

## The Senate Inquiry into Stillbirth

A Senate committee was established earlier this year for a National Inquiry into Stillbirth. An invitation for submissions went out and **Geelong father, Bruce McMillan**, was one parent who was invited to the Melbourne hearing on the 9<sup>th</sup> August to present a shortened three minute version of his submission. Since we've recently acknowledged Father's Day and also the week prior, International Bereaved Father's Day, it's timely to reflect on the heartfelt words of this local father. Bruce was very kind to share his words below...

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak at this hearing.

Six years ago last Friday our son Liam Henry came into the world. He looked just like any other new born child being held in his mother's arms except, for reasons that can't be explained, he never took a breath as he died in-utero.

As we stood in front of the doors of the maternity ward waiting to be let in for my wife to be induced it reminded me of Harry Potter as he stood on platform 9¾ about to run through a brick wall into a world that he never knew existed. We too were thrust into a world that we barely knew existed.

A world where friends disappeared, work colleagues acknowledged their own losses, and having to deal with that dreaded question "so how many children do you have?" – a question that we answer honestly and that often causes discomfort for those questioning - but to answer differently would be to deny Liam's existence and we are not prepared to do this.

*{continued on page 4}*



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The Geelong Cemeteries Trust would like to introduce the availability of our mobile office and facilities. We will have our fully equipped mobile office and one of our friendly customer service consultants available by appointment to meet on site at any of our cemeteries during business hours.

Our customer service consultants will be able to assist with any enquiry, including information relating to the reservation of graves and memorials, and the arrangements for memorial bronze plaques. Interest free flexible payment options are available.

*To schedule an appointment, please call our administration office on 03 5249 3939 during business hours.*



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## HOPE BEREAVEMENT CARE —

A service of Hope Bereavement Services Inc,  
in partnership with Red Nose (formerly SIDS and Kids)

- To ensure that those who have experienced the sudden and unexpected death of an infant, child or young person under 18 years of age receive information and support suited to their needs.
- To offer consultation and information about support services to assist these bereaved families.
- To offer consultation and assistance with debriefing for individuals and groups.
- To provide community education for people working with families who are experiencing trauma and grief following the death of a child.
- To investigate ways to meet the needs of many bereaved parents, while encouraging the support offered by the family & friends, local community & self-help groups.

### Hope Bereavement Services Inc Board

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Tracey Paech

### Office Manager - Maree Burn

Hope Bereavement Care offers personal support and information to anyone who has been affected at any time by the sudden and unexpected death of a child. This is a confidential service. If you would like support, more information or wish to make a referral, please contact the Bereavement Counsellor on (03) 4215 3358 during business hours or 1300 308 307 for after hours bereavement support.

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A trading name of

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**HOPE BEREAVEMENT  
PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS**



Improving our community



## Counsellor's Corner



Welcome to the Spring edition of Hope's Snowflake newsletter. This year we have been reflecting on the theme: **'Butterflies'**. If this catches your attention and makes you think about any songs or poems or experiences ... PLEASE email them into the HBC office on [hope@bereavement.org.au](mailto:hope@bereavement.org.au) and they can be included in future newsletters.

During the Winter' months we acknowledged the 30<sup>th</sup> Remembering Service held for Red Nose Day in Melbourne, held the Children's Memory Morning during the school holidays and the Senate Inquiry into Stillbirth took place. One of Geelong's local Dads was invited to attend the Inquiry and share a summary of his submission - see his words in this edition - very powerful!

I also participated in a workshop in Melbourne called 'Stepping into the Heart of Grief' hosted by the Centre for Existential Practice. An overview of grief models were reflected upon and discussed. One idea that impressed me, and that I'll bring into my work at Hope, is the concept of being an 'exquisite witness' as defined by J. S. Jeffrey – *a person who enters into the sacred space between two human souls, having the deepest respect for the yearning, seeking and wishful hopes of the other person, who is seeking to survive in a world changed by grief and loss.*

**Warm wishes to you,**

**Tracey Paech**

**Bereavement Counsellor**

## New Hope Logo

This is the new logo for Hope Bereavement Care.



