

Wombat's Wish Newsletter

Summer 2025



Dear Families, Sponsors, and Friends of Wombat's Wish, welcome to our summer newsletter!

As the days grow longer and the warmth of summer settles in, we're delighted to bring you the final edition of the year — a time filled with reflection and connection!

The Christmas and New Year season is often a meaningful and emotional time for many of our families. With this in mind, we've curated a newsletter that supports you through the holidays while celebrating the strength and resilience of our community. Inside, you'll find updates on our recent grief programs and family days, details about upcoming events in 2026, book recommendations, grief-support tips for the festive season, and a wrap-up of donations received over the last quarter.

Whether you're looking for guidance, inspiration, or simply a moment to pause amidst the year-end rush, we hope this edition brings light, comfort, and connection to your summer.

All the best,
Nicki Dunne, General Manager

What's in this issue:

WHAT'S NEW

Job Ad

This year's Fundraisers
2026 Schedule
Programs

WHO ARE WE?

Meet the Team
Staff Introductions
Staff Farewell

FEATURE

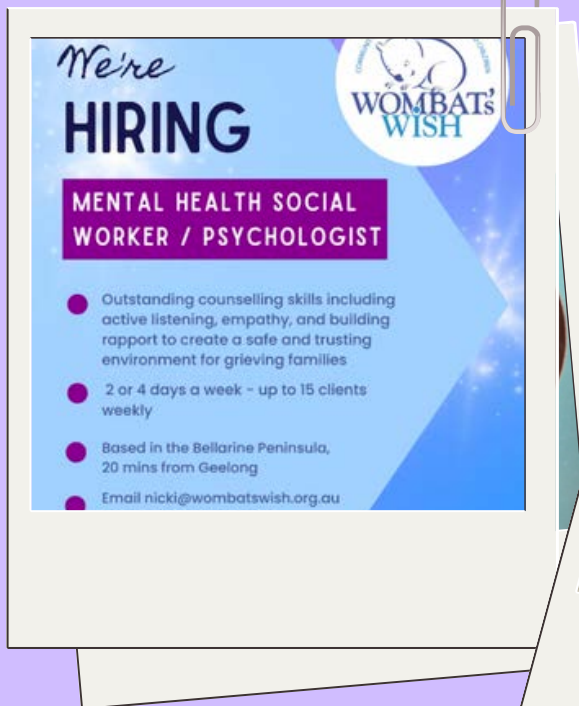
COUNSELLING CORNER

Grief Exercise
Recommended Books

SUPPORT

Our Sponsors
How to Support us
Corporate Sponsorships
Further Resources
Contact us

WHAT'S NEW?



WE'RE HIRING!

🌱 Wombat's Wish is growing! We're looking for a compassionate and skilled Psychologist or Mental Health Social Worker to support children and families navigating grief.

This role involves providing both in-person and online one-on-one counselling sessions (2-4 days a week), offering flexibility while ensuring meaningful connection with the families we serve. The successful applicant must be able to register as a Medicare Provider.

If you're passionate about making a lasting impact and supporting families through parental loss, we'd love to hear from you. ❤️

Please contact Nicki, our General Manager via nicki@wombatswish.org.au for a position description and to express your interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

WHAT'S NEW?



WOMBAT'S WALK FUNDRAISER - TOTAL FUNDS RAISED!

The moment we have been waiting for... and the moment that fills our hearts. ❤️

We are so proud to share that we raised an incredible \$111,666.07 at our Wombat's Walk last month!

This day was more than a fundraiser—it was a gathering of kindness. From the beautiful faces who showed up, to the buzzing entertainment, market and food stalls, to the families walking for their important person... you created something truly special.

A heartfelt thank you to Burke Britton Financial Partners for your support, AMP for fund-matching, Portarlington Cricket Club for hosting, and to every single person who donated, gifted goods or lent a hand. Because of you, Wombat's Wish families in 2026 will receive the support they deserve.

