

Hi, my name's Kim. My journey with chronic pain started back in 1993 when I had a motor-cycle accident. I only suffered head and facial trauma but managed to do a bit of internal damage in those areas. It took some serious commitment from my mum and me, and close to two years, to get me back in to the work force, but we did it, pain and all.

South Kolan Queensland, December 2010. I'd just finished loading the trailer for the fifth and final time for my move into Bundaberg, and it had just started to rain.

I had two jobs back then, one that I earned a wage from; I worked part-time as a cook at an outdoor education centre, a really cool school camp facility. I needed this job to support me in my other job. My other job was mostly volunteer work; I was a clown. Balloons, magic, plate spinning, and general silliness; more often than not, helping charities raise money or doing free shows with my puppet for less fortunate kids at weekend camps where I worked with my other job. Not working school holidays or many weekends meant my "real job" didn't interfere with my clowning and working with children meant the clown only ever had to take the costume and make-up off. I had the best jobs in the world.

When the rain finally stopped it was January 2011. Bundaberg and surrounds were flooded. Had I not moved from the house in South Kolan I would have lost everything and been one of those that needed evacuating. Instead I put my clown gear on and went to the evacuation centre and made balloons to help cheer people up and I entertained voluntarily at the fundraising dinner to help Bundaberg businesses get back on their feet and I did what I could out of costume too.

Once the water subsided and the clean-up started, we realised the kitchen at work was a mess with mould. The flooded Kolan River stopped short of the camp buildings but the dampness didn't. January 21st another cook and I went to work to get the kitchen cleaned and ready to operate, we had a group coming in for the weekend.

The day was almost over when I slipped on a small drop of water and my foot collided with the deep fryer, I knew I hit a nerve, by the pain and pins and needles, but things settled down enough for me to keep going and finish things off. That bump was the beginning of my new life – a life of severe chronic pain; like nothing I've ever felt before.

My beginnings with CRPS were similar to many I have read about since, a long time to diagnose, incorrect diagnosis, incorrect treatment, lack of knowledge, it looks perfectly normal, and so on. Living alone in a regional area certainly didn't do me any favours either and the Work Cover run around, I'm not going to go into that now. After going through an unsuccessful nerve block in May 2011, my condition worsened and I was no longer able to live alone and required a carer; not long after that I was introduced to Dystonia; episodes of painful, violent convulsions that although I am conscious of and through, am unable to control, stop or speak during.

June 2012, while soaking my pained feet, in a purple bucket filled with warm water and Epsom salts, the CRPS had spread up my right leg and in to my left foot, I thought about how hard the last eighteen months had been when it came to support, information, etc. There was very little available apart from American information. I felt very much alone with my condition and concerns; and thus the birth of The Purple Bucket Foundation Inc.

Much time was spent ensuring all formalities and legalities were attended to before I sought public memberships, with the first official AGM held in November 2014; prior to this all official decisions were endorsed by the steering committee.

TPBF has come a long way since then, jumping the little hurdles and skipping over stumbling blocks. I have no doubt that TPBF will be a strong support and advocate for all those suffering with CRPS and other Chronic Pain conditions.