

FR*ENDS* INDEED



National Centre
For Childhood Grief

Providing support to newly
bereaved children and families
childhoodgrief.org.au

Newsletter of the National Centre for Childhood Grief



CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

By Mal McKissock OAM Director,
Clinical Services

Each fortnight I sit in our 'group room' at "A Friend's Place" with 10 children who are living with the death of a parent and I am humbled, impressed, encouraged and, amongst other things, reminded of the value of community.

I see the children supporting each other, telling their stories and, in a way that only they can understand, enriching their memories of the parent who died.

Likewise I am touched by the skill, sensitivity and commitment shown by our team at the National Centre for Childhood Grief (NCCG). The counsellors and support workers return week after week and, without any financial reward, provide a therapeutic, stable and loving environment where it is safe for children to express their grief in their own way.

Counsellors provide one-to-one counselling throughout the week and, every Wednesday evening, one of our two groups of bereaved children come together to gain guidance and encouragement from our team as well as support and normalisation from each other.

This may lead you to think that we only provide support for children. However, whenever the children are at "A Friend's Place" the parent or guardian is there as well. Parents have the option to participate in support sessions with other parents in a group facilitated by one of our counsellors.

In the children's groups we utilise a wide variety of 'activities' and creative exercises aimed at enhancing the child's

ability to live with their grief.

As well as individual counselling and support group options, many of the children elect to attend our Bereaved Sons'/Daughters' Adventure Camps. The objective of these extra activities is to take the support and safety provided through "A Friend's Place" to enable the child to experience safety in the wider community. During these 'camps' they learn about bush craft, learn the importance of working together, develop leadership skills and have a lot of fun.

Since our last newsletter, in February 2009, we have seen many new children at "A Friend's Place" and have also expanded our platform.

Whilst the majority of our work is counselling individual children and facilitating support groups we also provide many other options, such as:

-  **Bereaved Sons' and Bereaved Daughters' Adventure weekends** (more information inside)
-  **Support groups for children who are bereaved through murder** (groups run with the Victims of Homicide Support Group)
-  **Email support services** (run by Di McKissock) to parents and children, teachers and school counsellors around Australia

Not only are our services highly sought after around Australia. Fostering the development of services further afield have resulted in visits to "A Friend's Place" from professionals from Ireland, New Zealand and the USA. They have returned home with new knowledge and experiences to enhance their own services in their countries.





National Centre For Childhood Grief

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

By Rick Taylor

Welcome to the second annual edition of *Friends Indeed*, the newsletter for the National Centre for Childhood Grief. In this edition we celebrate another successful year in terms of the counselling, activities and fundraising.

In November 2009, I was very lucky to be able to attend the Bereaved Sons' Adventure Weekend (see more on this weekend later in this newsletter). I was reminded why I am involved in the NCCG. As a non-counsellor associated with the charity I don't often get the opportunity to meet the boys and girls who benefit from its work. By extension, the children are often "invisible" in many of our lives – it is hard to spot a bereaved child in everyday society.

Time spent with the boys on their adventure weekend reminded me of the grief they feel and the immense need for "A Friend's Place". Our volunteers counsel recently bereaved children and teach them to learn to live with grief. They love and support them through the worst time in their lives.

The counsellors were able to take these boys into the bush and participate in activities they should be doing with their fathers – climbing, camping, making fire etc. It will be a positive memory of their fathers in years to come.

I would like to thank all our volunteers once again for their work. Hundreds of hours of both group and individual counselling have helped hundreds of children this year. It is through the volunteers' hard work, love and devotion that we are able to make a difference to these children.

We have been very lucky with Ella Bullen joining the team last year to support the running of our operations. Already Ella has made a huge impact on organising counselling sessions, receiving calls from bereaved parents, and ensuring the smooth running of the charity. Thank you Ella and welcome aboard!

I would also like to thank everyone who has donated.