WHAT'S NEW?



Wombat's Wish 2026 Time Table

Weekend Grief Programs

- 13th to 15th February 2026 - Family WGP - Corop
- 27th to 29th March 2026 - Family WGP - Queenscliff
- June 2026 - Family WGP - Bass Coast
- 21st 23rd August 2026 - Family WGP - Queenscliff
- 27th to 29th November 2026 - Youth WGP - Queenscliff

Family Days and Events

- 18th April 2026 - Family Day
- 21st June 2026 - Family Day
- July 2026 - Wombat's Wish 21st Birthday
- 11th October 2026 - Wombat's Walk
- November 2026 - WW Annual General Meeting
- 13th December 2026 - Family Day



WHAT'S NEW?

1:1 COUNSELLING

1:1 Counselling online via Telehealth and in person is available for those in immediate need. Our main office in Clifton Springs is our primary counselling location. We do consider some outreach counselling to those living further regionally that can be discussed with our General Manager and Clinical Team directly.

Through counselling, we can help families understand big feelings and concerning behaviours, as well as develop more tools to deal with grief. Our service is free and bulk billed through Medicare with a Mental Health Care Plan from your GP, providing 6 to 10 sessions per year. Please note our counselling team members are registered psychologists and accredited mental health social workers.

To access this free service you must:

- Make an appointment with your GP
- Ask for an individual mental health plan for each family members who require the counselling service
- The children will need to chat with the doctor, too
- Then ask the GP to send the Mental Health Care Plan to counselling@wombatswish.org.au

Contact the office for more details, or fill out the [referral form](#) on our website.



WHAT'S NEW?

WEEKEND GRIEF PROGRAMS

Weekend Grief Programs are held at different times throughout the year for the children and their parent/carer. Our supportive team work through a mixture of evidence based and fun activities that aim to support children and their families through their grief journey.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE QUEENSCLIFF WYUNA WEEKEND GRIEF PROGRAM IN NOVEMBER



UPCOMING FAMILY GRIEF PROGRAM:

- 13th to 15th February 2026 – Corop

WHAT'S NEW?

FAMILY FUN DAYS

Wombat's Wish Family Days are a fun day out for our families both new and old. You can meet others and get to know our team, or catch up with friends you met or others from past Wombat's Wish Weekend Grief Programs. These Family Days are a great way for your children and young people to stay connected and feel supported further along their grief journey, while making some fun memories.

Remember, all of our Family Days are offered free of charge to your family.

SNAPSHOT OF OUR CHRISTMAS FAMILY DAY IN SERENDIP SANCTUARY



JOINS US FOR OUR UPCOMING FAMILY FUN DAYS:

- Family Day 18th April 2026 Kyabram Fauna Park
- Family Day 21st June 2026 (TBC)

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING OUR AGM LAST MONTH!

Thank you to all who attended our AGM. We deeply appreciate your time and ongoing commitment to our mission. Your presence and engagement play an essential role in guiding the direction of Wombat's Wish, helping us strengthen our programs and expand the support we provide to grieving children and families.

This year's AGM also gave us the opportunity to share some important team changes, including welcoming new members and celebrating those moving into different roles. We remain grateful for the dedication of every person who helps shape our organisation. Thank you for your continued belief in our work — we look forward to building on this momentum together in the year ahead.



WHO ARE WE?

THIS IS THE WOMBAT'S WISH 2026 TEAM!

OFFICE

Operations

- Nicki - General Manager of Operations, Programs and Partnerships
- Suzy - Community Engagement Officer
- Mel & Annika - Administration

Clinical

- Rachel - Clinical Psychologist

The office is open Monday to Wednesday 9am to 2pm

BOARD

- Peter - Chair
- Luke - Vice Chair
- Simone - Treasurer
- Hannah - Secretary
- Jo - Board member
- Kate - Board member



And a shoutout to all of our wonderful wombat's Wish volunteers
- new and current !

