



National Centre
For Childhood Grief

Providing support for
bereaved children and families
childhoodgrief.org.au

FRIENDS INDEED

National Centre for Childhood Grief • Newsletter

A "New Normal"

Dr. Liz Mann – Clinical Director NCCG



Terrorism. Violence. Fear. Sadly, all part of what is rapidly becoming a "new normal" in our world. Never something we would choose, but rather something forced upon us.

When someone close to us dies, everything in our lives changes. Our world is often thrown into complete chaos, and we can wonder if life will ever be "normal" again.

Last year, two of our counsellors died - Peter Coupland and Michael Hassett. Both were special, highly valued and dearly loved members of our team here at 'A Friend's Place'. We know of course, how beloved they were as husbands, and fathers, how loved they were as members of their wider families, and loved and respected as friends. Our loving and compassionate thoughts continue to be with the families of these two very special men. We miss them both so much.

Other significant changes have been that while Mal and Di have been enjoying their (semi) retirement, we have had to adjust to not having them around the Centre as much. We have very much appreciated their ongoing support.

The Chairman of our Board, Rick Taylor, has also stepped down from this role after 12 years of faithful service. Mark Steinberg is already doing a fine job as our new Chairperson. Mark, Andrew, Robert and Rick have also worked tirelessly to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the Centre.

So the NCCG has been going through a phase of significant change, of grief, and of learning to function and thrive in what is now our "new normal".

This process has been made possible

by the commitment and support of many people. Our dedicated team has been outstanding. Every counsellor and support worker has continued to provide a level of counselling service that is exceptional.

Ella and Valda have continued to be the engine that keeps us running smoothly.

I thank each and every one of the team for their commitment and support to me, to the bereaved community and to our Centre. I am confident that together we can continue to help bereaved families learn to live with their grief, and adjust to the reality that is *their* "new normal".



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Mark Steinberg

Welcome to the eighth edition of "Friends Indeed" Recently the Peter Coupland Memorial Dinner, was held at Eden Gardens. The event was a moving memorial to Peter and his work at 'A Friend's Place'. We miss Peter's contribution to the Centre and are grateful to have known him. Thank you to everyone who attended and/or donated to pay tribute to his life and his service to the Centre. I am looking forward to participating in the inaugural "Peter Coupland Adventure Weekend" for boys.

'A Friend's Place' continues to provide support for kids as they go through difficult times and learn to live with grief and loss. A team of loyal and generous people supports us and we are grateful for their involvement. The donations given to the Centre make a real difference in achieving positive outcomes for the kids that we care for.

I would like to thank the people and corporations who have supported us. Your donations ensure we can continue to support grieving families.

I would also like to acknowledge Valda and Ella, who ensure that our whole operation runs smoothly and efficiently.



HAND-OVER TO NEW CHAIRMAN

After 12 years of dedicated service Rick Taylor steps down as Chairman to make way for our new Chairman Mark Steinberg.

Rick is really pleased that Mark is quickly and enthusiastically making the role his own. While his role has changed to some extent, Rick is still very much involved, as a Board Member and in practical ways, such as assisting with the Boys' Adventure Program. He really enjoys being a part of the charity that he loves.



LETTER TO THE NCCG TEAM FROM OUR CO-FOUNDER DI MCKISSOCK OAM

Dear Liz - and all the team,
"2016 Planning Ahead" team meeting.

All of our senses were touched, and our hearts filled to overflowing. What a wonderful feeling it is to be able to look around the room and feel proud of the safe hands in which we have placed the care of all who enter 'A Friend's Place'. I think that has been our greatest achievement in life. We recruited the services of wonderful people, appointed the right leader, retired at the right time, managed the transition in the way we planned, and have been able to observe the smoothness with which change has been accommodated, despite unexpected and sad challenges along the way.

I hope that many children, many families and individuals, will continue to walk through the front door of whatever building you occupy, and instantly feel the love, safety and hope that is the essence of 'A Friend's Place'.

Our first meeting for the year was the icing on the cake - a heartwarming demonstration of the therapeutic value of informed, skilled, creative and loving teamwork.

I could burst with pride.

