



National Centre  
For Childhood Grief

Providing support for  
bereaved children and families  
[childhoodgrief.org.au](http://childhoodgrief.org.au)

# FRIENDS INDEED

National Centre for Childhood Grief • Newsletter

## Change

Dr. Liz Mann – Clinical Director

It is with very mixed feelings that I compose my first newsletter report as Clinical Director of 'A Friend's Place'. As anyone who has been bereaved knows full well, change can be both painful and difficult. When change is forced upon us unexpectedly, such as often happens when someone we love dies, the pain and heartache can seem unbearable. I am so thankful to Mal and Di, that because they love and care for our community at the Centre so much, they were determined to minimise the pain of their leaving, and to give us all time to adjust to managing in their physical absence. This thoughtfulness epitomises the depth of their care, and their understanding of loss and grief. It also reflects their gentleness and patience in helping people learn to live with their grief. They genuinely live what they teach.

It seems appropriate and fitting that I firstly thank Mal and Di, on behalf of all of us, for their lifetime of dedication and support to the bereaved community. Their tireless work, vision and passion for bereaved children and their families has been phenomenal. 'A Friend's Place' is their treasured 'baby' - a place where people can come in their time of great distress and receive the care and support that they so desperately need. It is so much more than a counsellor's office. It is a genuine community, like an extended family, where we all care deeply for each other. It is a safe haven for so many bereaved people. I feel both humbled and honoured by the trust Mal and Di have placed in me to carry their dream into the future.



Another very special person I want to mention is our beloved friend and colleague, Pete Coupland. We were all deeply saddened to hear that Pete died on 1st May, following a 3-year battle with AML. Di has written a beautiful memoir for Pete later in this newsletter, but I just want to say that personally, I am extremely grateful to Pete for the encouragement and support that he showed me in my new role. My love and best wishes go to Heidi, Billie and Mia in their terrible grief.

I know Pete will be greatly missed by many families associated with the Centre, many of whom Pete cared for so beautifully during their own grief. I continue the work here knowing that Pete was passionate about 'A Friend's Place', and so desired it to continue for generations to come.

Together the team, staff and Board members are faithfully continuing the wonderful work here at 'A Friend's Place'.

We know that what

we do is based on a rich foundation of experience, knowledge, compassion and, most importantly, love. I am deeply appreciative of everyone's support as I navigate my new role, and ensure that what has been so lovingly established here will continue to grow, develop and flourish.





## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE



### Rick Taylor

Hi everyone and welcome to this year's newsletter. It has been a time of great change for us recently, and with that change, comes great opportunities. For the last 18 months or so we have

been working through a transition plan as our beloved founders Mal and Di McKissock retire as clinical directors and the reins are taken over by Dr. Liz Mann. Liz has been a senior counsellor for several years now and is perfectly qualified as clinical director. She has the love and support of the counselling team, the rest of the Board, and the wider counselling community. Exciting times are ahead for A Friend's Place and we are safe under Liz's leadership.

Mal and Di's retirement coincides with our 21st anniversary as a charity. It is a nice symmetry that

the traditional coming of age mirrors the leaving of our founders. Mal and Di will still be around in the background – Mal is still on the Board, Di is still providing Clinical Supervision for our Counsellors and doing lots of email counselling, but we will miss them both dearly on a day to day basis. We had a formal party at the end of January: a beautiful combination of tears and laughter, of remembering the past and excitement for the future. Needless to say, we owe Mal and Di a huge debt of gratitude and thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

I would also like to thank all our supporters this year who have provided their love, their time, and their money. We have a fantastic team of counsellors and volunteer workers, supported by Ella and Valda who keep the whole machine working smoothly. Third Link, Macquarie Bank and State Street continued to support us again with some very generous donations, and we also were also lucky to receive donations from the Commonwealth Bank, Turks Legal, and more recently Sun Corp and the Nine Links Foundation. We also received a large number of individual donations – thank you to everyone; your support makes a big difference to us and enables us to continue the invaluable work of caring for bereaved children and their families.

## END OF AN ERA

On the 31st January 2015 Mal & Di McKissock retired. After 40 years as Directors of the Bereavement Care Centre and 21 years after they founded the National Centre for Childhood Grief (A Friend's Place), they have handed over the 'keys' to a wonderful team of Counsellors and Volunteers.

The new Director of 'A Friend's Place' is Dr. Liz Mann. Liz has worked with Mal & Di for a number of years and brings a similar passion for the care of bereaved children and their families as well as being able to continue the degree of clinical excellence for which 'A Friend's Place' is known.

