



National Centre
For Childhood Grief

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

FRIENDS INDEED

National Centre for Childhood Grief • Newsletter



Turbulence

Dr Elizabeth Mann – Clinical Director

The world is a turbulent place. It always has been, and probably always will be. But, throughout history, there have also been moments of peace and tranquillity, and places of refuge. Places to shelter from the storms of life. However, at this time, those moments of peace and tranquillity are sometimes difficult to find. Each time we switch on the news we are confronted with sights, sounds, and images of turmoil, terror, and distress. It's as if the world is constantly in chaos, and life seems unpredictable and unsteady.

Earlier this year, I went on a family cruise to New Zealand, and what should have been a relaxing, fun experience was not as enjoyable as it might have been. Unfortunately, I suffered quite severe seasickness that continued for months after I disembarked. The ground felt like it was swaying and I continued to feel unsteady and nauseous for several months. An extended period on my 'sea legs', so to speak. Not what they advertise in the brochures! It made me think about how the world feels when we are grieving. When someone we love dies, our world is turned upside down, and thrown into turmoil. Nothing feels secure or steady anymore. It can feel as if our life will never be 'normal' again.



The kids in one of the Centre's support groups did an activity recently about 'snow globes' (you know, those timeless souvenirs filled with glitter and Eiffel Towers that kids just love) and about how our grief can make our lives feel like they have been shaken and agitated. The agitation can take a long time to settle, and our world can easily be rocked and destabilised, sometimes by very simple things. We talked about what might upset the delicate balance in our grief and tip it back into turmoil and severe pain, just when we thought we were gaining some degree of calmness and control. We explored what

we could do to help settle our feelings, what might help us 'ride out the storm' and wait for the turbulence to become calm again. Interestingly, we observed that sometimes what stimulates these intense experiences of distress, can paradoxically also help to soothe them, in the right setting of course. Remembering special moments, looking at photos, spending time thinking and talking about our loved one who has died, can both trigger our grief reactions, and soothe our pain. Sharing these memories in a safe place, with someone we trust, can make all the difference.

Many people are fortunate enough to find that kind of safety in the context of their family and friendship circles. Here at 'A Friend's Place', we provide another safe place for grieving families. Somewhere that is stable, comforting, and steady in the turmoil of grief. Somewhere we can risk exploring our grief because we know our vulnerability will not be exploited and we will not be alone in the turbulence and pain.

It is a privilege for me to work with an incredible group of people who together make it possible to provide this safe refuge for hurting families. I want to thank all of my team for their unique and valuable contributions - Mal and Di for their ongoing background support; Valda and Annette in the front office; Racquel for her outreach into the wider community; the Board for their commitment, hard work and reliable support; the competent and creative counsellors who provide loving care for bereaved children and their families; and all the volunteers for their hard work and selfless commitment to 'A Friend's Place'. You are all amazing human beings who even managed to help me find moments of relative calm when my 'sea legs' dictated otherwise. You, and the families we all care about, are what make this place so special. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Mark Steinberg

Welcome to the latest edition of Friends Indeed, our annual newsletter from the National Centre for Childhood Grief.

It has been another busy period at 'A Friend's Place'. We recently held our first Peter Coupland Adventure Weekend for 2017, being the boys' weekend, which was spent at Yarrabin Farm in Central NSW. The weekend comprised a number of exciting clinical and adventure activities and the boys were eager to share their experience with their parents/guardians at the end of the trip. Planning is currently underway for the girls' weekend in November.

In a first of its kind for 'A Friend's Place', we held an Open Day on 1 June, which was well attended by existing and prospective supporters. The day provided a unique opportunity to find out what goes on behind the scenes, and everyone who attended enjoyed an informative and interesting visit. The day was organised by Racquel Sherry, our



Development Manager, with the insights into our clinical work delivered by our Clinical Director, Dr Liz Mann and Scott Andrews, one of our Bereavement Counsellors. My thanks to them, along with the other staff at the Centre, for putting together a superb experience.

'A Friend's Place' continues to provide support to kids as they go through difficult times and learn to live with grief and loss. We are supported by a team of loyal and generous clinicians and we are grateful for their involvement.

