



Thank you for taking the time to complete the feature questions below.

Please, tell us about you and the work that you do?



Pete McGee

This is a joint article from Pete McGee and [Douglas Holmes](#) talking about the collaborations we have been working on since February 2018. The project is called the Recovery Box an idea that started to come together in Point Cook in Victoria. We started to put our ideas down on paper and started clarifying what was needed to turn the Recovery Box from an idea into a project that would change how information would be made available to Consumer, Carers, Mental Health Professionals and the general public. The original idea was to develop an App that could be incorporated into the product Peter had developed and was already selling successfully online.



Has this, and if yes, how does, this link to mental health?

Pete and Douglas have both been involved in mental health for many years and have come together to create the Recovery Box: a digital mental health gateway to information and resources that have been peer reviewed, easy to use and consumers have demonstrated that it has worked for them.

What has been some of the best moments of your journey creating your work?

For Pete one of the best moments of the journey with creating this was has been I'd say the best moment in creating this was the joy at seeing it take form over the years and finding new ways where it applied to empowering consumers to collaborate, network and recover and also from a personal level creating this has really expanded my wisdom on new ways to facilitate the work in mental health but also pushing and expanding my skills in development.

For Douglas one of the best moments of the journey with creating this work has been seeing this idea come to life and then doing presentations to individuals and groups and seeing the light come on about how this product will change how information will be made available Consumer, Carers, Mental Health Professionals and the general public.

What projects are you currently working on? And if yes, which are there upcoming?

We are currently working on the [Kickstarter Recovery Box project](#) to raise funds to move the Recovery Box from an idea stage 1 to stage 2 where we will raise \$10,881.00 to purchase 50 boxes where we can engage a range of Consumer, Carers, Mental Health Professionals and the general public to be involved in further developing the information that can be used on the box. The Kickstarter project will be finalised on 29 April.

Another project we are working together on is the Warm Fused Glass workshop. The two-day workshop is suitable for people who have experienced mental and emotional distress, families and supporters, mental health and community workers, doctors and therapists, and anyone who would like to better support people who have experienced mental and emotional distress. The purpose of the workshops is to teach participants how to make 3 kinds of fused glass pendants; from start to finish, as a saleable product. Participants will also be taught how to use Market Taxi to raise funds for consumer run projects; and ways of using creativity to cope



with emotional distress and symptoms which have been shown to improve people's relationships with their experiences and feel more empowered.

Peter combines personal experience of trauma, psychosis and hospitalisation with experience gained through training and practice, including working in the first Voices Vic team. A voice hearer, Peter's work is based on the principles of the Consumer Movement. He has created and managed innovative projects supporting young people, families, and adults who hear voices or have unusual beliefs. Peter is a founding member of SUPER CRO, trainer and spokesperson, promoting creative responses for people in severe distress. He is Vice Chair and board member of SUPER CRO a Consumer Run Organisation that aids consumers through education, advocacy, collaboration, feedback and equal representation.

Do you have any 'coping strategies' that you use, either with daily life or in mental health?

For Pete I no longer identify as having a mental illness but rather the extreme effects of trauma a series of adaptations and defences to the various traumas I endured so for me personally it's all about working on behaviours and changing the way I respond to triggers for example anger is a healthy response to either hurt and guilt and while its ok to get angry how I used to handle anger was unacceptable so anger management helped me.... Anxiety is a normal response to being in a traumatic situation and anxiety forces your brain into overdrive to over think things. So for me I guess you'd say I've normalized my symptoms in relation to my life experience because this puts them back within my level of control... From there I do a lot of rationalizing and taking steps back managing emotions... For a long time when my emotions and triggers were too intense I did a lot of distraction techniques till the emotional thinking died down and I could think rationally.

I've done a lot of work on my recovery and a lot of trauma therapy as well and I am pleased to say that I haven't heard voices or hallucinated for 7 or 8 years and have not been on medication for 9 or 10 years and have had my original diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia removed 4 years or so ago.

For Douglas I rely on the H.A.L.T.S. It can seem a bit corny at times however with the journey I have been on since getting a diagnosis of Bipolar Effective disorder in 1992, then getting onto a Disability Support Pension in 1994 the H.A.L.T.S. is something I picked up from attending many self-help group. Be careful with getting Over Hungry, Be careful with getting Over Angry, Be careful with Over Lonely, Be aware of getting Over Tired and for me Don't GET Over Serious.

How do you view the journey of recovery?