Mal & Di will of course still be 'involved' with the Centre, offering supervision and mentoring to the team as well as the occasional training programs.

A wonderful retirement party was held in their honour at the Centre on January 31 2015. Guests included past & present counsellors, new and old board members, and ambassadors. Many parents who have been part of the AFP family and special appearances included

some of the 'kids' who attended the groups many years ago and who are now adults. On the night some of the 'kids' even turned up with their own children to say hello, goodbye and "thank you" to Mal & Di.

We know this is not really 'goodbye' to Mal & Di but their role within the Centre will change dramatically as they enjoy the next phase of their life together. This is a significant step as the Centre has reached its 21-year milestone.

It has come of age.





# IN LOVING MEMORY OF PETER COUPLAND

## Dianne McKissock

One of our beloved counsellors, Peter Coupland, died peacefully on Friday the 1st of May 2015, in a room filled with love. He was diagnosed three years ago with Acute Myeloid Leukemia and after a bone marrow transplant in November 2012, fought hard to regain his health and well-being. Despite living with an uncertain future, decreased energy, and physical strength, Peter contributed to life almost until his last breath.

His association with the NCCG spanned a 16-year period during which time he provided individual counselling for children and their families, co-led support groups, and provided individual counselling for bereaved and dying adults through The Bereavement CARE Centre. He was an invaluable Board Member for the NCCG for a number of years and only resigned because of failing health. Peter remained connected to, and continued to support the NCCG in every way possible until the end of his life.

Three of Peter's professional 'babies' were the adventure programs designed to increase children's resilience in times of adversity, managing grief in the school setting, and care of bereaved adults in the workplace. In the last 2 years of his life Peter worked as a counsellor with the Palliative Care Team in the Southern Highlands, continued his unique and compassionate style of executive coaching in South East Asia and Australia, and was patient representative on several committees with the Cancer Council.

Bereaved in early life when his own father died, Peter was an inspiring role model for bereaved children and young people at the Centre. When colleagues, children, and adult clients were asked to describe him and the impact he had on their lives, the adjectives were consistently similar - a skilled clinician, outgoing, ethical, trustworthy, passionately loving, expressive, funny, empathic, gentle, strong, committed, adventurous, unique, special, magical - a life changing person. A lot to miss.

His funeral on Monday the 25th May in the picturesque Southern Highlands of NSW was also special - a fitting celebration of a wonderful man and a life lived superbly. Our hearts go out

to Peter's beautiful wife Heidi, and their equally beautiful daughters Billie (17) and Mia (13). We know they have a tough path to walk for many years to come, and hope that the love and respect Peter earned from so many people gives them reason to feel proud, and perhaps, in the long term, will help to smooth some of the rough edges of their grief.

To know Peter was to love him, and to love him means missing his physical presence every day. We are grateful for the many magical memories he has helped us create at the NCCG, a lasting contribution to the healing 'essence' of 'A Friend's Place'. In a future newsletter we will let you know about the memorial, which will be created in his honour.



Sophie Robertson, one of our bereaved parents along with her children used our services for many years and received counseling from Pete has created a "crowdfunding page":

<https://ozcrowd.com/campaigns/remembering-pete-coupland/#.VWP9MlyqpHy>

Funding page ends: July 19, 2015



## NEW AMBASSADOR



### Rachael McLennon

I remember first being introduced to the work done by the team at the National Centre for Childhood Grief 4 years ago and it instantly resonated with me. Having 3 young children of my own, I often wonder what life might be like for my kids should anything happen

to me and/or my husband. The older we get, the more aware we become of things that can go wrong. Cancer, car accidents, boating accidents have all claimed the precious lives of parents I know that have all left children

behind. As a parent, I have come to learn that if I can build resilience in my children, then I have provided them with a tool they will use throughout their lives.

So to know that an organisation like the NCCG exists, to provide loving emotional support to these children, gives me a sense of relief.

Having recently resigned from the Board of the NCCG to find a little balance, I am delighted to have been appointed an ambassador, which provides me with an opportunity to advocate for their work, and do what I can to raise both awareness and funds for a wonderful team.

I am incredibly proud of the NCCG, their work and their compassionate team and I am delighted to continue to support them.

## 'A FRIEND'S PLACE' CHARITY AMBASSADOR

### Darren Percival

A graduate from a Sydney performing arts centre, Darren worked for a decade with jazz icon James Morrison, released several solo albums, and worked as a backing vocalist for many well-known Australian artists.

Best known these days for his phenomenal, soul stirring performances on the first season of 'The Voice' where Keith Urban coached Darren, he became the 2012 runner up. His album 'Happy Home' debuted at number 3 on the ARIA chart, followed by a sell out national tour. Darren lives in Queensland with his wife Amanda and two young children.