In particular there have been some very generous donations from **Angus and Julia Coupland, Dr. Ray Raper, Kenny Arnott and Lisa & Josh Oshlack**. We have also received support from companies such as **State Street, National Council for Jewish Women of Australia, Ambition Group Limited and Hunter Transport**. A special thanks goes to the social committee of **Kimberly-Clark Australia** who organised staff to give memory boxes, photo frames and scrap books to our kids last Christmas.

What these kids really want for Christmas is one more day with their dead parent, but we can't give them that. Kimberly-Clark gave them a way to remember their parent with a very thoughtful and touching gesture.

Your donations are important to us – we are a small charity with a low income and every contribution makes a difference. With your support, no matter how large or small, we can continue to provide a safe and loving environment for bereaved children and teach them how to live with the grief.

Thank you for all your support and we look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Richard M. Taylor



WHAT DO WE DO?

The NCCG ("A Friend's Place") provides free individual and group counselling for bereaved children and young people (up to the age of 18 years) and their families.

The philosophy of the NCCG is based on the following 4 principles:

- 1 Grief is a natural response to loss
- 2 Children, like adults, grieve when someone close to them dies and they need opportunities to express this grief in an understanding and supportive environment
- 3 The duration and intensity of grief are unique for each child
- 4 With support, children have the capacity to integrate grief into their lives if the environment provides acceptance, compassion and safety

Parents' support groups are run simultaneously with the children's groups. We also act as advocates for individuals and families to assist them in overcoming specific challenges. Additionally, we provide community education seminars and workshops.

Counselling services are provided for children and families in specific situations. This helps to identify and assess the most appropriate and effective response to those who have experienced traumatic deaths including suicide, homicide or terrorism.

For more information about the NCCG, or if you would like to put a friend in contact with us, please visit www.childhoodgrief.org.au or phone us on 1300 654 556 or email info@childhoodgrief.org.au

As parents, we get an insight into what our kids are experiencing, so we are better equipped to manage situations as they arise and before they get out of hand.



childhoodgrief.org.au

REECE'S



IN PROFILE: ELLA BULLEN (CENTRE MANAGER)

By Dianne McKissock OAM



I am delighted to be able to introduce Ella Bullen as our Centre Manager. Ella began work at "A Friend's Place" in June 2009 and, from her very first day, has added to the warmth and efficiency of our service. Ella is a pleasure to work with, a real team player, yet happy to work alone. She is organised and capable while being able to initiate and complete tasks with the minimum of fuss. Ella is quietly building on the physical facelift of the centre which was begun by Sylvia when she supervised painting and refurbishment.

At the same time, Ella is increasing our administrative efficiency, helping us all to lift our game in that department without stepping on anyone's toes. A real people skill indeed.

Ella loves her job. She loves being able to use all of her skills – her organisational knowledge and efficiency, talking to people in need, feeling as though she is making a worthwhile social contribution, making a difference. She also genuinely likes her colleagues, loves working with them, and is stimulated by all she is learning.

I asked Ella what she finds hardest about her job and her answer was a version of 'hearing about the terrible things that happen to people, the sadness of their experience.' Her own sadness in response is usually diffused in action as she sets about ensuring that they receive the help they need, as quickly as possible.

In her private life she is the wife of Bruce, and the mother of a 13 year old daughter called Tayla and a 11 year old son Robert. Her 88 year old father in law completes the household.

Ella loves gardening and being a home maker. She transfers many of these home making skills into enhancing the environment in which we all provide care for those who are grieving. Ella says she feels natural and at home at the Centre, a sentiment shared by the whole team, and hopefully by our clients.

We all extend you the warmest of welcomes to the team, Ella and our hope that we may continue to share a long and productive collegiate experience. ■



"A Friend's Place" has really made a huge positive difference to my journey as a 'single' parent.

I love you dad

I first came across the National Centre for Childhood Grief (or "A Friend's Place" as it's affectionately known), after my dad died when I was 6 years old. I am now 14. There was no lead up to his death, he went to work and never came home. It seems like such a long time ago now.

I guess when dad died I didn't really understand what was happening, all I knew was that I was really sad and I just wanted my dad to come home and for everything to go back to normal. But it didn't and slowly even though I was only 6 I think I knew it could never be the same, for me or my mum.

