



**PLUS**  
Neuro Wellbeing

**ACT Newsletter**

November 2024

*Our Values - Empowerment, Community, Expertise, Creativity and Spirited*

## Exciting news about the 2024 MS Gong Ride!

The Events Team has been working hard to ensure this year's ride is unforgettable. A special thanks to the staff and their families who volunteered to help with threading the 2024 medals—your support is invaluable and will be greatly appreciated by all our participants on event day! It's not too late to sign up as a volunteer on the day. If you are interested, please sign up [HERE](#) This really is a day enjoyed by riders, volunteers and staff. So, why not come along and join in the fun!

We're pleased to report that we have over 6,000 riders signed up so far! The ride wouldn't be possible without the support of these individuals and teams, many of whom return year after year with enthusiasm for the ride and the cause. To be a part of the riding action you can still sign up [HERE](#) Together, we're working to make this event a fantastic experience for everyone!



**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**  
*for our*  
**HOLIDAY DINNER PARTY**  
**DEC | 12 | 2024**  
*hosted by MS Community of Canberra  
at 5:30 pm  
Saffron Restaurant, Franklin St  
Kingston, ACT*



Clare's story of resilience, passion and finding support through our FREE Employment Support Service is truly inspiring. Discover how she's overcoming challenges and embracing her "perfectly imperfect" life with MS. [Read more.](#)





## “Go For Gold” Winner Achieves Prestigious Recognition for her Writing

MS Plus member Jennifer Severn was shortlisted this year for the prestigious Commonwealth Short Story Prize with her story ‘*Nobody Owns a Fire*’. The story was one of only 23 shortlisted from a total of over 7300 entries from 56 Commonwealth countries. Only four stories were chosen from the Pacific region and Jennifer’s story was the only one from Australia.

‘*Nobody Owns a Fire*’ is one of her collection of linked stories, ‘Garnet’, to be published in early 2026 by Vine Leaves Press.

Jennifer was awarded a Go For Gold scholarship in 2014 to engage a mentor to help her write her memoir ‘*Long Road to Dry River*’, which was published in 2019. More information on her website: [www.jennifersevern.com.au](http://www.jennifersevern.com.au)."

By Vanessa Fanning



## Deanna: an artful advocate for MS

When she was just 17, Deanna was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) during her VCE exams. **Her first symptom was sudden blindness in her left eye.** *"I couldn't see colour. It was like staring at a black-and-white canvas,"* Deanna recalls. **An ophthalmologist diagnosed optic neuritis, often associated with early MS.** A neurologist later confirmed Deanna had it.

Back then, Deanna knew little about the neurological condition. *"It was 2007. I knew about the MS Readathon for kids, but I didn't receive much support or education,"* she says. Deanna went online looking for information. **However, she felt overwhelmed by the negative portrayals of people with MS.** *"The lack of positive representation left me thinking my life was over before it had begun,"* she says.



A pivotal moment came during a routine health check. Deanna told her new GP she couldn't attend uni or travel because of her MS. The elegant-looking doctor told her: **"I have MS and a great life. So can you."** **Inspired, Deanna pursued higher education.** She earned degrees in social sciences, sexual health and social work. **She travelled overseas, found love and built a career as a mental health clinician.**

Now 34, Deanna is happier. Improved drug treatments, mental health support and a solid social network have helped. **Along her journey, she discovered MS Plus.** The staff supported her with assessments and in navigating social services. Today, she serves as one of their ambassadors, advocating for better peer support for younger people with MS.

**She also participates in MS Plus fundraising events.** In 2022, Deanna raised \$8,000 through the MS Walk, Run + Roll and the MS Tuscany Trek, a 100-kilometre journey. She also curated their charity art show, showcasing artists with 'invisible illnesses.' In her spare time, Deanna creates digital art. With her *Circular Blooms* project, she turns her MRI scans into colourful works of art. **"I turn anxiety-inducing MRIs into something positive," she explains.** Through her art, she hopes to challenge misconceptions about MS.



**Recently, Deanna decided to write her Will, making MS Plus a beneficiary.** *"I'm grateful for MS Plus support and want to help further their mission. I want to bring hope to others,"* she says. **Like Deanna, you can leave a legacy of hope for people living with MS, through a gift in your Will. Any gift, large or small, even 1-2% of what is left, after gifts for family and friends, can go to research or support services.**

Want to know more? Contact Laura, Future Planning Manager, on **1800 443 867**. You can also email [futureplanning@msplus.org.au](mailto:futureplanning@msplus.org.au) or visit [www.myslegacy.org.au](http://www.myslegacy.org.au).

Link to her story on our website: <https://www.msplus.org.au/news/deanna-an-artful-advocate-for-ms>

# what's on

Exploring the latest programs and updates from client engagement and wellbeing



**NOVEMBER 2024**

## Peer Talk - Speak with someone who understands

Peer talk is a one-to-one peer support program. Trained peer volunteers who have lived with MS and understand the challenges you might be facing are available to speak with you. You'll be matched with a peer volunteer who has a specific interest or experience that matches closely to your circumstance.