WHO ARE WE?



CHAIR - PETER

How long have you been volunteering at Wombat's Wish and what's your role?

From memory I think I have now been The Board for 5 or 6 years and Chair of Finance Committee for perhaps 3 of these and as of AGM 2 weeks ago now Chair of The Board as well for 2026. First introduced to WW about a decade or so ago by a good friend Naomi K who invited us to a fund raising event at ALMA. Our friend worked with Hannah and turned out I have been friends with Cooky since Uni days who of course was there that night as our Patron. I then from 2016 or 2017 had pleasure of supporting via my old business.

Why do you volunteer for Wombat's Wish and what do you enjoy the most about it?

Sadly I have 2 sets of grandchildren (2 and 2) who have lost their Dads (2 of my sons Clayton and Jack) and with my ex-wife took on care of grandson Kody when he lost his Dad in a car accident when Kody was only 6 days old. I count Kody as my 4th son. Kody has also volunteered at WW camps. Therefore, the WW concept and wonderful services provided are very personally important to me. Seeing the amazing work done and listening to the life changing outcomes from many kids and surviving parents/carers is powerfully motivating and personally uplifting

Best or funniest memory you can recall about one of Wombat's Wish's Weekend Grief Program?

Talking to parents and carers/grandparents who have participated in the Wombat's Wish Weekend Grief Program and hearing their stories about the great positive impacts not just on their youngsters but also for themselves is pretty special



WHO ARE WE?



CHAIR - PETER

What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering for Wombat's Wish?

Giving something of yourself especially your valuable time gives back to you many times more than it requires of you. Being able to have a direct impact on the lives of youngsters/families who have gone through unimaginable grief rewards the doer/giver massively and is a very long lasting positive feeling.

What do you do outside of Volunteering

I have the pleasure of loving and being very passionate about my 30 year career as a Financial Planner and have no end in sight. Recently started an exciting new position as a Senior FP at Forbes Fava Saville in Grovedale. As well I have been lucky to have had a long-time involvement with Footy in Geelong area since arriving here from Uni some 5 decades ago, which has allowed a vast network of friendships. Married to my beautiful young Spanish wife Esther and we recently moved into our new home we built in Connewarre on the edge of Barwon Heads where we love the nature therapy and lovely walks with our dogs.

Any hidden talents that you can share with us?

Very happy for others to comment on any talents hidden or otherwise. Maybe a little self deprecation though is that I have a long history of having accidents and causing self harm through lack of care and attention to safety a bit too often.



WHO ARE WE?



MEET OUR TEAM



CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST - RACHEL

How long have you been volunteering at Wombat's Wish and what's your role?

I did my first camp with Wombats wish in 2018, started off volunteering and am now a team leader on camps and I provide 1:1 counseling as a Psychologist at Wombats Wish.

Why do you volunteer for Wombat's Wish and what do you enjoy the most about it?

Shelly's camp food (kidding, kind of), because I love helping others and giving people skills/ strategies to help with their grief. My favorite part is watching the children make friends over weekend camps and in 1:1 counseling I love watching the children trust me more and open up about their challenges.

Best or funniest memory you can recall about one of Wombat's Wish's Weekend Grief Program?

Nicki's many clumsy moments but probably her looking like a sausage dog when she fell over trying to jump onto a counter bench.

What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering for Wombat's Wish?

You will feel like part of the family within 1-2 camps, such a fun but also rewarding experience and we would love your help. 😊

What do you do outside of Volunteering?

I work as a Psychologist for Wombats Wish and a private practice in Sunbury. I have almost completed my clinical registrar training so will be a clinical psychologist very soon.

Any hidden talents that you can share with us?

I wouldn't call it a hidden talent but I like to think I'm pretty strong and I enjoy doing Crossfit classes. 😊 I also love baking and make a pretty good cheesecake (even if I say so myself)

WHO ARE WE?



