

NEWS FROM THE BURROW

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF WOMBAT'S WISH
SPRING 2023



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Spring edition of our Wombat's Wish newsletter. 2023 is our biggest year yet, and as we extend our outreach across the state, the team has been fortunate to meet so many new camp families and community supporters.

In this edition we'll share some of the highlights of our Wombat's Wish Winter camps, our annual fundraiser, and some of the projects we've been working on.

Last month, we successfully launched our new camp at Grantville in the Bass Coast region to support bereaved families from Melbourne and Eastern Victoria. And just a few weeks ago, we were pleased to welcome back many previous camp attendees for a special Youth Camp weekend in Queenscliff on the Bellarine Peninsula.

This month, we're also farewelling Wombat's Wish Coordinator Rebecca Scott, who has played a vital role in growing our organisation over the last three years. For many of our camp families, Bec has been the first point of contact with Wombat's Wish and we are so appreciative of her time, effort, and care.

As a grassroots not-for-profit, Wombat's Wish continues to grow through the support of our people, from volunteers to corporate sponsors. For more ways to help Wombat's Wish, check out our new-look website at www.wombatswish.org.au.

Best wishes,
Casey



WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE:

What's New:
Staff, Camps,
Technology &
Accessibility

Wombat's Wish
out and about

Check out our
Winter camp
photos!

Feature:
Managing Grief in
Teens & Young
People

Plus much more!

WHAT'S NEW

PEOPLE



We're sad to say goodbye to our amazing coordinator Bec Scott, who is moving interstate in September.

Over the past three years, Bec has played a vital role in growing Wombat's Wish, travelling throughout the state to meet with families, developing programs for Youth Camp and group counselling, leading and supporting teams at camps, organising events and tirelessly writing grants - among many, many other things that have enabled our reach to expand throughout Victoria.

Bec is often the first point of contact for grieving families when they reach out to Wombat's Wish, and her care, compassion, humour and understanding is highly valued by families and team members alike.

We'd like to express our appreciation for Bec and best wishes for her exciting times ahead - and sunnier weather!



Suzy Coad joins our team this month as a Community Engagement Officer.

Although she's new to our Operations sector, Suzy has been a much-loved part of Wombat's Wish camp program for more than a decade. We're delighted to have her on board and look forward to benefiting from her enthusiasm, passion and experience with Wombat's Wish.

Suzy is a qualified personal trainer and experienced manager, with a Bachelor and Graduate Diploma of Psychology. She's also currently finishing a Diploma of Counselling and has a special interest in grief and bereavement support. Welcome Suzy!



WHAT'S NEW

PROGRAMS



GRANTVILLE WEEKEND CAMP

This Winter heralded the launch of our new weekend camp program in Grantville, in Victoria's Bass Coast region.

With so much demand for Wombat's Wish programs from eastern Victoria and south-east Melbourne, our new location has enabled more families to participate and access resources, understanding, new friendships and connections along their grief journey.

And what a beautiful camp it proved to be, with picturesque surroundings and a peaceful outlook for our campers over Westernport Bay. In a range of ages from five to fifteen, the children and young people who participated, threw themselves into activities with courage and compassion for each other.

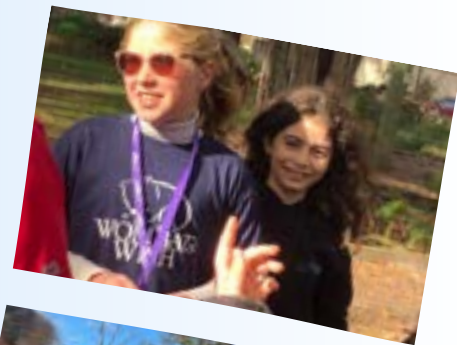
Accompanied by psychologists, social workers and mental health professionals, our volunteer team for Grantville also included a teacher and respiratory scientist, both with many years of experience supporting children through tough times. One of the strengths of having such a diverse growing pool of volunteers and team members, is the unique experience, insight and rapport each brings to our camp families. Even the most shy children inevitably find themselves connecting with a volunteer, having important chats, bonding over a shared love for basketball, black-and-white cats or the Bombers, playing games and sharing laughs.