For Pete the journey of Recovery can be best described as I would say that I used to think recovery had one destination and it was one path measurable by steps leading towards off medication out of the system working family all that sort of thing.... This was my belief when I started working in the recovery movement but I guess we are all still learning and growing even us doing the pushing for new ways of doing things and we often grow and mature and find new ways ourselves and now I believe that recovery is unique to the individual and is about the individual coping better with what there experiencing and moving forward in the direction they choose making positive steps towards their own goals. Subsequently I think the journey of recovery has many different stages and steps... For example I was a messed up angry violent alcoholic teenager and then I was a schizophrenic medicated in the psych system and while I of all people should have seen the link between my symptoms and my past trauma's I didn't and I believe I didn't because I had done a lot of violent things and hurt a lot of people and I am in fact not a violent person I don't like hurting people yet how I learnt to express my



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anger as a child was what was taught to me by those around me.. So for a long time schizophrenia worked well at helping me at some unconscious level deal with guilt I was not ready to deal with let alone deal with the traumas I was clearly not ready to deal with.... After that I was victim of trauma.. I was the way I was because all these things happened to me in the past and it wasn't my fault I turned out this way... I explained all my behaviours as symptoms of trauma and was totally stuck in victim mentality and I was angry at the psych system...

Eventually I came out the other side of that and realized it wasn't about fault it was about control and I'd been giving my control away the whole time so began working on myself taking back control owning my behaviours and stopping focusing on the things that were done to me and began focusing on the things I could do to change my situation.. I also softened my anger towards the psych system because I realized that was my own anger at myself for taking the pills and not questioning anything. These were all steps in my journey of recovery and self-growth and evolution and you know what I am still growing still learning and still maturing towards the more evolved version of myself and I don't think I will ever stop.. Once one realizes they can change their life and the things they are unhappy with it all becomes quite exciting even if it is difficult and painful sometimes.

I guess that's also why we designed the recovery box to deliver as much resources and tools to the individual so that they had the means to pursue their recovery journey wherever that road lead them and also share any resources and techniques they had found along the way to help others in their journey because there is no one size fits all framework there is no one direction for recovery and for me personally it's about respecting the individuals journey and whatever stage they are at and providing as much tools to assist them in that journey.

Douglas was involved in describing the journey of his Recovery as being the driver on his own bus in a Featured Symposia at the 2012 at the [Cairns TheMHS Conference](#): The Personal Recovery Journey – the road to citizenship Recovery "...involves the re-definition of a sense of self, the emergence of hope...and the establishment of meaningful relationships with others" (Provencer, Gregg, Mead & Mueser, 2002). The presenters, Michael Appleton, Paula Hanlon and Paul O'Hara, Linda Mizzi, Douglas Holmes and Lynda Hennessy will reflect on specific aspects of their personal journeys describing how their sense of self and hopefulness for wellbeing aids the development of meaningful relationships and a sense of citizenship and vice a versa. The presentations will explore the importance of performing "significant social roles" and the relationship with wellness and life satisfaction. The symposium will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss the mechanics of 'recovery focused' services and how the individual approach is not only essential but is possible and can be successful in supporting the recovery experience for consumers. The "Recovery Bus" will be introduced as a concept promoting the personal responsibility and ownership of the recovery journey.

What does the future hold for you?

The future for Pete I'd like to think the future for me is all about moving forward creating better options for myself and becoming a wiser older more mature version of myself more well-adjusted I am doing pretty good now but I'd still like to work on more things like my attachment style etc... I guess also I'd like to have my own house and travel more... I think I will always be working on setting up new projects in mental health because I am passionate about making a difference even if the way I make that difference has changed overtime as I have learnt more.



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The future for Douglas is bright, currently supporting my mum now 87 to have a life that make her quality of life in her twilight years - in a year two at the University of Newcastle doing a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major of English and Creative Writing. I have been fortunate in the last 12 months to have cataract operations on both my eyes; I just completed renewing my license for another 5 years without the need to wear glasses.

I am looking forward to working with members of the [SUPER CRO](#) to turn another great idea into a charity that supports the development of the Recovery Box so that anyone who is unable to afford one can participate in the journey Pete and I are creating with the Recovery Box.

Favourite Quote?

Pete favourite quote is I am going to use some of my own quotes here and one of my favourite sayings I have learnt along the way is:

“There are no problems that can't be fixed only solutions we haven't found yet and if you spend too long lost in the problem then you'll never begin looking for a solution and sometimes a bigger problem can be broken down into many smaller solutions”

Also

“Like glass life can be broken but if you sit down and think about it and rearrange the pieces you can still create something beautiful”

Douglas's favourite quote is from Margaret Mead:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Web link

Recovery Box Web www.recovery-box.com

Pete on the project <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQpjY6dakic&t=>

Pete's guest spot <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzHJi3fiDI>