COMMUNITY - SUZY

How long have you been volunteering at Wombat's Wish and what's your role?

I have been volunteering on and off for 15 years, and I am lucky enough to now have a paid position with Wombat's Wish as a Community Engagement Officer.

Why do you volunteer for Wombat's Wish and what do you enjoy the most about it?

I love seeing the families that come to camp, connecting and supporting each other. I am involved with WW because I want Death and Grief to become subjects that are freely talked about and not perceived as taboo topics.

Best or funniest memory you can recall about one of Wombat's Wish's Weekend Grief Program?

The funniest moment for me was when, during our last Corop camp, I got a flat tyre on the way to our Parents' Day Room on the Saturday, and I had 2 Dads change my tyre, 1 directed traffic in a fluorescent poncho, and the Mums were chatting! Best Icebreaker ever!

What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering for Wombat's Wish?

Do it! The Wombat's Wish Team is the nicest, most inclusive, funny and dedicated bunch of people I have ever met!

What do you do outside of Volunteering?

I love my dogs, and I do Respite Care for dogs that need a home for a couple of nights or months. I love eating, binge-watching Netflix, spending time with my family and travelling.

Any hidden talents that you can share with us?

I can cook a mean scalloped potatoes



FAREWELL



ALL THE BEST TO OUR AWESOME SOCIAL WORKER, FRAN!

With a heavy heart, we farewell our wonderful Social Worker, Fran. Over the past two years, Fran has been an extraordinary presence within Wombat's Wish — attending majority of weekend grief programs, fundraisers and family days, supporting families with compassion, and always going above and beyond to ensure children and caregivers felt truly held and understood.

Her proactive spirit, gentle guidance, and unwavering dedication have left a lasting impact on our programs and our community. While we are saddened to see her go, we are equally thrilled for the next chapter awaiting her. We wish Fran all the very best as she steps into a well-earned retirement and begins her exciting hiking adventures overseas. She will always remain a cherished part of the Wombat's Wish family.

You will be missed - All the best, Fran!
Take good care and keep in touch!



“It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with a great team, volunteers and amazing families and kids – listening, learning and walking alongside everyone's unique experiences of grief. I'm stepping down my work hours to only do private practice, and to have some “time for me”! I may see you at the beach, the bush or even a future camp! Wishing the hardworking team at Wombat's Wish all success next year – and to all families, a Christmas and holiday time that is best and just right for your family.”

FAREWELL



ALL THE BEST TO OUR WONDERFUL BOARD MEMBER, DAVID!



As we say farewell to David, we want to acknowledge and celebrate the significant contribution he has made as a Board Member of Wombat's Wish over the past 11 years (including 6 years as vice chair and 8 years of santa). David has brought thoughtful leadership, generosity of time, and a deep commitment to supporting grieving children and families.

His insight, guidance, and considered approach have helped strengthen our organisation and ensure our programs continue to grow with care and purpose. David's dedication behind the scenes has had a meaningful and lasting impact, and his support has been truly valued by the Wombat's Wish community.

While we are sad to see David step away from the Board, we are grateful for all he has shared with us and wish him every success in the next chapter ahead. He leaves with our heartfelt thanks and best wishes.

Thank you, David — you will be greatly missed. Please stay in touch.



GIVING SEASON

If you'd like to give a meaningful gift this year, why not make a donation to Wombat's Wish on behalf of yourself, your workplace, or even a loved one?

All donations from our community go directly to funding our grief support services for children grieving the loss of their Mum or Dad, meaning that we can provide the help they need at no cost to bereaved families.

It's so easy and takes thirty seconds - just visit www.givenow.com.au/wombatswish, select any amount and don't forget to add your special message! For other donation or sponsorship options, you can also check out the Donate tab on our website wombatswish.org.au.

