Wombats Wish

Newsletter

Autumn 2024





Welcome back to our quarterly newsletter, where we will be featuring some of our latest additions to the team, upcoming programs and services.

Message from the Chair

Its been a busy start to the year, but it's a little hard to believe it's May! We'are off and running with our 2024 weekend programs, and we've launched our online lounges and the introduction of 1:1 counselling services, which we're incredibly proud of. We've welcomed new team members, Board members and also new families into our burrow. Despite our growth, it's a challenging time for not-for-profit orgnisations with economic uncertainty making it harder to access funds. We have always relied on the support and generousity of our donors, sponsors and benefactors and we're incresibly grateful for the ongoing support. Organisations like Geelong Community Foundation, the Costa Foundation and EnergyAustralia have been vital to our growth and ability to offer new and expanded services.

Do you know someone you think can help? Please refer them to our website where our support options are available. Know someone we can help? Tell them to send a referral to us to hear all about our new and existing services. Enjoy the update from the team and I, and stay safe and warm this winter!

Casey Kaminskyj, Wombat's Wish Chair

issue:

What's in this

WHAT'S NEW

- Research Summary
- Workplace Health and Safety
- Programs
- Annual Fundraise
- Community Info Pack

WHO ARE WE?

- Staff Introduction
- Client Reviews

FEATURE

COUNSELLING CORNER

- Message from Jill
- Books
- Grief Exercise

SUPPORT

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

RESEARCH SUMMARY

In 2022, we were thrilled to receive a grant from GCF to undertake some muchneeded research in order to update our evidence base and grief program development – for the first time in over 15 years.

We recently wrapped up that research – and although there were some delays and challenges which we learnt from, we came out much better for it as an organisation.

We now have improved confidence and validation of our services, we better understand our gaps and future service direction, and we have significantly updated our evidence base. We've also learnt a lot about our internal data and family cohorts, which is vital to how we to continue to support young people and their grief journey.

I'm so proud of this research, and the resilience and agility that our team showed to deliver it. I'm especially proud that it was almost entirely powered by women. Doctors. Therapists. Social workers. Neuroscience. Qualitative and quantitative data.... All from our small and spirited team of superheroes based on the Bellarine!

These outcomes have also linked in with our program expansion work in 1:1 and online group support, which you can find more information about on our website. Sharing and collaboration is an important part of work like this, so I'm thrilled to also announce that we have been invited to speak on this research and our outcomes at the mental health & social work conference later this year – stay tuned to our socials for updates! If you are a community organisation and would like more information in the meantime, please reach out to us at info@wombatswish.com.au.

A huge thank you to Geelong Community Foundation and it's generous donors for their ongoing support (and patience) while we learned our way delivering this program. GCF grant programs enable positive impacts through our whole region and we've been incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to deliver this one.



Casey Kaminskyj, Wombat's Wish Chair

Almost 600 hours were dedicated to this research (295 paid, 300 volunteer) over 11 months Research Over 40 resources were utilised as part of our literary review Summary · 6 working group meetings were held as a part of our mixed method, collaborative approach The majority of evidence base references now within the last 7 years (an average of 20+ year reference evidence date uplift) We had community collaboration with key partners We have clear service outcomes and pathways forward in terms of prioritised and identified change Phase 1 is complete, but we have committed to ongoing research and development Most of our weekend program work, is still valid with a refreshed strong evidence base and current grief theory Parent support is vital to our program moving forward, and more correlate Key findings with how children cope than we previously understood There is an organic alignment between relevant grief models and our strategy, creating a significant opportunity moving forward Our own internal data is as vital to helping resource investment and decisioning as the external research is Differentiation in future programs may be key to our evolution (i.e modules for different causes of death, circumstances etc) We may be observing more men starting to access services (hypothesis) There is no gold standard evaluation method for camp programs We have a post covid camp cancellation challenge, requiring more focus 7 changes made to weekend camp program, including time and resource Recommendations changes, to better support particpants ability to absorb the program & Reflections 11 recommendations have been made on informed future work programs (some have already been committed and prioritised) Overall, greater support mechanisms are needed for parents and employees in particular (training, resources) There's an opportunity for more digital resources in the modern context (some already implemented, more being assessed) More focus is needed moving forward to remain up to date with contemporary methods, to be field leaders and achieve our vision Significant research collaboration was, and is needed in the future Our knowledge base has been strengthened along with our data maturity Post implementation review to leverage key project lessons Start testing a new quantitative measure for children and young people Next steps participating in our programs Sharing key findings with stakeholders (conference participation, publication, abstract distribution) Increase parent support options, informed by new evidence base Assessing and prioritising investment in specialist programs / more targete support (cause of death, cohort differentiation) Finalising our abstract, updating our website and materials to reflect the currency of our evidence base Ongoing work to understand participation barriers and outcomes Continuation of data led program development and expansion Pause to celebrate, reenergise, and look forward!

