

ANDREW CAMERON'S EXPERIENCE AT WORLD BURNS CONGRESS 2015

It is of course appropriate to begin my report by thanking you and the Board again so very much, for granting me the opportunity to attend this wonderful event. My experience of World Burn Congress, was and is, something that I will always be grateful for and will most certainly never forget - for all the best of reasons!

Now, where to start...? There is so much that was positive about the WBC experience.

So much *Encouragement*....

So many *Courageous* and *Inspiring* stories....

So much *Hope* renewed....

So many *tools* to assist with getting back to *Living!!*

The varied content of the program, as a whole, meant that there was something for all ages and stages of recovery. From the all important Walk of Remembrance, to the Pre Congress Workshops, the Breakout Sessions, the guest speakers, the therapeutic massage service, to the Healing Through Our Stories - Open Mic and of course not forgetting the UBelong Program for youths aged 7-17years. All of this and so much more goes into making 'World Burn' the resounding success that it is!

Personally, I found the whole 'World Burn' experience very rewarding and ultimately life changing. Almost too hard, to easily put into words. As a burn survivor myself, I took much encouragement and inspiration, from simply being in the presence of so many others and hearing their courageous stories. Many of the journey's shared, included inevitably, some of the detail of their accident and the horrible, painful struggle of early recovery, to a place, with much support along the way, of acceptance and moving on in time, towards a healthy, purposeful and thriving life!

Listening to and sharing, in part, these stories, along with participation in one of the many Breakout Sessions: - 'Facing the Future ... STEPS to Social Confidence and Control' (definitely a highlight of my WBC experience) I began to realize how "stuck" I was feeling around this very issue. This workshop included a practical session on the learning that we'd made, around establishing and maintaining safe boundaries "with techniques to feel confident in social situations" such as the sometimes, intrusive questions asked and or the often hurtful staring from strangers. As already alluded to, this session on it's own, moderated by fellow burn survivor, the amusing, insightful and very inspiring Barbara Kammerer Quayle, has reinvigorated and renewed within me, a fresh sense of hope, about my journey forward from here. I was also able to come away from this session with helpful resources to further work on and other valuable information available on Phoenix Society's web site

I try to remember daily to affirm that... "I see myself moving forward..., growing strong..., healthy and thriving..., secure in the everlasting arms of the Love of God..." a line which I've adapted from the book "Falling Through Clouds" which I purchased at WBC

I now again, recognize the importance of remaining connected with the many others who are on this journey, as together we support, encourage and gain strength and healing from one another through our shared experiences. To this end I plan to be available to attend the Children's Burn Camp in the New Year to help and encourage whomever I can.

I think one of the most valuable reminders I took from attending the Phoenix Society's World Burn Congress is that LIFE is most certainly a journey and as I think I'm experiencing, the learning curve is quite steep in places... but that is all good! The important and key ingredient to truly living life..... is to keep moving forward..... and this is most certainly my aim.

I whole-heartedly commend our dear friends Alan Breslau (and Delwyn) for establishing the Phoenix Society and Burn Support Group respectively. Their tireless work over many years and in particular to see The World Burn Congress established and now flourishing is truly a credit to them both. The wider burn community is much stronger and better resourced because of it.

Finally and without any hesitation I would recommend to any other burn survivors and or those connected with them: if you are ever given the opportunity to attend a World Burn Congress... just do it! Your life will never be the same!!!