We are delighted to have him as an Ambassador for 'A Friend's Place' (National Centre for Childhood Grief) and appreciate his time and effort as a special performer at our annual event - 'Remembering Hearts'.



## AMBASSADOR

### Deborah Clay

Deborah is the Sydney News Director at Southern Cross Austereo's 92s 2Day FM and Triple M. and the first female recipient of the prestigious Brian White Memorial Award, which recognises sustained achievement and effort across news, current affairs, entertainment, and sport reporting. Deborah is also

on the CH 7 morning show.

We are thrilled to have her as our Ambassador and appreciate all the work she has put in to support the National Centre for Childhood Grief.

## JOSH & RALPH

Josh & Ralph busking at Chatswood for NCCG, they managed to donate a sizable amount to the centre using their musical skills and genuine cute looks. Thanks for thinking of us.



'A Friend's Place' video is now on Youtube (a link has also been placed on our Facebook page).

<http://youtu.be/q8ZW21m18x4>

'A Friend's Place' is thrilled to share with you this video. The video was funded through a grant from the St George Foundation and made by Trapdoor Productions; with their permission it features children who have attended groups at the Centre. In only a couple of minutes it manages to take the viewer on an unexpected, powerful journey.





# BOARD CHANGES

It is with a mixture of sadness and deep appreciation that we say goodbye to two of our very special Board members – Rachael McLennon and Nina Olle-Bennet. Both are creative, intelligent, and competent women, and they generously contributed their very different but equally special gifts to helping the NCCG not only survive financially, but also clinically. They supported the Clinical Directors in the transition process towards retirement, and loyally supported and publicly promoted the Centre's services in the wider community. Both had the capacity to envision future directions and ways in which 'A Friend's Place' might expand or slightly change its services to ensure they are made available

to a wider group of vulnerable grieving children and their families.

Rachael and Nina combined business knowledge and skills with heartfelt compassion and understanding, and for this reason they will be sorely missed. We all understand that the complexity of trying to combine careers and life in a young family with their roles as NCCG Board Members eventually became too difficult and they resigned at the end of 2014. They will continue to express their loyalty to 'A Friend's Place' in different ways in the future - Rachael as an Ambassador, and Nina as a consultant.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your invaluable contributions to the care of bereaved families.

## OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

### MARK STEINBERG

Mark Steinberg is a Chartered Accountant who has worked in CFO or equivalent roles for the last 15 years in a number of industries and geographies. He is currently the Group CFO for Cover-More Limited, an ASX listed company.

Mark qualified as a Chartered Accountant in South Africa in 1989 and subsequently spent 11 years in the profession, 4 with PwC in Johannesburg and 7 with E&Y in Sydney, doing a mix of audit and corporate advisory work. He became an Australian Chartered Accountant in 1990 and a member of Finsia in 1991.

Following his time in the audit and accounting profession, Mark spent almost 10 years in the telecommunications industry, and a further 10 years in financial services. During this time he has worked with organisations that include Optus, Vodafone, Macquarie Bank and Commonwealth Bank.

During his time at Commonwealth Bank, Mark worked as a committee member of the Staff Community Fund, the vehicle through which the bank collects contributions from current and former staff and provides support to a variety of not for profit ventures.

### ANDREW MARCHANT

Andrew is a financial services professional with more than 17 years of experience across advice, investment research, asset allocation, tax, trustee responsibilities and governance. Andrew's current role is Head of Advice for Commonwealth Private. Andrew is also a member of the Commonwealth Private Investment Committee.

Andrew's interest in philanthropy was sparked during his career at Perpetual Private Clients, Australia's largest professional trustee, where he was fortunate to support many high net worth families, charitable trusts and for purpose institutions in developing and managing their investment portfolios for the benefit of their beneficiaries. Andrew was also a member of the Perpetual Private Clients Investment Committee.

Andrew is a member of the Sydney Eisteddfod Investment Committee and is qualified with a Bachelor of Commerce, a Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investments, and a Graduate Diploma in Financial Planning.

### ROBERT McROBBIE

Robert McRobbie has practiced law in New South Wales in private practice and in the financial markets for several years. He is a Director in the Legal Risk Management Division of Macquarie Bank's Commodities and Financial Markets group.