Along with meaningful moments sharing memories and stories of their important person, and coming up with self-care ideas to manage the hard days, our campers also hit new heights on an epic giant swing and made new furry friends with the camp's resident Shetland ponies.

WHAT'S NEW

PROGRAMS

SNAPSHOTS FROM GRANTVILLE



WHAT'S NEW

PROGRAMS



YOUTH CAMP

After the success of our inaugural Youth Camp in Winter 2022, we were pleased to run this special program for the second time in July 2023. A dozen young people, aged from 12-17, joined us at Cottage by the Sea in Queenscliff on the Bellarine Peninsula, for a weekend of activities and talks aimed at navigating the particular challenges of grieving a parent, as an adolescent. The Youth Campers had all previously attended a Wombat's Wish camp with their family and were keen to return for a special weekend just for them.

Developed by qualified youth workers Bec and Nicki (Wombat's Wish Coordinator and Manager), our Youth Camp program is founded on evidence-based practice in helping young people minimise harm and risk-taking behaviours; recognising their strengths and providing a safe environment to express feelings, share ideas and hold open forum discussions. A popular part of our Youth Camp program is a visit and Q&A session with a doctor specialising in physical and mental health of young people and it was great to see our campers really embrace this opportunity to ask questions, learn, and talk about ways to engage in self-caring behaviours even on the hardest days of their grief journeys.

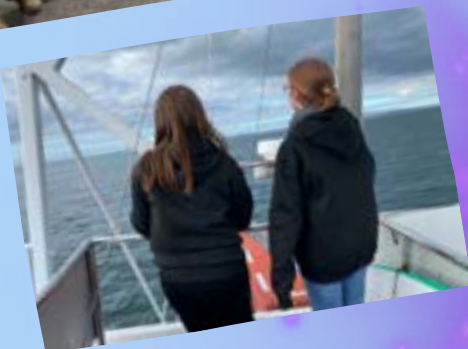
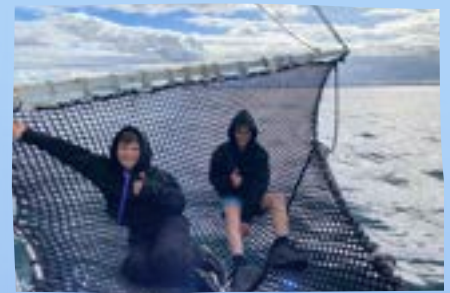
Our Youth Campers enjoyed gorgeous catering from Simply Scrumptious (with some disputes over who got the last piece of cheesecake!), long beach walks and a boat trip into Port Phillip Bay to meet a colony of seals. In the evenings, both campers and team relaxed and got to know each other through games, a few raucous cards sessions, and taking turns on Cottage by the Sea's fabulous indoor slide. As a special surprise, each young person was gifted a brand-new skateboard, courtesy of Cottage by the Sea.

Each of our Youth Campers demonstrated resilience, humour, thoughtfulness and mateship, and it was a such pleasure for our team to spend the weekend with such an awesome group of young people.

WHAT'S NEW

PROGRAMS

YOUTH CAMP MEMORIES



WHAT'S NEW

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER: TRIVIA NIGHT



This year, we threw a fantastic Trivia Night at Geelong West Pavilion for our Annual Wombat's Wish Fundraiser.

Nearly 150 people went head-to-head in teams to answer questions ranging from sports to song lyrics, as well as participating in a silent and live auction and raffle.

Hosted by emcee Luke Maher of Master Maher and with ambience provided by ILoveThisShop Waurin Ponds, we all had a great night and were thrilled by the fabulous support shown by our community, attendees and generous donors.

We're pleased to announce that we raised almost \$12,000 on the night, which will enable Wombat's Wish to continue to provide our therapeutic camp programs and support services, at no cost, to grieving families across Victoria.

