



Hope in age of anxiety

Brisbane author and corporate trainer Vicki Bennett offers keys to a better future as an antidote to overcome worries

Story PHIL BROWN

What do you reach for when you are anxious? A book is not a bad option. Brisbane author Vicki Bennett's latest, *The Book of Hope: Antidote for Anxiety*, would be an appropriate option.

It's a compendium of the wisdom and knowledge she has gathered over decades as a motivational speaker and corporate trainer. Bennett, who lives in Brisbane's leafy west, has spent her career helping individuals and the big end of town, working with corporations such as Westpac, BHP and others.

Her self-help books have been translated and published internationally and include *I've Found the Keys, Now Where's The Car?; I've Read The Rules, Now How Do I Play The Game?* and *Signposts for Balance in Love and Work*, among others.

In recent years she has also had success as a children's author with her 2015 book *Two Pennies*, a powerful and poignant story about a little boy who helped to

build a school in Villers-Brettonneux in France, which was followed by *The Little Stowaway*, a World War II story and, in 2019, *Oliver's First Big Spy Adventure*, a book she wrote with her grandson about his inner life as a spy.

She is also the co-producer and writer of the acclaimed documentary *Never Forget Australia*, which explores the relationship between France and Australia forged in World War I.

Coming back to the subject that started her on her path as an author, her new book combines everything she has learnt along the way. And it couldn't have come at a better time.

"I was talking to my publisher and we were talking about anxiety and he said he felt it was something that needed to be addressed," Bennett says. "We talked some more and we realised that one of the most important antidotes to anxiety is hope, having hope for the future.

"We all deal with anxiety in different ways – with alcohol or drugs or social media, anything to try and make it go away."

Bennett's book offers a different solution, facing the reality of feelings and emotions as a first step. The title of her first chapter says it all really, *Make Peace with Anxiety*, which is easy to say but perhaps a little harder to do. But Bennett has decades of experience in this field and not being immune from anxiety herself makes her advice even more authentic.

"In my book I outline steps people can take," she says. "I have a big bank of skills I have collected over the years and I am happy to share them."

With a straightforward and empathetic style and no-nonsense approach, she includes visualisation and other practical techniques. And in case you think that sounds wishy washy she points out that no sportsperson takes the field without visualising success.

Can books really help though? Well, they have certainly helped her, Bennett says, citing a book her dad gave her when she was a teenager: *I Can: The Key To Life's Golden Secrets* by Ben Sweetland.

"That was the beginning for me," she says. ***The Book of Hope: Antidote for Anxiety* by Vicki Bennett, Boolarong Press, \$30:**