During his 10 years at Macquarie Robert has been involved in a number of philanthropic projects, including as a member of a team providing assistance to the Tiwi Land Council in relation to various commercial enterprises in the Tiwi Islands. In this role Robert has spent time in the Tiwi Islands learning about business and social initiatives being developed for the benefit of the Tiwi community. Robert has also been proud to

participate in a number of Macquarie Group Foundation initiatives, including as a mentor and judge in a social entrepreneurs Kick Starter program coordinated by the Macquarie Group Foundation and The School for Social Entrepreneurs Australia. Robert sees his participation on the NCCG's board as an opportunity to focus more of his attention on supporting an organisation which plays an essential role in the lives of many Australian families.

Robert has degrees in law, arts and social sciences from Queensland University and the University of New South Wales. He has also completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Applied Finance at Macquarie University. Robert lives in Sydney with his wife, Louise and three children. In his spare time Robert is a keen photographer, specialising in animal and wildlife photography.



## NEW COUNSELLOR



### Scott Andrews

I first became aware of the McKissock's through the ABC radio program Step by Step – Coping with Grief when I was about 12 years of age. Although most of the content went over my head at the time, my mum gained a great deal of comfort through listening to the program. She had

also bought one of the first editions of Mal and Di's book (Coping with Grief), back when it was much smaller than it is now, and a well-thumbed copy was kept on the family bookshelf for many years.

I started my counselling training through the Australian College of Applied Psychology while I was still working at Optus as a Dispute Resolutions Officer. I left Optus prior to graduating and worked for two years in a funeral home. During this time, I obtained a thorough knowledge of the funeral industry and was dedicated to assisting families

in a meaningful and personalised funeral experience. The majority of my undergraduate field placement was completed at the Homicide Victim's Support Group (HVSG), and I continued to work there as a volunteer on the 24-hour telephone support line until I was offered a full-time position shortly thereafter. While working at HVSG, I completed both the adult and children's bereavement counselling training at NCCG, and am now involved as a Support Worker in one of the fortnightly kids groups. I am often humbled by the strength, compassion, and resilience that the kids demonstrate in our group.

My current roles at NCCG involve further training in counselling with both adults and children, and working on various research projects that focus on the childhood bereavement experience. I am currently studying a Master's degree in Social Work and hope to finish by the end of this year. Hobbies include going to the beach, cooking, Bikram yoga and fantasizing about buying a motorbike and learning to paraglide. Our 2 year old son (Jacob) keeps my wife and I entertained and exhausted in the most enjoyable way.

## NEW COUNSELLOR



### Joke Klein-van Exel

My name is Joke (English: Yokuh) Klein-van Exel and as the name suggests I have an international background. I was born and raised in The Netherlands and my husband's work has taken us overseas since 1990. We lived in Germany, Singapore, and all together 12 years in Australia. Our two sons were also

born in The Netherlands but raised internationally.

In 1977 I graduated to become a Registered Nurse and have practised in The Netherlands, Singapore and Australia.

What I loved most in my 30 years of working as a nurse, was the interaction with patients and the difference I could make by providing them with the very best care I could give. In 2010 I felt the need to broaden my personal and professional horizon and decided to study counselling and psychotherapy. I thought my nursing experience and interest in people would provide me with a sound base for this change of career. I am so glad I took that decision especially since after my graduation I got the opportunity to become involved with 'A Friends Place' where such wonderful work is done by helping children to cope with the death of someone they love. I hope to be doing this work for many more years to come.

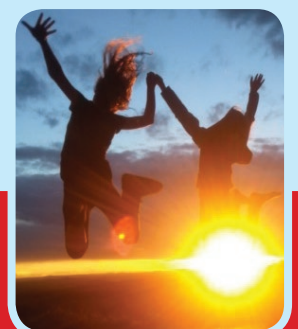
In my free time I love to walk, ski, practice yoga and riding pillion with my husband on his motorbikes. Last but not least I am a passionate tennis and soccer fan.

## 2014 GIRLS RESILIENCE WEEKEND

Our very special guest/volunteer for 2014 Girls Resilience Weekend, was Phoebe Bakker, her talents in painting, drawing, illustrating and teaching were put to good use on the weekend as Phoebe guided the girls in creating their precious Journals. Phoebe's work has a profound effect on people of all ages, transporting them into a magical world of imagination.

Comments by Phoebe Bakker: Words fail me. This has been one of the most valuable and inspiring experiences I can remember. What a privilege to be invited to invest in these young girls who are navigating grief and to watch as they took the lessons and flew, filling their Journals with colour, poetry, memories and feelings, reminders and quotes. The buzz

in the room as 16 girls created from the heart is something I will never forget. You definitely need a full day to see the transformation from shy and self described 'non-creatives' to vibrant and excited girls passing their work around with pride. Heart=full. Thank you to @Noonaweena for the most amazing venue and thank you to #CommBank for your sponsorship of this weekend – as much a part of the process as the lessons. And to Mal, Di and the volunteer team from @afriendsplace and of course, the catering team – thank you.