I was sad, angry, confused without really knowing why! My first visit at the centre was a few months after dad died. Mum did not know what to expect so she really couldn't prepare me for that first visit. Looking back I think it was good not to know. It was better just to see for ourselves.

"Am I different now to when I first came across the centre? Yes. I have grown up and have an understanding of death and its consequences"

It was good, comfortable and easy. There was someone there who understood how I felt about things and could explain it in a way that made sense. **My mum was looked after as well and this made me feel better.** Looking back at that time now I think it helped us take a little bit of control of everything that was happening around us. It was not long before I joined the kids group. **Every alternate Wednesday I would go the centre and be with other kids who had lost a parent. It felt like a community, we were all in the same boat with different stories to tell.**

These groups are run by leaders from the centre and they are great. It is fun, sad, silly, and respectful and so much more. I learnt how to remember my dad and accept that his death did not change the fact that he is still my dad. I was able to learn that being sad is okay, it's normal and death is a part of our lives. I also know that I have met some great people there – both kids and adults. The funny thing is I probably would never had met them had my dad not died. I still find that a little strange.

"The childhood grief centre and my being part of the group of bereaved kids helped me deal with not having my dad around any more. I realised that death is just part of life."

While I would be at the centre in the kids group, all the parents would sit and have a chat and a catch up about things happening in their lives. There was a leader made available to them so they could raise any issues about kids and grief. **I know my mum found this useful as she was with people who were going through similar things to what we were and they understood,** possibly more than people who have not lost a partner at a young age. I don't know exactly what they talked about and

STORY

they never knew exactly what we talked about but I do know they, like us, seemed to spend a lot of time laughing.

I stayed at the groups for a long time, it became part of my routine. Sure it was a juggle and a rush at times but it was good and I know it helped me cope and understand what death is and how it changes everything. **I enjoyed it there, at times it was very sad but that was just part of the whole process.** The National Centre for Childhood Grief, and my being part of the group of bereaved kids, helped me deal with not having my dad around any more. I realised that death is just part of life.

I only hope any kid who is unlucky enough to have a parent die is lucky enough to come across "A Friend's Place"

The leaders at the centre are fantastic, they give so much to the kids and the parents and a simple "thank you" never seems enough. Am I different now to when I first came across the centre? Yes. I have grown up and have an understanding of death and its consequences. Now I have left the centre I think I can really see how much they helped me realise that I would be okay and that I was not the only one who has had a parent die.

As a child who lost a parent it was great to be able to talk to someone rather than the surviving parent, you don't want to worry or upset them further. You could ask things and know it was not a silly question. You are always treated with respect and kindness.

For me "A Friend's Place" is fantastic. You are given unconditional support and the staff ask for so little in return. Did they help me/us? Yes. Bereaved kids need honesty, understanding, kindness and to be treated like kids. Often we are caught up in adult things when someone dies and it is too much. I only hope any kid who is unlucky enough to have a parent die is lucky enough to come across "A Friend's Place". ■



HELPING YOU HELP THEM

THREE USEFUL RESOURCES FROM THE NCCG

ONLY
\$66
PLUS P+H



KIDS' GRIEF

A Handbook for Group Leaders

By Dianne McKissock OAM

The essential resource for all those involved in the care of dying and bereaved children and their families.

All proceeds of sales support the ongoing work of the NCCG.

THE MAGIC OF MEMORIES CD

By Dianne McKissock OAM
Narrated by Henri Szeps OAM

These 5 real life stories, narrated by Henri Szeps, are designed to help adults understand and facilitate children's grief.

All proceeds of sales support the ongoing work of the NCCG.



ONLY
\$55
PLUS P+H

ONLY
\$38
PLUS P+H



THE GRIEF OF OUR CHILDREN

By Dianne McKissock OAM

Ideal for newly bereaved families.

All proceeds of sales support the ongoing work of the NCCG.