Hope Bereavement Care had its beginnings as FACTS/ BPBP in 1985, to provide grief support for those who'd experienced the death of a child. In the mid-1990s the Barwon Paediatric Bereavement Program (BPBP) approached the Sudden Infant Death Research Foundation (SIDRF) to provide funding for a bereavement support counsellor for the area. In 2002 SIDRF became SIDS and Kids and BPBP became Hope Bereavement Care (along with the Snowflake logo – a flower of hope) and the partnership was so intertwined that locally the organisations were thought of interchangeably.

In 2011 the Hope Board, wanting to diversify in the bereavement support offered in Geelong, funded a counsellor with supervisory support provided by the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB). This counsellor provides grief support to those bereaved by someone aged above 18yrs.

In 2012 SIDS and Kids began merging the states to become one national entity and was eventually rebranded as Red Nose in 2016. While Red Nose still funds one part-time counsellor at HBC, some points of difference evolved when Red Nose was merging and restructuring. HBC and the Barwon Region still very much wanted to maintain a relevant, local and personal bereavement support service and still be able to extend support to families who'd experienced the death of children aged between 7-18yrs.

In 2016 the Hope Board, through a partnership with Jesuit Social Services, welcomed another arm of the service – supporting those bereaved by suicide.

The new logo has been adopted by the current Hope Bereavement Care service as a whole, which provides free information, support and counselling for families and others who have experienced the sudden or unexpected death of a loved one.

# *The Senate Inquiry into Stillbirth*

*{continued from page 1}*

While I was vaguely aware of stillbirth having previously worked in the funeral industry, I was not aware of the magnitude of the losses. As we know there are over 2000 stillbirths a year. Our national road toll hasn't been over 2000 since 1991. If governments of all persuasions had allowed the national road toll to carry on for 27 years with no reduction, there would be a national outcry at the failure of governments to act. Yet here we are in 2018 with virtually no government money being spent on research into an area that impacts on so many lives and probable even less in supporting organisations who support those of us who have suffered the loss of a child.

I don't need to reinforce the importance of these Senate hearings.

As a father I have often felt left behind in this journey and it has often seemed that stillbirth is a woman's issue. Listening into parts of yesterday's Senate hearing in Sydney I rarely heard the impact on dads, I rarely heard dads mentioned, invariably we seem to get lumped in with families and partners.

One of the most important things that was said to me after the loss of our son was by our midwife who came into our room and said "you won't understand this now, but you will in time" and she simply said "hello mum and dad". At the time it seemed like a bizarre statement.

As dads we carry our own grief and too often we put this aside to support our partners, we are told to be strong for our wife or partner, be strong for our families; and we are usually asked how the wife is and rarely how are we. I can't recall the last time someone called me to see how I am doing.

There is little research into the impact of stillbirth on dads, and dads seem to be resistant to attend support groups and seek counselling.

We need to find a way to engage dads in a way that will support them in their grief journey and to stop engaging in conversation around stillbirth that seems to imply that stillbirth is a women's issue. We have lost as well.

Finally, if I'm allowed to stretch a little beyond my three minutes if I haven't already, I'd like to acknowledge the many parents who have found the process of sitting down to write a submission too painful for them, as many have become overwhelmed with their grief and reliving the pain of their loss. Many have stated that they have felt that the opportunity to write a submission was a way for them to acknowledge their children, and not being able to complete the submission they feel that they have failed their children.

I would ask the committee that as they spend the rest of their time meeting and speaking with bereaved parents and other vested parties through these hearings that you keep these parents in mind and I would hope that in some way you can acknowledge their pain and loss at not being able to provide submissions and acknowledge that they have not failed their children.