Your generosity helps our little organisation, help children across Victoria. 💙💜





HOW TO PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS

Are you caring for a bereaved child this Christmas? It may help to:

- **Plan ahead for how to spend the day. What feels right for you now?**

This might change year by year. It's okay to want to celebrate, or to want to avoid the day altogether, or something in between.

- **Be mindful of social media use.**

Curated, filtered images of other family celebrations may not be helpful at this time. For some people, it may feel right to post an online tribute, but for others a digital detox might make the day more manageable.

- **You don't have to skip cards or gifts if you don't want to.**

You could also write a letter, update your memory box or create some art.

- **Link in with friends or family who knew your important person.**

Share a memory or story about your important person, listen to their favourite music or watch their favourite movie together.

- **Take time out for self-care.**

This may include having extra support services on call - it's what they're here for.

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wombatswish.org.au

Find support

Wombat's Wish: www.wombatswish.org.au or facebook.com/wombatswish
BeyondBlue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat
Support After Suicide: 03 4215 3358 or bereavement.org.au/grief-support
Suiceline: 1300 651 251
Compassionate Friends: 1300 064 068 or compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au
First Light Widowed Association: firstlight.org.au

Resources with online chat support

Grief Australia: 03 9265 2100 or griefline.org.au
Mensline: mensline.org.au - for boys/men aged 15 and above
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 - for kids and young people aged 5-25 years
Lifeline: 13 11 14 or SMS 0477 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au
Headspace: headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/

**WOMBAT'S
WISH**





Find support

Wombat's Wish: www.wombatswish.org.au or
facebook.com/wombatswish

BeyondBlue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au/support-service/chat

Support After Suicide: 03 4215 3358 or bereavement.org.au/grief-support

Suiceline: 1300 651 251

Compassionate Friends: 1300 064 068 or
compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

First Light Widowed Association: firstlight.org.au

Resources with online chat support

Grief Australia: 03 9265 2100 or griefline.org.au

Mensline: mensline.org.au - for boys/men aged 15 and above

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 - for kids and young people aged 5-25 years

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or SMS 0477 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au

Headspace: headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/



NEW YEAR & OFFICE CLOSURE OVER THE HOLIDAYS

We enjoyed meeting new families and are always excited to see familiar faces. Thank you to our wonderful families, donors and sponsors for their contribution and support this year. We look forward to welcoming you back in the new year.

Wishing everyone a safe start to the new year!

Please note that our office will be closed from the 16th December 2025 to the 19th January 2026!



WOMBAT'S WISH'S 20TH BIRTHDAY

In July 2025 Wombat's Wish turned 20!!! 🎂🎉

Established in 2005 by our founder and local psychologist, Jill Crookes, Wombat's Wish has grown into an established charity supporting families and children across Victoria with their grief.

Over the last year, we've introduced a variety of new resources to continue to enhance our services and support to families. Here are some of our best highlights of the year:

- moved into our new office on 3 Dumburra Avenue in Clifton Springs
- updated our Community Information Pack for Schools to navigate and support children experiencing grief
- held our second Planting Session at Geelong Memorial Park
- introduced new activities and coping strategies into our Weekend Grief Program
- and so much more...

Thank you for all of the support we've received thus far, we hope to continue to grow our support to families in need of grief support. 💙



BE PART OF OUR WISDOM!



A group of wombats together is called a wisdom. And the important work and services that we provide for bereaved children and families, is made possible by our very own 'wisdom' of Wombat's Wish donors and supporters.

We'd love to invite you, and your friends and family, to become a part of Wombat's Wisdom. A donation of \$100 per year – less than \$2 a week – goes a long way to helping Wombat's Wish provide support to more than a hundred families across Victoria waiting to join our weekend grief programs.

Through our GiveNow campaign, our goal is to grow our Wombat's Wisdom to 300 members in 2025 to fully fund an entire weekend grief program for parentally bereaved children and their families.

So what are you waiting for? Get involved and be a part of our wisdom:
<https://www.givenow.com.au/wombats-wisdom>.