My love and support for as long as life allows.



Remembering Hearts®

Was held last year on Saturday October 10, 2015 at Bicentennial Park Federal Road Glebe.

Children and adults alike loved the baby animals and enjoyed a family picnic, followed by our special *Remembering Hearts* Ceremony to remember those we love who have died.

Thank you to Kristian Schimid who MC'd the event.

This year we will not be holding a formal event. *Remembering Hearts* Ceremonies can be held privately. Packs will be on sale from the Centre throughout the year. If you would like to hold this ceremony in your area or at your home, for more information please contact Ella Bullen on 1300 654 556 or visit www.childhoodgrief.org.au



AMBASSADOR



**Rachael McLennan,
Ambassador for NCCG**

Recently, I spent some time at 'A Friend's Place' and was, once again, struck by a sense of purpose in terms of why I feel so motivated to support the NCCG as an ambassador.

During a group counselling session, the children in the group had written questions they did not have answers to,

and the questions had been framed and hung on the wall... Why didn't I get to say goodbye to my dad? How much out of 100

did my dad love me? Why don't people understand that sometimes I need my own space? Why did this happen to me? What if my mum dies too? What was my dad thinking about when he died? Why couldn't I go to the funeral? Why is grandma so sad and quiet? Am I still allowed to laugh?

As a mother of 3 young children, I feel an overwhelming sense of relief that the NCCG exists to support children (not unlike mine) who are struggling to find answers. Grief is something that humans on the planet will encounter, in their own unique way, but unsupported or managed, it can be destructive.

Thank goodness for the team at the NCCG who give of themselves so generously and thanks to those of you who continue to support the organisation to do the incredible work that it does.

BOARD MEMBERS



**Andrew Marchant,
Board Member NCCG**

I am immensely proud to play a role in the NCCG's efforts to provide outstanding care and support for grieving children and their loved ones. The Board is working hard to broaden the capacity of the organisation to provide counselling services for more

of those in need across Australia and to ensure the Centre is financially sustainable for future children to benefit. I would like to pay special tribute to all our colleagues, counsellors and volunteers for their commitment and energy, and for making 'A Friend's Place' such a warm and loving environment.

**Robert McRobbie,
Board Member NCCG**



I am immensely proud to play a small part in the wonderful work being done at 'A Friend's Place'. As a new director I have spent much of the past year learning about how the NCCG provides its world-class bereavement counselling for children and families while also delivering much needed indirect support for kids in schools and remote communities through its outreach program. Every time I visit 'A Friend's Place' I am reminded of the love and compassion, which underpins the services provided, by the staff and volunteers at the NCCG. Not only does my association with 'A Friend's Place' make me appreciate the love in my own family but also it makes me grateful that there are so many good people helping families experiencing grief.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

This past year, through the generous donations of our corporate sponsors we were able to send out to rural NSW schools a "bereavement resource package" for the education of staff and support for bereaved children" **free** of charge.

Some very grateful feedback:

I find these resources thoroughly useful. It would be wonderful if they were available in all schools. There is such a diverse and fabulous selection that I know I can go to my file and find something useful for a grief situation. *School Counsellor*

I've received your resource packs. Wow!! They are great. I have shared your information and shown the pack to other counsellors and they too were very impressed. Don't be surprised if you receive 8 or 9 requests for the package. *School Counsellor*

Thanks for arranging the delivery of the resources – and of course the Board for approving the generous distribution of these resources across schools throughout the Hunter region, which undoubtedly will benefit more children and families than you could know. *Forensic Grief Counsellor*



PETER COUPLAND MEMORIAL

EDEN GARDENS – 30/4/16

On Saturday evening the 30th of April 130 people attended a poignantly beautiful and inspiring memorial dinner to celebrate the life of Peter Coupland. The theme of the evening was 'adventure', for two main reasons; Peter began the Centre's adventure program many years ago, a program dear to his heart; and the evening also served to launch an ongoing adventure program in his memory.

The Chair of the NCCG Board was MC for the evening and did a fine job of making everyone feel welcome. Another Board member, Robert McRobbie, kindly agreed to photograph as many as possible of those present, while the rest of the Board mingled and generally made themselves known – in the nicest possible way of course.