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

2024 Review - Wombat's Wish is committed to workplace health and safety.

Our Workplace Health and Safety Policy, aims to provide a safe workplace for all staff, volunteers, and visitors to prevent incidents, accidents, injuries, illnesses, and diseases.

Wombat's Wish is to report and investigate incidents to avoid their recurrence. This commitment also applies to near misses and unsafe workplace practices that can cause accidents, injuries, or illnesses.

This policy is to set out a framework for the Board, Manager, employees, volunteers and visitors to maintain a high standard of workplace health and safety, identify, report, investigate and compensate for workplace accidents, injuries, illnesses or diseases and remedy any unsafe workplace or unsafe work practices which have or could contribute to them.

In particular as a women's led organisation, we want to ensure our employees and volunteers feel safe at all times. In light of recent changes to external risk profiles, especially for women, we decided to review and update our policy to add some additional safety measures, particularly in allied health settings.

We wish we didn't have to undertake this activity, but sitting down around the table and having a hard-light-of-day look at some of our practices and mindsets, showed us that we did have some gaps, and complacencies around some of our habits. Some of the updates we made included different contact and rostering requirements when our people are in 1:1 health settings with clients, which is safer for all our employees.

Proactive prevention was key in us reducing avoidable harm for our organisation, and we encourage other allied health and community organisations to go through the same activity. Please feel free to reach out if you'd like to hear more about our process or outcomes.



1:1 COUNSELLING

1:1 Counselling online via telehealth and in person is now available for those in immediate need. 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 <u>referral form</u> on our website.



ONLINE LOUNGES

To further support families after having attended a Weekend Grief Program, Wombat's Wish has introduced separate Online Lounges for parents/carers, young people and children.

Held monthly and facilitated by a qualified grief practitioner, the Online Lounges will provide parents/carers, young people and children with the opportunity to not only connect with our team and other families regardless of where they live in Victoria, but also offers a great chance to explore their grief journey further and discuss any issues or concerns.

The sessions are informal and allow families to join whenever they feel the need to. Just send a message with your name, your children's names and their ages to admin@wombatswish.org.au, confirming that you'd like to register for our online lounges and we'll be in touch with a Zoom invitation link and our consent form that you will need to sign prior to attending the sessions.







We've had the first Online Lounges for parents, young people and children and the feedback so far is very positive. We look forward to continuing to improve our services to families.



UPCOMING ONLINE LOUNGES

Parent Online Lounge - 3rd June 2024 @8 - 9.30pm

> Youth Online Lounge - 18th June 2024 @7 - 8.30pm

Kids Online Lounge - 25th June 2024 @4.30 - 5.30pm

WEEKEND GRIEF PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES

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.



- Grantville Family program 21st to 23rd June 2024
- Queenscliff Youth Program 19th to 21st July 2024
- Queenscliff Family Program 16th to 18th August 2024
- Corop Family Program 13th to 15th September 2024
- Queenscliff Family Program 29th November to 1st December 2024

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.

Join our next Family Fun Day on the 2nd June and receive more information about it by emailing us at info@wombatswish.org.au.

SNAPSHOTS FROM OUR PREVIOUS FAMILY FUN DAYS



- Sunday 2nd June 2024
- October 2024 (date to be confirmed)
- December 2024 (date to be confirmed)

This year, we had our biannual Fundraising Gala at The President's Room in the GMHBA Stadium in Geelong for our Annual Wombat's Wish Fundraiser.

Hosted by MC Luke Maher of Master Maher and with ambience provided by ILoveThisShop Waurn Ponds, we all had a great night.