Our team and families thank you in advance for your contribution! 🙌💙💜

Join our Wisdom!

You can click the link to go to our GiveNow page:

<https://www.givenow.com.au/wombats-wisdom>

Or you can donate directly through our webpage, at:

<https://wombatswish.org.au/donate/donate-support> make sure you put 'Wombat's Wisdom' as your reference! You can also:

- Use the 'Share Cause' button on the Wombat's Wisdom GiveNow page
- Share our Wombat's Wisdom social media posts on your Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn pages

Every bit helps to grow our Wisdom! At the end of this newsletter you'll find more information about donating to Wombat's Wish as part of a group or workplace

COUNSELLING CORNER



The Dougy Center
The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

Dear _____,

It is fun when we _____

One thing I want you to know about me is

I wish we _____

I feel _____

I hope _____

Thank you for _____

Love,

P.S. One more thing I want to tell you is

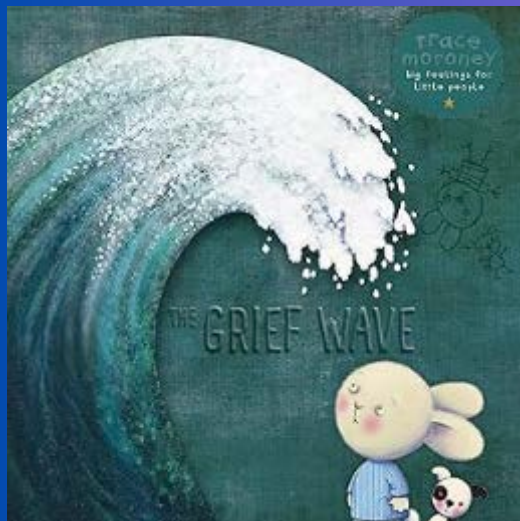
www.dougy.org

COUNSELLING CORNER

THE GRIEF WAVE

Trace Moroney – big feelings for little people

The Grief Wave sensitively describes the experience of loss and grief, and offers a range of well-researched techniques to help children develop valuable coping skills, and helps to prepare them to navigate their way through future grief events.



COUNSELLING CORNER

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

Diane Namm, illustrated by Laura-Jäger

This book is an invaluable resource for families navigating grief—whether the loss is recent or years past. It opens the door to difficult conversations in a way that feels safe and natural. More than that, it reminds us all that those we love never truly leave us; they live on in memories, in traditions, and in the quiet moments of everyday life.