ORDER NOW

www.childhoodgrief.org.au

Ph: 1300 654 556

Email: help@childhoodgrief.org.au

ADVENTURE WEEKENDS

A SUCCESSFUL COMBINATION OF FUN AND TEAM WORK

By Peter Coupland, Senior Counsellor

"A Friend's Place" believes children and families can survive and cope with the many changes and challenges that occur in grief if they have adequate understanding, support and compassion. Our adventure weekends are designed to emphasise the importance of teamwork.

Thank you to State Street, a global financial management company, and Barker College for their support. The Bereaved Daughters' Adventure Weekend and The Bereaved Sons' Adventure Weekend would not be possible without this support from our loyal sponsors.

State Street's on-going sponsorship enables us to employ a highly professional team of instructors from the Outdoor Education Group (OEG). We look forward to a long association with OEG.

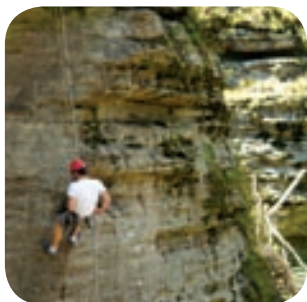
Barker College once again donated the use of The Grange at Mount Victoria for our accommodation and we are very grateful for their generosity.

Bereaved Sons' Adventure Weekend

31 October – 1 November, 2009

Building on the successful themes from the 2008 weekend, there was a notable change in levels of confidence, teamwork and willingness to try new challenges.

This year we added camp-craft to the range of activities in preparation for future journeys. These weekends encourage the boys to build the necessary skills and confidence in asking for and receiving help. We believe this particular skill is invaluable in coping with grief and other challenging periods of their lives. ■



My son had a **FABULOUS** time. He's had increased self-confidence and the weekend was a definite catalyst in this development. He has made new friends, surfs with confidence on his surfboard and has really developed in his ability to think things through and be proud of who he is. Bringing boys together in the same situation is a wonderful idea and it has really made a difference.

– Michelle Spartalis –

A beautiful, nurturing weekend with big experiences for the girls – stretching themselves, facing fear and being brave, noticing nature, domestic goddess stuff while reflecting and conversing with their parent who died. I learnt a lot about some pretty simple (and emotionally complex) stuff. Thanks for allowing me to join you all.

– Sashe Fisher –



Bereaved Daughters' Adventure Weekend

6 – 7 February, 2010

**FUN EXCITING
EXHILARATING
MEMORABLE
INSPIRING** were just some

of the words used by the girls who participated in their first Bereaved Daughters' Adventure Weekend.

Braving the wettest February weekend in Sydney for years, 12 girls ranging from 9-15 years, worked together and supported each other through some very challenging and wet outdoor activities.

Ropes courses, initiative activities, climbing and abseiling helped to build trust, communication and team work skills. Talent shows, cooking and games kept them occupied while sheltering from the rain. The memories of their parent who died were ever-present as we discussed how proud they would be to see their daughter's courage, resilience and determination. ■



4 WAYS YOU CAN HELP

The NCCG is a registered charity and provides free of charge services to bereaved families. We are fully dependent on donations from the community to sustain our organisation.

There are so many ways you can help:

1

Volunteer your **TIME OR EXPERTISE**

2

Offer the NCCG access to any **RESOURCES** you may have

3

DONATIONS (even the smallest amount can make a difference)

4

SPONSORSHIP of a special project or a core service.



CORE SERVICES

Our core counselling program requires approx. \$1,250 per year to support a grieving child.

You can contribute in the following ways:

| | |
|----------|---|
| \$50 | = Support a child for one group session |
| \$100 | = Support a child for one month |
| \$300 | = Support a child for three months |
| \$625 | = Support a child for six months |
| \$1,250 | = Support a child for one year |
| \$2,500 | = Support 2 children for one year |
| \$5,000 | = Support 4 children for one year |
| \$18,000 | = Support a group for one year |

NB: All children's details are kept private



DONATE TODAY AND CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE!

www.childhoodgrief.org.au

click on the "donate" button
or

Email: Peter Coupland
or Rick Taylor at
info@childhoodgrief.org.au

PHONE: 1300 654 556



National Centre For Childhood Grief

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