## Remembering Hearts® 2014

Thank you to all who were able to attend our Remembering Hearts Event on Saturday 10th October, you all made it feel like 'A Friend's place' indeed. The

year long preparation to make the day such a success and the process appeared seamless and to all of you who were able to help on the day ... many, many thanks for a job well done. The RH event was the last 'official' function for Di and me and we could not have chosen a better way or a more wonderful group of people with whom to do it. Our hope is the day will get bigger and better and many of us will continue to be involved at some level for the near future.

- Mal



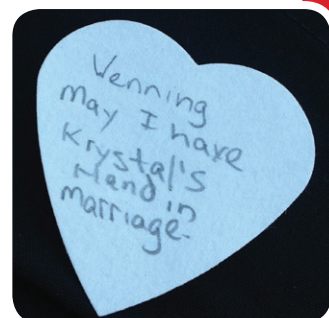
## REMEMBERING HEARTS 2014 STORY

### Andrew and Krystal

Andrew and I thought we would share a moment we shared together at the 'remembering hearts picnic' last year. My father passed away when I was 11, unfortunately he took his own life when he was as young as 33. I miss him terribly. I am very traditional when it comes to marriage and Andrew knew that he needed to ask dad for my hand in marriage. Obviously a difficult task, considering the circumstances. Andrew, I think had it planned the whole time however I came along to the picnic to celebrate my father's life. Andrew had other plans.

When we went down to the water Andrew had written on his heart 'Venning can I have Krystal's hand in marriage' Andrew showed me this moments before letting go off the jetty and in to the water. This was a moment that Andrew could connect with dad and this has been memorable for me as we enter into starting our lives as husband and wife. I never thought I would feel like dad was present in my life through these moments however he is right here with me every step of the way.

I want to say a big thank you to NCCG for all the work you do with young children, I know I would have benefited from your services as a child. Furthermore the event was a wonderful opportunity for me as an adult to remember and celebrate dad's life and share it with the people I love. Thank you and God bless.



## SAVE THE DATE

### Remembering Hearts® 2015

10th October 2015

Bicentennial Park

Federal Road, Glebe New South Wales 2037

1 - 4 pm family picnic, includes activities for the kids. For further details and to secure your free ticket please go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/remembering-hearts-tickets-7842877257>



# THANK YOU

Thank you to Turks Legal for supporting our work and for the wonderful huge toy delivery, every piece has been played with and appreciated.

T 02 8257 5700

E [info@turkslegal.com.au](mailto:info@turkslegal.com.au)

Level 44, 2 Park Street,

Sydney NSW 2000

[www.turkslegal.com.au](http://www.turkslegal.com.au)



# COMMUNITY GRANT

We are thrilled to announce 'A Friend's Place' has been recognised by @Commonwealth Bank with a \$10,000 community grant. With this grant we were able to take children who have suffered the death of a parent, some both parents, on a "Resilience Weekend". This time away provides loving support in a safe place where children can meet other children who have had a parent die and share their experiences as they learn to live with its impact on their lives. Also included is a lot of fun! The girls resilience weekend was held at the end of June 2014. Thanks for your support Commonwealth Bank!



# A BIG THANK YOU ...

... to the following corporate teams that donated their time to help make 'A Friend's Place' what it is today and also for donating valuable and much needed resources.

Optus Consumer Insights

William Buck (NSW) Pty Ltd

Allergan Australia Pty Ltd

Stanford University Global Volunteer day 16/5/15

ANZ Legal Group

# "TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIVING"

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$2.00

## THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

- 1 Monthly "direct debit". Decide the amount you wish to pledge and you can join or cancel at any time. Visit [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au) and click on the 'donate online' button.
- 2 To make a one-off donation our bank account details are:  
Name: NCCG BSB: 032545 A/C: 152908
- 3 You can also help by providing craft materials or much needed equipment. There is a wish list on our website [www.childhoodgrief.org.au](http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au), under "How Can I Help" – "By Donating Goods" e.g. the Centre would love some new furniture for our counselling rooms.

- 4 The National Centre for Childhood Grief is now registered with [www.everydayhero.com.au](http://www.everydayhero.com.au) nominate us as your charity to fundraise for e.g. City to Surf, the Sydney Half Marathon or any number of activities nationally.

- 5 Call 1300 654-556 if you wish to make a donation from your credit card (Visa or MasterCard).



National Centre For Childhood Grief

ABN 79 098 660 130