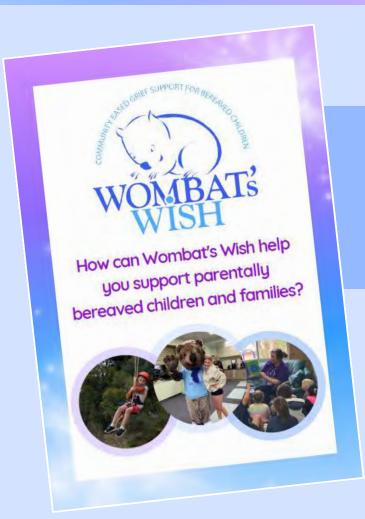
With over 180 people attending, we conducted a silent and live auction, as well as a raffle. The night consisted of a lot of fun activities, a photo booth, chats with our ambassadors and a panel of previous families who have attended our programs, delicious food and lots of dancing to raise awareness and funds for children and families that have experienced a death of a parent or primary carer.

Together with our sponsors and donors we raised \$17,378.73, which will enable Wombat's Wish to continue to provide our therapeutic weekend grief programs and support services, at no cost, to grieving families across Victoria

Thank you for the support shown by our community, attendees and generous donors







INTRODUCING

Our new Community
Information Pack

Caring for a bereaved child can be difficult in so many ways.

What should you say? How should you act? Is there something specific you should be doing or not doing? How do you know if a young person is coping?

One in every 20 children before the age of 18 in Australia will be bereaved of a parent. That's one child in every classroom. Yet many teachers and professionals receive no bereavement training and are unsure how to support grieving children and young people in their care.

As well as providing direct bereavement information and support to children, young people and their families, Wombat's Wish can now help teachers and other professionals to provide the best support possible by sharing our Community Information Pack with schools, General Practitioners, Mental Health and other professionals.

Please find more detailed information on our website.



WHO ARE WE?



BOARD MEMBER

Hannah Dawes

Hannah has worked in various roles in the Insurance sector, with many years working as a lawyer. Hannah has been with Wombat's Wish since 2014 and is very passionate about the organisation and the support it provides not only to the local community, but the broader community across Victoria and Australia. When Hannah first heard about the organisation, she was drawn to it due to the free support it provides to people that otherwise is not readily available. Hannah is committed to continuing to see Wombat's Wish grow and to be able to provide more services to parentally bereaved children and their surviving parent or carer.

STAFF MEMBER

Frances McAloon - Grief Counsellor

Frances is an experienced Accredited Mental Health Social
Worker with a Bachelor of Social Work and a Masters of Gerontology.
With over 35 years' experience, Frances has worked alongside children and families in many settings from inner city Melbourne in family services to outback western Australia in child services. Over the last decade, she supported the local community with myriad day to day challenges, including grief, loss and life transitions. As a counsellor at Wombat's Wish, Frances does 1:1 grief counselling for children and families who have experienced the death of a parent/carer. You'll also be seeing her at our weekend Family Grief Programs, where she will work with children, parents and carers, and lead activities and conversations around grief as well as provide tools to support families.

WHO ARE WE?

SPECIAL MOMENTS & FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENTS

Wombat's Wish changed my life. The weekend grief camp helped so much after the death of my parent and helped me become who I am today.

I wouldn't of gotten through the tough times if I didn't have the support from Wombat's Wish.

-Sky

Thank you to everyone who helped me and spoke to me at a wombat's wish camp.

I was really nervous at first but the staff was so nice and I had so much fun and made new friends.

Now i don't feel like i am the only person who knows what it is like to have a parent die.

-Emily

I just want to say thank you for such an amazing weekend. I cannot put into words how incredible it was for us, just blown away and incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to attend. It was extraordinary and so powerful.

As we were about to hop in the car yesterday, Stella wrapped her arms around me and gave me the hug and thanked me for bringing us to camp and for organising for us to come.

This morning when she was packing her box to take to school to show her class mates, I made a comment about telling her friends how great it was and she said No mum, incredible, it wasn't great it was incredible.

-Nea

I wish you all well. My 12 year old son and I attended the first camp. Excellent and much needed and appreciated - about 24 years ago.

He is now 36, happily married Dad of 2 and a great job. I worried about all of these for him at times.

Life does get better over time. Take it slowly, One step or hurdle at a time.

-Julia

NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS WEEK

Happy National Volunteers Week!

From the 19th to the 25th May, Australia celebrated its Volunteers and highlighting the important role within our community. It invites people to give it a go #somethingforeveryone.