WITH MANY THANKS TO:

Ilovethisshop Waurin Ponds	Drysdale Hotel
Tom Hawkins, Geelong Cats	Cafe Zoo
Brian Cook, Carlton Football Club	Ground Zero Cafe
Emily Mannix, Melbourne Vixens	Tania K
Artisan Framing & Canvases	Dot van Dorp
Jack Rabbit Vineyard	Sofia's Spot
Austins Wines	Surf Junction
Jayden Ong Winery & Cellar Door	Performance Pilates & Yoga
Cellarbrations	Powderpig Snow Brand
Portarlington	Jade + May
Lavish Hair & Beauty Co	Queenscliff Sweet Shop
Saltair Spa	Kaisercraft
Queenscliff Day Spa	Mic Crowley
Pinch Salt and Float	Rising Sun Hotel
Zero Gravity Health	The Railway Club
Wallington's WRG	Great Ocean Road
Freckleberry Chocolate Factory	Chocolaterie
	Creekside by J



WHAT'S NEW



TECHNOLOGY: STAYING IN TOUCH

Have you seen our new website? Wombatswish.org.au has had a makeover! Community Engagement Officer Kelsey has been busy rebuilding our website, to ensure that you can quickly find information, helpful grief resources, contact details, videos and more. You can also use our website to register your interest in volunteering with Wombat's Wish, to make a referral for your family or one that you know, and to make a donation to support our work. Coming soon: merchandise, feedback forms and picture portal - watch this space!

We also know that life as a solo parent or carer means a lot of extra demands on your time - so this year, we're rolling out secure, safe software platforms called Halaxy and Jotform, which enables us to keep in contact with current and future Wombat's Wish families more easily by text or email. If you get a text from Halaxy about an upcoming camp or event that you're interested in joining, you can rest assured it's our team getting in touch to say hello!

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVITY - OUR COMMITMENT

All of our work at Wombat's Wish is about caring for families. As Wombat's Wish grows to fit demand, we believe accessibility and inclusivity are more important than ever.

For each of our weekend camp programs, we've recently developed a range of Social Stories, aimed at providing support and logistical information to our WW community before camp. This helps ensure that every family feels reassured and comfortable from the moment they leave for camp.

Our team is currently working on our organisation's Reconciliation Action Plan, which we will be excited to unveil later this year.



WHO WE ARE

MEET THE BOARD:

JO BETZ, SECRETARY

Jo is a marriage celebrant, co-founder of digital wedding publication Ivory Tribe and more recently the author behind Grief – a guided journal that was written for those who wish to explore their own grief through writing.

Widowed in 2017, Jo brings her lived experience of grief to the Board, as well as her experience of parenting a bereaved child. Having attended Wombat's Wish camp with her daughter in 2018, she has seen first-hand just how wonderful Wombat's Wish is for bereaved families and the importance of Wombat's Wish within our community.

Outside of Wombat's Wish and working, Jo loves to holiday and experience new adventures with her daughter, is an avid walker and reader, and always enjoys time spent with her family and friends.



FEATURE



GRIEF IN TEENS

As we all know, grief isn't linear or predictable. Each person walks this challenging path differently, and feels or expresses grief in their own way. For teenagers and young people, grief is made more complex by the already-bumpy road of developmental and social changes that take place during this time in their lives.

WHAT CAN GRIEF LOOK LIKE IN ADOLESCENTS?

Despite the common inability to articulate or understand their grief, research shows that the death of a parent or carer ranks among the most distressing trauma experiences for young people.

Young people may display destructive or anti-social grieving behaviours including impulsivity, social and familial isolation, substance abuse, sexual activity, and risk-taking. For some, grief may manifest physically through fatigue, trouble sleeping, light and noise sensitivity, and eating difficulties. Teens who have experienced the death of their parent are also more vulnerable than their peers to low self-esteem, depression, and poor results at school.

Some young people may confide in their friends, while others may avoid them or struggle to relate to their peers. Their own experiences or emotions may be so overwhelming that some young people seem to stop caring about others, or taking an interest in life around them or their future.

continued below

FEATURE



GRIEF IN TEENS

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE GRIEVE THIS WAY?