The Centre's Clinical Director, Liz Mann, began the evening's speeches by talking warmly and appreciatively about the significance of Pete's long and productive relationship with 'A Friend's Place', and the many and varied roles he filled. Her speech was followed by Di McKissock speaking briefly about broadening our understanding of adventure to include emotional and verbal aspects of courageous adventure and a hope that, over time, we can include a variety of family and relationship centred weekends under the adventure umbrella.

Peter's wife Heidi delivered the main address – an awe inspiring and heart-warming story of Pete's adventurous, and courageous involvement with life – almost from his first breath until his last. While Heidi's word pictures and total focus were on Pete, her presentation itself was a challenging and humbling example for all of us. Her clarity, her beautiful words, her pride in the man with whom she chose to spend her life, also demonstrated her own courage and confidence. She managed to share her loving and funny memories while 'holding' her grief in check. No easy task on the eve of the first anniversary of Pete's death. Heidi's commitment to her children, and to life itself, despite the pain of her own grief, is inspiring.

Further inspiration was provided by presentations from two of Pete's closest friends – Tony High and Mark Whitfeld. Typical Aussie guys in many ways – the larrikin aspect, the focus on

fun and adventure, the loyalty and warmth of mateship, the three men were less typical in other aspects. They were expressive and able to reveal their vulnerabilities to each other, trusting that they would always be 'watching each other's backs'. We hope that the friendship they experienced, and warmly shared with us all, will serve as an example for everyone who is part of the family of 'A Friend's Place'. Friendship has the capacity to enhance most life experiences, and to make many difficult ones survivable.

Sophie Robertson, once one of the Centre's mums, spoke eloquently about her experience of Pete in the caring role of bereavement counsellor. He was there consistently and sensitively for her and her two sons after the death of her husband and their father. Her sons also benefited from Pete's spirit of adventure. Nicholas Stubbins, remembered fondly as one of the young boys who attended Centre support groups and adventure weekends after the death of his father, spoke beautifully as a young man looking back on that experience. Everything Pete contributed to his life has borne fruit, and we have no doubt, will continue to do so.

Formal presentations ended with Mal McKissock involving many of the Centre's ex 'kids', most now all grown up, as he drew the threads of the evening together. He had run a continuous and enlightening slide presentation of 'Pete the adventurer' as background for the entire evening, finally demonstrating with the impressive young people he invited to share the 'stage', the value of Pete's contribution to the Centre, and to the families who used its services. He then officially launched 'the Peter Coupland Adventure Program'.

The evening is hard to describe in words – one of those 'you had to be there' kind of experiences, perhaps suffice to say that, despite any poignancy involved, most of us left on a 'high'. Here's to Pete!



SOPHIE ROBERTSON

Parent, client and friend of 'A Friend's Place'

Everyone in this room loved Pete for the extraordinary human being that he was.

However, what was it specifically that made him so special?

My husband died 12 years ago and 11 years ago our eldest son Ruben started group at a friend's place at the age of 9. Fabian started a year later as the youngest in group at barely 6 years of age and he was lucky enough to have Pete run his group.

Everyone who had the good fortune of being in Pete's orbit knows how he always seemed to be present. When he spoke to you, it was like you were the only person in the room, even a crowded one. He listened and heard you.

You know that saying that you truly know a person by what they do when no one is watching? Or when no one is expecting anything? Or when there is nothing in it for them? An act of remarkable kindness and thoughtfulness of Pete's will always remain with me and it was when Ruben was sitting the HSC some four years after he finished group and out of the blue, he receives an email from Pete wishing him well and saying that he felt sure, Ruben would tackle the HSC in the same usual calm and methodical manner that he did everything else. This so clearly demonstrated what made Pete special; it was not just that he remembered, which WAS amazing as four years is a long time, or that he cared, but that he took action to write that email. I do not know about you, but often I have good intentions, but they do not always

translate into action. Pete seemed to take relentless action that is evidenced by his legacy.