The Wombat's Wish team recognises the hard work our volunteers and staff put into supporting children and families across Victoria with their grief journey - not only just in this week but every day in the year.

Thus, we would like to take the opportunity to thank our wonderful board members, volunteers and ambassadors for everything they do for Wombat's Wish and our families - We hope you enjoyed the little treat!



NATIONAL GRIEF WEEK

"Grief is something that will affect us all at some point in our lives, yet there is still much taboo about the human experience of bereavement"

The mission of National Grief Week is to normalise the universal, human experience of grieving by creating conversation, increasing awareness and bringing hope.

At Wombat's Wish, we are proud to be a part of increasing grief awareness for children and families that have lost a parent or primary carer.

Let's encourage each other to come together and learn more about grief and how we can better support one another.

Here are some events that Hope Bereavement Care is doing during National Grief Week - more information on how to RSVP here.

19 National Grief Week - Launch Event (3 -3.30pm, AEST)

MAY

Art Exhibition - Finding Hope in Grief (9am, AEST)

Professional Development Session - Supporting children and young people bereaved by a traumatic, sudden or unexpected death, in school setting (4 - 5pm, AEST)

Webinar - Responding to Patients Bereaved by a Traumatic, Sudden or Unexpected Death (6.30 - 8pm, AEST)

22 Walking with Grief (1 - 2pm, AEST)
MAY

Grief Week - Creative Bereavement Workshop
(10am - 12pm AEST)

Dru,mming Workshop - Rhythms of Life and Loss (10.30am - 12pm, AEST)



COUNSELLING CORNER



Julie Stokes psychologist and co-founder of Winston's Wish in the UK has recently published a book:

You Will Be Okay: Find strength, stay hopeful an get to grips with grief.

"I found this to be a very readable 'gem', full of great information, ideas and practical exercises for all family members on the partner/carer/parental death grief journey.

The only slight drawback s that Julie uses a lot of UK examples (e.g. English soccer players and Olympians). We have plenty of Aussie "grief heroes" too. I will tell you about them in our next Newsletter."

Jill Crookes, Founder of Wombat's Wish



COUNSELLING CORNER

Ups and Downs: A Book for Kids about big feelings

KAREN YOUNG (ILLUSTRATED BY NORVILE DOVIDONYTE)

All feelings are important - the magical, the messy, and the inbetween. Sometimes though, big feelings can have us behaving in ways that aren't so, let's say... shiny. This happens to all of us. The more young people understand how and why, the more they can build the capacity to feel their feelings and manage them in positive ways. 'Ups and Downs' draws on Polyvagal Theory, a widely accepted neuroscientific theory, to support young people to understand why they feel and do as they do, and how to do differently when they need to. Driving brains and bodies isn't easy! It takes time, experience, and the right information, so let's give them that.

FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



FOR ADULTS



You Will Be Okay: Find Strength, stay hopeful and get to grips with grief

JULIE STOKES

The death of a parent, sibling or friend is one of the most traumatic experiences for a child or young person and it can be hard to know how to talk to them about it. In this honest, comforting and strength-building guide Julie Stokes, a clinical psychologist and founder of childhood bereavement charity Winston's Wish, provides readers with the tools they need to navigate this tough and turbulent time.

Readers will discover the stories of other people who have been through grief themselves. They will learn how to flex their 'grief muscles' in order to develop confidence, trust, grit, a resilient mindset and flexible feelings – the ability to notice, accept and talk about emotions when they choose to. And packed with practical exercises, such as creating memory boxes and managing different kinds of memories using 'memory stones', this guide will give readers helpful ways to manage their grief so they can begin to move forward with life.

COUNSELLING CORNER





Please write your name here:	
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Grief can feel a little muddled at times. Try one of our word search puzzle's to see if you can find a range of words linked to Grief.

Search horizontally, vertically and diagonally for all 16 words.

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OUR AMAZING DONORS

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The Rosemary Norman Foundation



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

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



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.





Visit our website <u>www.wombatswish.org.au</u> 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.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/

www.winstonswish.org





CALL

03 9069 0314 0499 966 228



EMAIL

info@wombatswish.org.au



WEBSITE

www.wombatswish.org.au



SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: @WombatsWish Instagram: @wombatswish LinkedIn: Wombat's Wish





OFFICE HOURS

Monday, 9am - 5pm Tuesday, 9am - 5pm Wednesday, 9am - 2pm Thursday, 9am - 2pm