I would also like to acknowledge our vital support people who ensure that our whole operation runs smoothly and efficiently. Valda Tucker has been with us for a number of years and provides tremendous support to both the clinical team and the Board of Directors. We recently welcomed Annette Gurr as the Coordinator of Counselling Services to the team, to replace our long-time friend, Ella Bullen, who retired towards the end of last year.

The donations given to the Centre make a real difference in achieving positive outcomes for the kids that we care for. Over the last year we have attracted funding from both existing and new supporters. I would like to thank the people and corporations for this support. Your donations ensure we can continue to provide valuable services to grieving families.

Annette Gurr

Coordinator of Counselling Services

I started working at NCCG in May this year. My professional background began in project administration and coordination within the engineering and telecommunication industries. However, wellbeing has always been an area of interest for me, not just my own wellbeing but also others. This ongoing interest led me to undertake 3 years of study in Counselling.



The training enabled me to combine both my administration skills and clinical learnings to support other students engaged in counselling/psychotherapy education. In all my positions, what I have enjoyed most about them is working with others. Being a people person, I decided to engage in more study that focused on learning about others. Currently, I am undertaking a Degree in Social Science, majoring in Anthropology. Anthropology,

in short, is the study of culture. This study has provided me the opportunity to expand my perspective in ways that I never could have imagined. I have been exposed to many viewpoints on how people understand and navigate living in this world. Over time I have noticed that I am less surprised and more in awe of the creative, innovative, diverse and interesting ways people move through life and transition through times of change. NCCG provides a service that I personally and professionally feel privileged to be able to support. I am grateful to be working in an environment that is meaningful, purposeful and supports others to find and learn new ways to navigate life. I am also thankful for how the team has welcomed me in with such generous warm hearts, and consistently supported me while I transition into this position.

Racquel Sherry

Development Manager



Racquel Sherry joined the National Centre for Childhood Grief in 2016 as the organisations Development Manager. Racquel is passionate about the health and wellbeing of children and has a strong understanding of philanthropy and fundraising. In combining the two she has effectively worked with individuals and organisations to create partnerships, which have enabled real and significant change in the lives of those who need it. Prior to joining the NCCG, Racquel established successful fundraising partnerships with organisations including Youth Off The Streets and Camp Quality, alongside doing a Degree in Social Science and volunteering for a variety of organisations. Racquel has a strong sense of empathy and equality and her fundraising is inspired by the impact that generosity has on the individuals who give and those who receive. She has spoken about her work in fundraising at the Fundraising Institute of Australia and Blackbaud Pacific Conferences and continues to mentor fundraisers as well as hosting events for charities and corporate organisations to come together to talk about effective partnerships. Prior to joining the not for profit sector Racquel worked in a variety of Human Resources and Educational roles for corporate organisations including AMP and Optus. Outside of work Racquel enjoys spending time with children and travelling with her husband.



BOARD MEMBERS

Emmanuelle Delannoy, New Board Member

Emmanuelle is a Division Director at Macquarie Group. She started her career in Financial Services, before working as a strategy consultant, primarily for High Tech and Pharma/Biotech clients. She spent a few years as a partner in a small Silicon Valley brand strategy and innovation consultancy, and is passionate about bringing creativity and lateral thinking to problem-solving. She became involved informally with the NCCG in 2010, after meeting one of the Centre's counsellors and hearing first-hand about the critically important work this organisation and its counsellors perform every day. After a few years of running a small-scale fundraising effort for the charity through work, she joined the Board in 2017 in order to broaden her impact. Emmanuelle was educated in the US, earning her undergraduate degree in Mathematics and German Studies, and graduate degrees in International Studies and Business. She lives in Sydney with her husband and children.



Mal retires from the Board

After 23 years of attending every Board meeting ever run, Mal (and Di as an unofficial member) has now officially retired from the Board. We had a special celebration with most of our current and past Board members to reflect on all those years. Our dinner was held at Liz's home and catered for beautifully by Bold Food. Mal and Di underwent a type of "Graduation Ceremony", reminiscent of the graduation ceremonies we have in group when a child feels ready to finish group. We went around the table and each had a chance to express what having Mal (and Di) on the Board has meant to each of us. Mal then gave us a reminder of the history of the NCCG and the Board, and we shared both tears and laughter. Every person there acknowledged the commitment and passion that both Mal and Di have brought to our Board meetings and decisions. The new Board is strong and competent, and will continue to hold true to the values that Mal and Di have instilled in both the Board and the NCCG. However, there were tears of sadness as we farewelled them and we know that they will be sorely missed. Board meetings will never be quite the same again! We want to extend our sincere thanks for all their effort at the Board level that they have poured into making 'A Friend's Place' just that. Thankyou both so much.