Ruben who is now 20 and I had a chat the other night when he told me how Pete was able to go on the Boys' weekend with a motley group of boys of different ages and temperaments, and instill discipline and respect to the point where everyone ended up being best friends just by being who he was. Fabian concurred saying that everyone respected Pete. He was able to create a space where the boys could be themselves and feel safe.

I remember after the first boys' weekend that my boys went on and I heard they had been abseiling. When I saw the photos I was horrified at the heights they had done it from when Pete and Mal looked at me and Mal said: "That's why we don't take mothers on those weekends!"

For my boys having to grow up without a father has seen me grateful to have a male role model for them in Pete. Pete showed them that you could be masculine, gentlemanly, vulnerable, and authentic all at the same time. He showed them that real men talk about their feelings; that wholehearted living is about connecting head and heart. What made Pete an extraordinary human being was not just what he did, but the way he did it. He was a role model not just for my boys but also for me.

A mark of a man is how he speaks about his family and we all knew that Heidi, Billie and Mia were the Centre of Pete's universe by the way his eyes lit up when he spoke about them.

The last thing Ruben said was; "I just don't know how we would have gone, had we not gone to A Friend's Place. I know, I wouldn't be as strong as I am now" and Pete was a huge part of A Friend's place for my boys. Thanks to Pete for his love, care, and attention and to his family for sharing Pete so generously with us and to Mal & Di for creating A Friend's Place where this magic can happen.



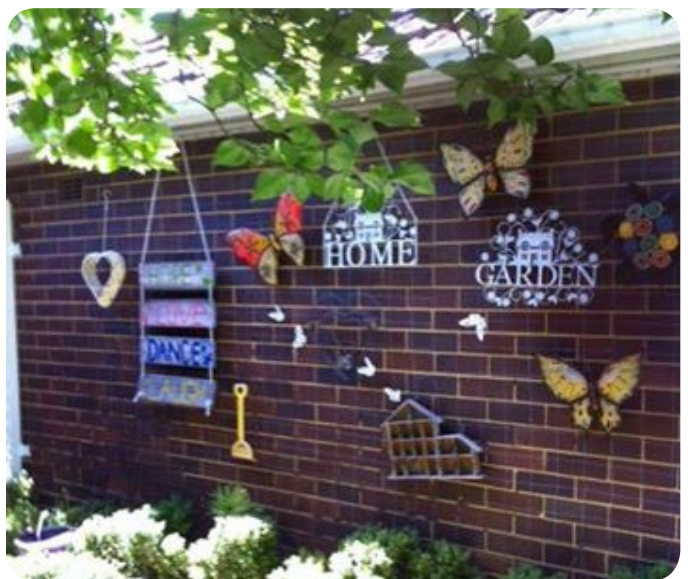
VOLUNTEER TEAM

A big thank you to our recent Corporate Volunteer Team.

What a fantastic team giving our centre some TLC and some much-needed resources.

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TRAVEL INSURANCE • MEDICAL ASSISTANCE



MICHAEL HASSETT ONE YEAR ON...



Mary Ashton

A year ago, on June 13, 2015, volunteer, support worker, Michael Hassett died unexpectedly of a heart attack while playing baseball. The news devastated 'A Friend's Place' community, in particular the Wednesday evening Blue Group who had the pleasure of Michael's presence each fortnight.

The kids, parents, and workers alike loved Michael. Michael had a strong presence yet he was gentle in nature. He showed genuine interest and admiration for the children he worked with and was able to communicate with them on all levels. He knew there was a very serious side to the bereavement work we do at the centre; he was gifted at facilitating in-depth conversations. He also knew how important it was for the kids to have fun. If Michael was running an activity it was going to be well planned and creative. It might involve props, pantomimes, rhyming slang, or coded phrases to decipher. With little effort, Michael would have the kids in fits of laughter and giggles allowing them to finish the evening on a high note after much deep and meaningful grief work.

