit card with the amount specified.

Your signature:

### Extra ways to help

☐ I would like to become a monthly supporter and give to people in need regularly throughout the year. Please charge the listed credit card \$  each month.

I would like information on:

☐ Leaving a gift in my will

☐ Volunteering

☐ Donating food and goods



### Mail this form to

PO Box 366  
Hunter Region Mail Centre  
NSW 2310

SAMARITANS FOUNDATION ABN 38 574 464 524

Samaritans is one of the largest regional welfare organisations in Australia but is truly local to your region. As the welfare arm of the Anglican Church, we deliver over 100 programs and community services to thousands of individuals and families each year.

Samaritans would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal Australia.