Heidi Coupland, New Board Member

My husband Pete was a counsellor at the Centre for many years and I got to know a lot about the amazing work that happens here through him. I never dreamed that I would one day have my own connection with the NCCG because I was a bereaved wife and mother. When Pete died unexpectedly in 2015, I found out just how devastating grief is for a family and that learning to live with it is one of the hardest things my daughters and I have ever had to confront. I am honoured to be a Board member and will do whatever I can to make sure the high-quality bereavement support I have personally received continues to be available to families in the future. I'm not sure the general public have any idea what bereavement support involves. Most people probably imagine a lot of caring nods from counsellors and hand-holding over tea and biscuits. Any family who has accessed the NCCG knows, that while there is no shortage of care and compassion, there is much more on offer. Learning to live with grief is an active process that takes time. Counsellors are guided by a sound theoretical model not just their hearts. I believe that what the NCCG offers is unique and I'm deeply committed to raising awareness of its fantastic work. It is inspiring to be part of such a hard-working Board. At meetings, I often find myself looking across the room at the photograph of Pete's smiling face that sits on the shelf, excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.



'A Friends Place'

Liz Mann

As many of you will know, we have recently received the news that the owners of 14 Hollis Ave have decided to sell the property, although we don't have a definite timeframe for this yet. We have been very fortunate to have the use of such a beautiful place for almost 20 years. Of course this means we will probably need to find a new home for 'A Friend's Place' in the near future. This news has understandably caused some turmoil and upset, as this place has been such a comfort for so many grieving families over the years. However, the Board is working hard on a plan to relocate our Centre, and we are confident that we will take what really matters with us - the people, the love and care that has been nurtured here for so long. We will do all we can to ensure there is minimal disturbance to our clinical services. If anyone knows of a suitable new home for us, please let me know as soon as possible.



BRAND NEW WEBSITE

Liz Mann

After nearly 2 years of planning, designing and building, our new website was launched in June 2017, and looks fantastic. Although we loved our original website, it had become apparent to the Board that it was time to update and modernise it, in order to provide easy access for people wanting to contact us or access our services. Deb Clay, ambassador for NCCG, and her husband, Kristian Schmidt, took on this monumental task.

I want to thank them both for their vision, their courage, and their tenacity for seeing this project from beginning to end. It has seen many hurdles and challenges, but they worked brilliantly as a team. Their creativity, dedication and commitment to this task was phenomenal. It would never have happened without them, and I want to thank them both very much from us all.

Together they worked with a very talented team from Focus Creative, and then brought it to life with Red Ant Media, both of whom donated many, many hours to help produce the polished new website now online. Our sincere thanks to both these organisations, for their expertise and support of this project.

Please peruse our beautiful new website, and feel free to click on Facebook and see what we are up to... Enjoy!



OPEN DAY

Racquel Sherry

In June we were very pleased to hold our inaugural Open Day at 'A Friends Place'. The National Centre for Childhood Grief invited our financial supporters to hear about the work that our Organisation does and what we have achieved in the areas of childhood bereavement and grief. Guests were given an opportunity to tour the Centre and hear about the range of services, including the Peter Coupland adventure program, individual counselling and group support. Clinical Director, Dr Elizabeth Mann, described the great work that the Centre has been doing and shared some special stories about the impact of the program on both children and their families. This rare chance to see inside our Centre was truly appreciated by our supporters, who all shared their gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to visit the Centre.

Right: Employees of Merck, our new corporate partners who volunteered their time on the day to prepare and serve morning tea and lunch.



Left: Clinical Director Dr Elizabeth Mann presenting to guests.

