

# A Long Dark Journey

My footsteps have been shadowed by a mysterious companion for many years, one that could either assist or disable my momentum in achieving goals. In 1999 I was diagnosed with Bi-Polar otherwise known as manic depression. These powerful forces were capable of erupting or consuming without conscious warning.

When in 'manic mode' I was capable of achieving any goal I set my mind to. Artworks and poetry flowed unhindered; often well into the night as little sleep was required to fuel the creative forces. However for every fantastic stimulating high the depression that followed was equally dramatic. Lethargy and the desire for sleep were overwhelming as thoughts became lost in chaos and confusion.

I left school midterm in 5<sup>th</sup> form to become a hairdresser. When I finished my training I joined the Army for three years as a signals operator. A variety of jobs followed until I returned to hairdressing in my own business. Cancer, a miscarriage and several accidents had left me with injuries, fear grief and pain that, combined with the revelation of mortality, left me in a distinctly unstable mental state. As the pain and fear crawled into my brain to share the 'other side of the looking glass' with bipolar, the 'I who am me' disappeared. Encouraged and supported by my partner I sold the business and moved to Yanakie to begin the slow journey home.

Studying via distance education has proven to be a stabilizing factor in my life. I enrolled in a post graduate course in "Career, Education and Development". When I completed the Graduate Certificate I then had access to Open University to study psychology. From this I was accepted to study at Monash University, where I am now.

It's been a long dark journey.....