Peer Talk is available anytime. For some people just one phone chat is enough, for others a few conversations might be better suited.

**Book a Peer Talk appointment or learn more:** 1800 042 138 | [connect@msplus.org.au](mailto:connect@msplus.org.au)  
**Cost:** Free

### Peer Support Peer Talk

Connect with a peer volunteer one-on-one



## Managing fatigue at work

### Manage your MS related fatigue at work

Register for FACETS



Fatigue is a very common symptom of MS and can significantly impact your work, but there are strategies you can learn to help.

FACETS (Fatigue: Applying Cognitive behavioural and Energy Effectiveness

Techniques to LifeStyle) is an evidence-based program designed for people living with MS to help manage fatigue using 'energy effectiveness' techniques and cognitive behavioural therapy strategies.

Developed by researchers from Bournemouth University and Poole Hospital in the UK, the group program is delivered by trained professionals with no more than 12 participants. The program involves weekly 90min sessions over 6 weeks.

**When:** FACETS for work – Lunchtime session 5 February 2025, 12.00 - 1.30

**Learn more:** [msplus.org.au/FACETS](https://msplus.org.au/FACETS)

**Register:** <https://www.trybooking.com/CUNAE>

**Cost:** \$150

## Learn MS for family & friends

Plus Navigate MS: Family & Friends is a two part program designed for people who support someone with MS. You'll learn about the condition, engage in informative discussions with experts and connect with a supportive community.



**When:** Next online program starts 12 November 2024

**Time:** 7:00pm – 8:15pm

**Register:** [www.trybooking.com/CKEQH](https://www.trybooking.com/CKEQH)

**Cost:** Free

## Make an MS Nurse part of your MS team!

Face to face appointments now available!

MS Nurses are an important part of your MS management team. No matter the question, MS Nurses can provide you with information, reassurance or management strategies.

We work very closely with other MS professionals, so even if you have access to a MS Nurse at your clinic, our nurses are available to answer any of your questions and offer support between your clinic appointments.

Book an appointment with an MS Plus nurse by calling 1800 042 138

**Cost:** Free



## Exercise Classes at Gloria McKerrow House

### Be Better Balanced

A combination of chair and circuit-based exercises designed for individuals who can still walk but have challenges with balance, stamina, and overall mobility. Classes are comprehensive and well-paced, ensuring they are enjoyable for everyone.

**When:** Tuesdays 9.30am — 10.30am  
Thursdays 10.00am – 11.00am (online available)

### Wheels in Motion

A class designed for people in wheelchairs or who are having difficulty walking. In this class the focus is on upper body mobility as well as making use of a motorised exercise bike for those it suits. This is a small group and where possible individual work is done on each person to mobilise leg movement.

**When:** Thursdays 11.00am – 12.00pm **Cost:** \$10.00 per class or 10 classes for \$90.00

*Please call 1800 042 138 to register*



## Online Mindfulness Meditation

*...for people with Multiple Sclerosis and other neurological conditions.*

Join us every Friday afternoon, from 3:30pm - 4:30pm and experience the relaxing benefits of meditation.

Email Helen Woodbridge ([woodbridgehelen@hotmail.com](mailto:woodbridgehelen@hotmail.com)) and she'll send you a Zoom link for the session every Friday. Carers and family also welcome!

## Peer Support

We have two Peer Support Groups available in the ACT, and new members are welcome at any time.

### People with MS (PwMS) Taking Control Group

Our group meets twice a month and seeks to connect people living with MS in the Canberra region, for friendship and information sharing, with a focus on living well with MS.

**Meets:** 1. 12.30 to 2.00pm - 2nd Friday, 15 November 2024 **Venue:** Zoom only  
2. 12.30 to 2.00pm - Last Friday, 29 November 2024 **Venue:** Gloria McKerrow House, Deakin

Contact Vanessa Fanning/Mary Webb at [pwmstcg@gmail.com](mailto:pwmstcg@gmail.com) to be added to our email list, and/or join our Facebook group 'Canberra Region MSers'. In line with privacy principles, you can unsubscribe at any time.

### ACT Weekend MS Peer Support Group

**Meets:** 10am, 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month **Venue:** ACT Café, Canberra  
Contact Plus Connect on 1800 042 138



## Tabletop Games

Come join us for a cuppa, chat and/or a game — No prior knowledge required!

**When:** Saturday 14 December 2024—Last games session for the year!

**Where:** Gloria McKerrow House, 117 Denison St, Deakin ACT

**Time:** 1:00—4:00pm, come and go at your leisure

Please register your interest at [pwmstabletop@gmail.com](mailto:pwmstabletop@gmail.com) for updates.

*\* Family, friends and carers are also welcome \**