Flight Centre Volunteer Work

A huge thank you to Flight Centre Travel Group for volunteering at 'A Friends Place' last July. We are extremely grateful for their generosity of time, productivity and spirit to support the Centre in keeping the outdoor and indoor environments pleasant and inviting for all. Recently, Flight Centre also donated a billy cart to NCCG for the kids. As part of a team building exercise, Flight Centre employees constructed three billy carts, one of which was given to NCCG. It's super slick and has already been tested in the backyard, with

surprisingly ok results given the grass. It's yet to be tried on more suitable ground. However, from what we've seen already, it's sure to triumph. Thank you again to Flight Centre for all their support in the past year. The Centre thrives with the support from volunteers and we are always most appreciative for this valuable gift.



Peter Coupland Adventure Weekend: Girls

Heidi Coupland - Board Member

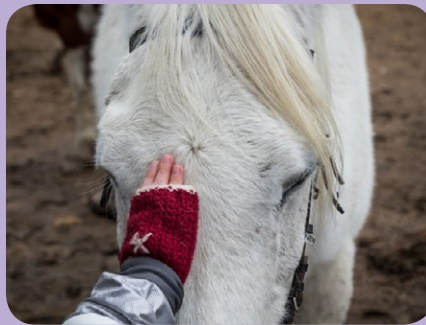
The Girls weekend was my first opportunity to see exactly what happens on the Peter Coupland Adventure Program weekends I'd heard so much about. I couldn't wait to participate. It was freezing when we got to Yarrabin for our horse riding adventure so everyone was relieved to hover around the open fire or play pool or ping pong in the games room until dinner. I was surprised to hear that most of the group didn't really know each other well, given how relaxed and friendly the girls were with each other. Everyone seemed at ease and in a playful mood, a tribute to the kind of relationships and trust that develop between the group and the counsellors.

There were a lot of funny and light hearted moments over the weekend, stemming from the joys of communal eating and sleeping, the chance to swap stories, a variety of farm animals to see and Mark's wildlife show consisting of joeys, snakes and rats. The horse riding was challenging enough to get our adrenalin pumping at times but still stay safe. And, one of the most memorable moments for me was watching the fun that ensued once the hot tub was ready for use and the girls initiated a game that was an excruciating endurance test, even for the adults who were observers. After leaving the comforting confines of the hot tub and jumping into the icy pool, the girls had to stand on the edge, wet in the

sleet and rain, and see how long they could stand it. As the screams of pain reached fever pitch only a few remained as one by one, they scrambled back into the hot tub laughing. The older teenagers were noticeably absent, perhaps older and wiser after all?

Woven into the program were a number of group activities that involved talking about the significant people we love who have died. It was indeed a poignant moment when I could be part of this group and it was my turn to say the name of my husband and how he died. I was very moved by the patience, respect and attentiveness shown by every girl as each person spoke, the room quiet enough to hear a pin drop if it wasn't for the crackling of the open fire. I'll never forget the feeling of sitting in a room with so many people who understood first-hand the intensity of grief. We all got to know each other's loved ones that little bit better and share our memories of them in different ways.

The weekend was certainly an adventure, in the traditional sense when we had to control our horses. But there were many other ways we found ourselves outside our comfort zones just enough to challenge ourselves. To have done this when coping with grief, was already using up a lot of our resources and was really something to be proud of. That's what learning to live with grief is all about.



2018 TRAINING COURSE CALENDAR

Course (link: https://childhoodgrief.org.au/education)	Date
Core Course in Bereavement Counselling	26th - 28th February 2018
Working with Bereaved/Dying Adults	10th - 12th September 2018
Working with Bereaved Children	20th - 22nd August 2018

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 OAM, B.Soc. Sc., Grief Therapist, Family Therapist, Master Clinician with the former A.A.R.C.

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





Peter Coupland Adventure Weekend: Boys

Scott Andrews - Bereavement Counsellor

In May this year we had the opportunity to take six boys away for a weekend as part of the Peter Coupland Adventure program. For the last two years, we have had our adventure weekends at Yarrabin, which is a holiday homestead in O'Connell (near Bathurst). Yarrabin is famous for having horse riding as one of its central activities, but for me, the wonderful home cooked meals and open fire places are the most memorable.



