A letter from our client

I grew up in state care, without parents or family to guide me. There was no emotional support, no safety net, and no one to show me how to navigate life. From a young age, I struggled with anxiety, low self-confidence, PTSD, and a deep sense of worthlessness. I've lived independently since I was 17, learning to survive on my own in a world that often felt overwhelming and unforgiving.

To cope with the emptiness, I turned to alcohol and gambling. I never used illicit drugs or relied on prescription medication, but these habits became my escape. They offered temporary relief, yet they also created destructive patterns that affected my health, my relationships, and my finances.

I started gambling in 2016 and quickly became hooked. The instant highs were addictive. Money that could have been saved went straight to bets, and I even sold personal possessions to fund it. Big wins often led to alcohol-fuelled binges, erasing any progress I made. During COVID, I accessed $20,000 of my superannuation and became addicted to online sports betting, losing it all. I also lost over $14,000 of accumulated annual leave after losing my job. I stopped gambling in January 2025, with a brief relapse in July after receiving my tax return. Since then, I haven't gambled.

My drinking, which began in 2018, became heavier over the years. Between 2020 and 2025, I drank a bottle of bourbon daily, before eventually switching to wine. As of February 2026, I have been clean for one month.

After losing my job in December 2024, I hit a personal low point - financially, emotionally, and mentally. I felt directionless, purposeless, and deeply depressed. Reaching out for help through the gambling hotline became a turning point. Through them, I connected with financial counselling services and the SSI Gambling Harm Prevention Program. Their support, guidance, and understanding were invaluable, and I will always be grateful.

During this period, I decided to take control of my life in a new way. I immersed myself in reading and writing, discovering a lifeline in storytelling. Writing became my escape from self-destruction and a path toward purpose. I've started two novels and I am pursuing a career as an independent author. I also plan to start a blog to guide others facing challenges similar to mine, especially those who grew up in care.

Counselling has been a guiding light. It has helped me manage anxiety, build self-confidence, and develop strategies to face life's challenges without turning to gambling or alcohol. I've learned that asking for help is not a weakness - it is a strength. Change is possible, even when life feels impossible.

I am still a work in progress, but I feel stronger, more hopeful, and more in control than ever before. I face life's hardships head-on, refusing to give up. I hope my story shows that no matter how far you've fallen, it's always possible to take steps toward a better life.