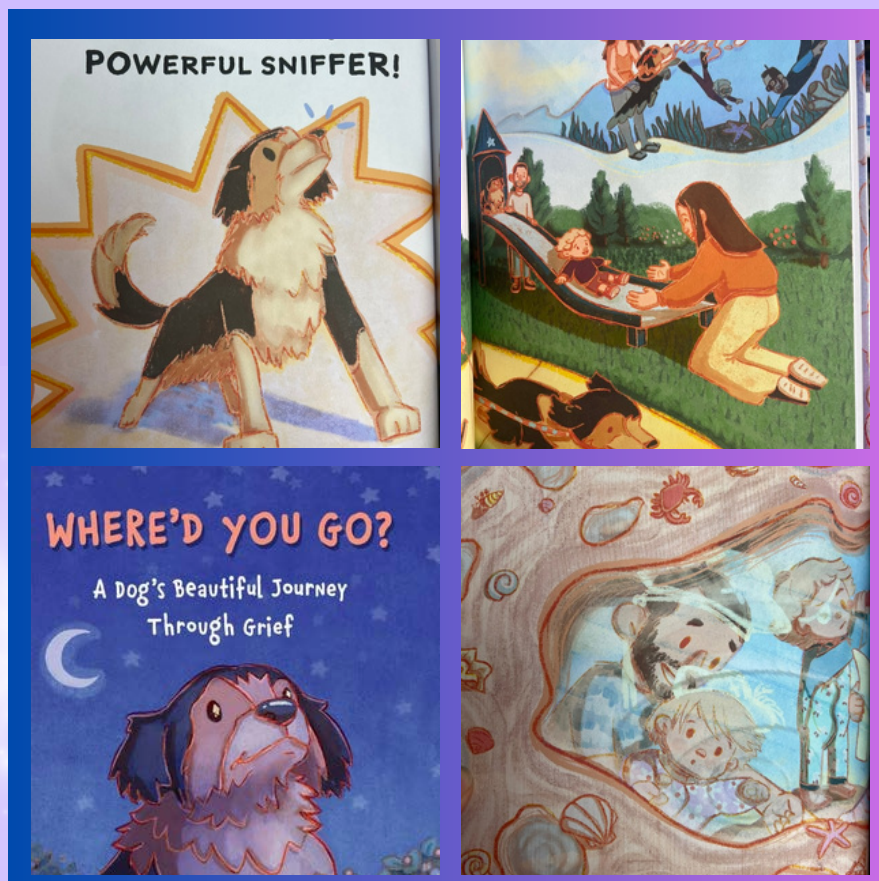


COUNSELLING CORNER

WHERE'D YOU GO? A DOG'S BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF

Holly Canda, Illustrated by Georgia Pip

Told through the eyes of the family pet dog this gentle and authentic story of grief for bereaved siblings helps families navigate the most difficult conversations to allow children to begin to understand where their beloved brother/sister has gone. Through connection and witnessing grief, the healing process can begin in this new world where their relationship transcends life and death



OUR AMAZING DONORS

Platinum



Gold



Silver



Donor



Rosemary
Norman
Foundation



BRM
Environments



Barwon Heads
SeaChange Quilters



Successful Grants



Clifton Springs Golf Club



SUPPORT



Wombat's Wish only survives with financial support from people just like you, and your kind donations.

We do not receive any Government funding and we do not charge for the services we provide to children, young people, and their families.

Wombat's Wish was established as a charity in 2005 and is predominantly operated by community volunteers. We are a registered Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), this means every donation over \$2 is tax deductible for the donor.

Every dollar donated goes towards providing direct services and support to a child in grief.

Can your workplace or organisation help support Wombat's Wish through corporate sponsorship? We'd love to hear from you.

Email nicki@wombatswish.org.au for a corporate sponsorship prospectus.

*Thank
you!*



SUPPORT

Visit our website www.wombatswish.org.au to find useful tools and resources to support your grief journey:

- Weekend Grief Program Brochure
- Youth Program Brochure
- 1:1 Counselling Flyer
- Community Information Pack
- Quarterly Newsletters



USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

- Kids help line
- Life line
- Beyond Blue
- Headspace Geelong
- Hope Bereavement Care
- Compassionate Friends
- Grief Australia

www.kidshelpline.com

www.lifeline.org.au

www.beyondblue.org.au

www.headspace.org.au

www.bereavement.org.au

www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

www.grief.org.au

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Winston's Wish
- Good Grief
- Grieflink
- The National Centre for Childhood Grief
- Support after Suicide
- Hope for Life Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Support

www.winstonswish.org

www.good-grief.com.au

www.grieflink.org.au

www.childhoofgrief.org.au

www.supportaftersuicide.org.au

www.salvationarmy.org.au/need-help/professional-counselling-and-bereavement/

SUPPORT



CALL

03 9069 0314

0499 966 228



EMAIL

info@wombatswish.org.au



WEBSITE

www.wombatswish.org.au



SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: [@WombatsWish](https://www.facebook.com/WombatsWish)

Instagram: [@wombatswish](https://www.instagram.com/wombatswish)

LinkedIn: Wombat's Wish



OFFICE HOURS

Monday, 9am - 2pm

Tuesday, 9am - 2pm

Wednesday, 9am - 2pm