The last time the Blue group saw Michael was three days before his sudden death. Michael was in charge of presenting the group rules. Michael produced a computer-generated crossword puzzle with words about death and bereavement. Despite all his efforts and preparation, there was a computer error, words were missing, misspelled and did not fit. Not at all fazed by the glitch, Michael continued on and had our group laughing hysterically by the end of the activity. Observing Michael over the years, I would say his greatest gift was the ability to laugh at



himself and his mistakes. By acknowledging his vulnerabilities, Michael invited the children in the room to do the same. Michael created a safe place for the children to talk about their overwhelming fears, biggest worries and greatest joys and accomplishments.

On that final evening with Michael, the main activity involved composing a list of advice to kids who were experiencing bereavement. There were many pearls of wisdom mentioned:

- Remember the happy and the sad times,
- It's Ok to have fun, to smile and to laugh,
- Don't feel guilty about the things you have or haven't done and
- Remember you will always carry the person you are missing in your heart.

Michael's unexpected death added more grief to the bereavement the children were already experiencing due to their parent's death. I know Michael would be very proud of the Blue Group and how the children have continued to grow and develop. The Blue group thinks of Michael each week as we pass around our special talking stick, a mini baseball bat. The Blue group continues to work hard on our grief, yet we also have lots of laughs and fun. We remember Michael with much love and we recall our own words of wisdom," Michael we will always carry you in our hearts."

National Institute
of Dramatic Art

NIDA WORKSHOP

Sat 17th October, 2015

'A Friend's Place' was given the opportunity to invite bereaved children to a 1-day workshop at NIDA, following is some of the feedback.

Sincere Thanks, I had one very happy girl after that event. Please pass on my heartfelt thanks. – Emma, parent

I was with the older group. We had about 12 kids. Started off with some icebreaker games similar to what we do with our kids in group. Enjoyed by all.

Then went on to some improvisation exercises. The kids really got involved. It was great fun, but challenging as well.

The NIDA staff member we had leading the group was great with the kids, very encouraging and full of energy. I was expecting a bit more 'emotional' stuff but it was not like that

at all. I Really enjoyed it and the kids enjoyed it too. – Carolyn Johns, Volunteer

Both Finn and Millie had a great time. Thoughts from Finn:

'Its a really great thing to do when as going to a place like NIDA is a great experience that we may only get to do once in our life.

I really loved the opportunity to catch up with other friends, especially if you do not go to group anymore. For first timers it was a great start to drama and something they may take up later in life. The games consisted of improv and entertainment which is something a boy my age might think bad if I have never done it before but I found it to be great fun spending time with other people expressing ideas and feelings".

Please send on our appreciation to the board for providing such a wonderful learning opportunity. – Sal



BOYS WEEKEND

Liz Mann on Our Inaugural "Peter Coupland Adventure Weekend"

In May, we took some very excited, and somewhat anxious boys to Yarrabin Holiday Ranch, near Bathurst for our Boys Adventure Weekend. Several of the boys were understandably quite nervous about being away from home, and unsure about what might be expected of them. We had a weekend packed full of adventure including horse riding, cracking whips, handling snakes, feeding cattle and sheep, having bush BBQ, swimming (in an icy pool), relaxing in the spa, telling stories around the campfire and toasting marshmallows, playing snooker and ping pong and generally having lots of fun. All the boys overcame their nerves and challenged themselves to 'have a go'.

We also spent time getting to know each other's parent who had died, and enjoyed sharing funny and poignant stories and memories together. We talked about and creatively used the metaphor of 'time' to explore and share what has changed in our grief and lives with the passing of time.

We were well fed and looked after by Annie and her team. They worked tirelessly to give the boys a wonderful country experience.

Our team of energetic volunteers also worked hard to ensure the boys felt confident and had fun, and remained safe. Thank you to everyone for giving up your time and supporting the Centre and our boys in this way.

In July, we are taking a group of our bereaved girls back to Yarrabin, and I am sure they too will love the challenge and fun of a country adventure.

Peter Coupland started our adventure weekends many years ago, and I am delighted that we are able to continue offering an Adventure Program to our kids each year in memory of Pete. He believed, as do all our team that these types of experience can help build confidence and resilience, and add another dimension to our existing counselling programs. All in all, it was a great weekend and one we will all remember for years to come.