Compared to children, young people aged 12-17 have a more adult understanding of the concept of death and what it means for a person to die. However, at this developmental stage, young people do not have the experiences, coping skills, self-regulation techniques or language that adults do, to understand, express and manage their grief, or that of their family.

Put simply, although they experience a huge range of powerful emotions, they may not yet know how to identify them, or what to do with them. This means that young people experience unique challenges throughout their grief journey, and may grieve in ways that make it difficult for parents and carers to know how to support them.

It's important to know that your teen or young person is experiencing grief in a way that is developmentally normal for their age. As well as this, it's common that new developmental stages of their growth and social milestones can trigger grief to re-emerge in different ways, even years on from the death of their important person.

FEATURE



GRIEF IN TEENS

TIPS ON NAVIGATING ADOLESCENT GRIEF

- **Provide** regular, non-pressured opportunities to talk. For some young people, this might be easier to do via text, or while driving or doing an activity together. These opportunities may come at inconvenient times, like on the way to school, but reconnecting and talking with your young person can be of huge benefit to you both.
- **Remind** your young person that you, or other support services, are always available to listen or talk with them, without judgement.
- **Allow** your adolescent to exert some control over their environment.
- **Set** clear boundaries. It is normal for young people - especially those that are grieving - to test them, but maintaining boundaries also helps their home environment feel consistent, stable, and safe.
- **Find** ways to share and preserve memories of the important person who died.
- **Plan** ahead for holidays or milestones that may be particularly difficult or challenging for your young person. You may like to celebrate them in a different way, or not at all.
- **Reassure** your teen that all of their feelings are valid and that it's normal for grief to come in waves.
- **Remember** that your young person may feel more comfortable talking to another trusted adult from a recommended grief or youth service.

BOOKS

FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Tough Boris - Mem Fox

One of our most popular camp books, Tough Boris tells the story of a young boy who sneaks onto a pirate ship - and is surprised to find that even the roughest, toughest Pirate can cry. Boris the Pirate is grieving his beloved parrot, and what follows is a gentle exploration of grief and the importance of expressing feelings.



Her Mother's Face - Roddy Doyle

A beautiful story from the Booker Prize-winning Irish writer, Her Mother's Face follows ten year old Siobhan as she navigates life several years after the death of her mother. Together, she and her father find ways to honour their grief, treasure their special memories and grow closer as a family.



FOR ADULTS

It's Ok That You're Not Ok - Megan Devine

Therapist Megan Devine, herself a widow, explores myths about grief, practical supports for managing stress and anxiety while making space for grief, and how to support others who are grieving.



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WOMBAT'S 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 camps. Currently, Wombat's Wish is one of the only specialist services in Victoria for children who have had a parent or carer die, and our weekend camps are an essential part of making sure that they don't go through that experience feeling alone.

Through our GiveNow campaign, our goal is to grow our Wombat's Wisdom to 200 members in 2023. This number fully funds an entire weekend grief camp for parentally bereaved children and their families, helping them move forward and take the next steps on their bereavement journey.



JOIN OUR WISDOM! HERE'S HOW:

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: www.wombatswish.org.au/donate - 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.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP



Rebuilding the lives of children & young people after the death of a parent

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.

FROM THE TEAM

If you require assistance or would like more information about supporting parentally bereaved children and young people, please get in touch with us at Wombat's Wish.



You can call us on:

03 9069 0314 or 0499 966 228

Email us at:

freeman@wombatswish.org.au

Take a look at our website:

www.wombatswish.org.au

Referrals can be filled in through our website or by contacting us directly.



Kids Helpline - www.kidshelpline.com

Lifeline - www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue - www.beyondblue.org.au

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service - www.barwonhealth.org.au

Headspace Geelong - www.headspace.org.au

Bethany Community Support - www.bethany.org.au

Hope Bereavement Care - www.bereavement.org.au

Compassionate Friends - www.compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement - www.grief.org.au

Canteen - www.canteen.org.au

Barwon Child Youth & Family - www.bcyf.org.au

**HELPFUL ORGANISATIONS
FOR
FURTHER
SUPPORT**