We arrived in the late afternoon on Friday, which still allowed plenty of time for exploration of our new surrounds and settling in to our self contained cabins. We had a quick meeting to learn about the rules for Yarrabin and the exciting adventures that lay ahead in the next few days. We also spent time getting to know each other and our parent who had died.

Annie, our host for the weekend, is a magnificent cook and we were blessed with delicious meals all throughout our stay. The games room also provided great entertainment. However, Saturday was when the real adventure began. Horse riding was available for those who wanted to challenge themselves. The first time I rode a horse (last year), I was quite nervous and took great encouragement from those around me who were on the ride. For all of the boys this year, this was their first horse ride ever! And, I am proud to say, all found the courage to participate. A couple of the boys were initially really scared to go on the ride, but through the gentle encouragement of their peers and the expert instruction from Annie and her team, they confronted their fears and ended up actually enjoying the experience.

As a counsellor, I could not help but think that the horse in front of them was a metaphor for the life ahead of them. Learning to live with their grief will be a daunting, scary, never-done-before experience for all of them. Yet, being surrounded by people who love them, who provide a safe environment to share their experience and encourage them to 'continue with life' when things get overwhelming, will be how they develop the coping skills and resiliency necessary to grieve and make healthy choices.

On Saturday afternoon, we all came together and participated in a group meeting, similar to the support groups that we run every fortnight during school term. The activity that we did in this instance was 'grief photography'. Each child along with a volunteer support person were given the task to wander the sizeable property and take some photographs on an iPhone that represented their grief and what life is now like for them. This was an opportunity to identify and describe aspects of their experience using a creative medium, rather than just relying on words, which can often limit the description of what we are going through. We then printed each photo and gave each of the children a journal to take home with their photographs.

Sunday morning gave us another chance for a horse ride and the confidence level of all the kids (and adults) was at an all time high! After an amazing lunch we all piled back in the bus



for the ride home. It was such a wonderful and memorable weekend for all who attended and the feedback that we have had from the parents of the children who attended has been very positive. We are looking forward to the girls adventure weekend coming up in November (November 3, 4 & 5). I would strongly encourage you to book early as places are limited and fill up very quickly.



Creative Memory Workshop

Joke Klein van Exel – Bereavement Counsellor

On Saturday 27th of May 2017, eight enthusiastic children participated in a *Creative Memory* workshop at 'A Friends Place'. The children were invited to bring along fabrics, clothing, photos and other special items which belonged to their loved one who had died. With the help of a skilled and excited team of volunteers, the children turned these items into 'Comfort Cushions'. These cushions were made into the shapes of hearts and soccer balls. From other materials they created beautiful 'Circle of Life' pieces, to be hung from walls and other suitable places. The children embraced

the experience by sharing their many wonderful ideas and personal stories, all of which was expressed in their projects. We were very fortunate to have Annette Ferguson, an expert in sewing, volunteer her time with us that day. Annette supported the children where necessary to develop their skills on the sewing machine, and the end results were fantastic. Every child completed their project and was able to take home a permanent and tangible memory of their loved one. Overall, this was a fun and valuable experience for all involved.



NSW Police Legacy Expo

A team of our volunteers represented NCCG at the "2016 Backup for Life EXPO", which provides post service support to former NSW police and their families. It was a wonderful day of mingling with other organisations and many people associated with the police force. It was also an opportunity to provide support to the police community with helpful resources from the Centre for those experiencing bereavement. Many thanks to all the NCCG team members who volunteered their time across the day.



A BIG THANK YOU

The following corporate teams donated their time and valuable, much needed resources to help make 'A Friend's Place' what it is today.



"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 childhoodgrief.org.au/donate/ for further detail.
- 2** Make a one-off donation to our bank account: AC name **NCCG**; BSB **032524**; AC **152908**
- 3** You can also help by providing craft materials or much needed equipment. Phone **1300 654 556** or email info@childhoodgrief.org.au for details of items on the wish list.

- 4** 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.
- 5** Call **1300 654 556** if you wish to make a donation using your **credit card** (Visa or MasterCard).

HELP CHANGE
A CHILD'S LIFE

Donate Now



National Centre For Childhood Grief

ABN 79 098 660 130

34011:0917