2016 TRAINING COURSE CALENDAR

Course	Link to Course Details	Date
Working with Bereaved Children	http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au/course-calendar/148-courses/91-working-with-bereaved-children	TBA
Core Course Bereavement Counselling	http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au/course-calendar/148-courses/101-core-course-bereavement-counselling	August 17 - 19
Working with Bereaved & Dying Adults	http://www.childhoodgrief.org.au/course-calendar/148-courses/90-working-with-bereaved-dying-adults	October 12 - 14

Facilitated by our Founding Members and Clinical Director.

Mal McKissock RGN, RPN, FRCNA (HON), FCN (NSW), GRAD DIP AD ED (SYD), CT (ADEC USA)

Dianne McKissock Certified Grief Therapist and Death Educator through ADEC (Association for Death Education

and Counselling – USA), clinical member of the Australian Association of Marriage & Family Counsellors, and a member of the National Association for Loss & Grief.

Dr. Elizabeth Mann, Clinical Director of NCCG. MBBS, Grad Dip Counselling, Member ADEC, PACFA reg. clinical



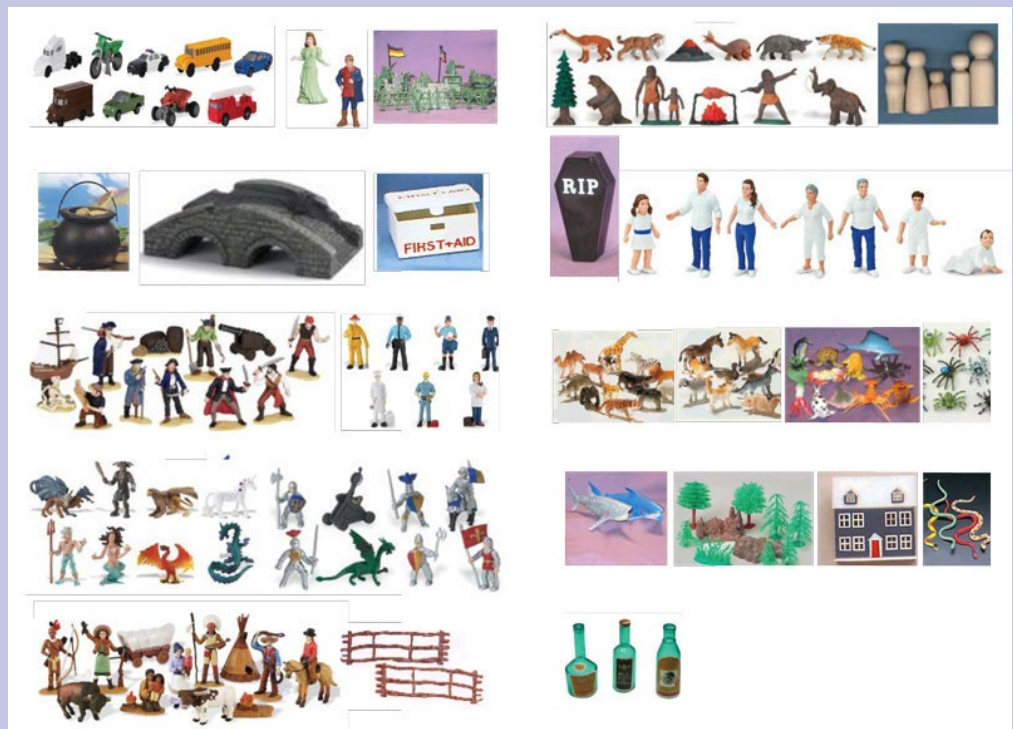
A BIG THANK YOU ...

... 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.



RESIDENT BUSKERS

Once again 'A Friend's Place' would like to thank Rick's son Ralph and his friend Josh for their generous donation of their earnings whilst busking. Their donation has purchased some new Lego and Sand Play toys.



'TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIVING'

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$2

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. Click on 'donate now' or visit www.childhoodgrief.org.au/donate

2 To make a one-off donation our bank account details are:
Name: NCCG BSB: 032545 A/C: 152908

3 The National Centre for Childhood Grief is now registered with 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.

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National Centre For Childhood Grief

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