## **Related Links**

*Stillbirth a neglected epidemic no one talks about.*  
Emily Baker, The Sunday Age 24<sup>th</sup> of June,  
<https://www.theage.com.au/national/act/neglected-epidemic-parents-share-heartbreak-of-stillbirth-20180622-p4zn3j.html>

Senator Keneally (a bereaved parent) speaks on Studio Ten -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYtClQOyOuk>

# Walk of Hope

**Date: Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

**Time: 10.00am to 2.00pm**

**At: Rippleside Park, Geelong**

**The Geelong Walk of Hope  
commemorates  
Pregnancy and Infant Loss  
Remembrance Day**



After a brief ceremony to remember their precious children who have died, family and friends will walk along the Geelong waterfront from Rippleside Park to Cunningham Pier and back (4 km round trip).

A free sausage sizzle (or BYO picnic lunch) can be enjoyed after the walk.

Participants are also invited to raise funds to help continue the work of Hope Bereavement Care supporting families who have experienced the sudden or unexpected death of an infant, child or young person under 18 years.

To **register** for our walk

go to

<https://www.trybooking.com/YGIB>

To start **fundraising**

go to

<https://nfp.everydayhero.com/au/hope-bereavement>

and create a Fundraising Page

**Contact: Hope Bereavement Care**

**P: (03) 4215 3358**

**E: [hope@bereavement.org.au](mailto:hope@bereavement.org.au)**

A service of Hope Bereavement Services Inc.  
Reg no. A00027598B ABN 76 451 676 675



# Children's Memory Morning

## July School Holidays

During the Winter school holidays, Hope hosted a total of 10 children and 9 adults, with 2 of the children attending for the first time.



*Neya and her Mum, Erica, remembering her sisters Catharine & Isla*

Tracey was on annual leave for this Memory Morning, so the day was hosted by locum Caroline Gubb and volunteer parent Sam Sharpe.

Caroline assisted the children to introduce themselves and who they were remembering and talk about their photo and/or keepsake they brought along. They then lit a tea-light candle in memory of their brother or sister. Hope's theme for this year is 'Butterflies' so the story that was read related beautifully to this theme. The book was called *Butterfly Park* by Elly Mackay.

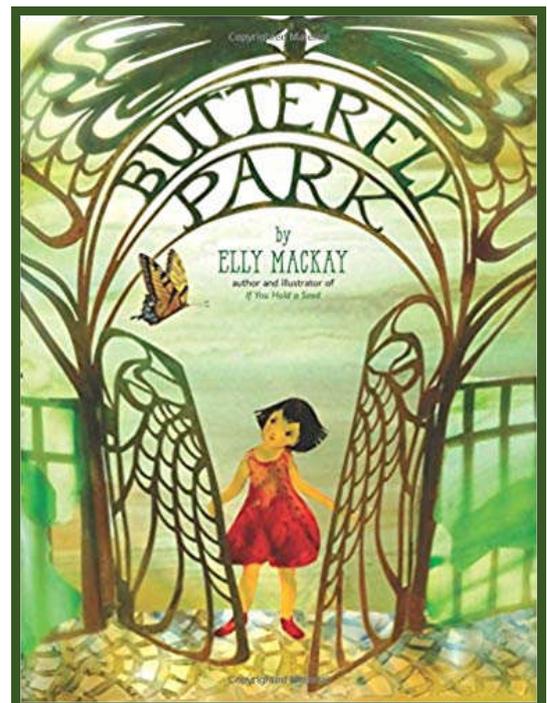
After the story, Caroline explained how they were going to create butterflies during their craft activity.

Thanks to all staff and parents for contributing on the day, including Maree from the office who was our kitchen co-ordinator again.

Children's Memory Mornings are as much about bereaved parents catching up for a chat as they are about the children sharing time with other bereaved siblings. Children from birth to primary are welcome to attend, even if their sibling who died was older and they never got to meet them. These mornings can help play a role in normalising this experience in their young lives.

**The next Children's Memory Morning will be on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018.**

If you don't already receive regular invitations, please contact the Hope office on 4215 3358 to be included on the invitation list. Children's Memory Mornings are held three times a year, usually on the second Friday during the term school holidays.



# Children's Memory Morning

## July School Holidays



*Below: The Forssman family remembering Thomas and creating memories for him*



*All the kids together proudly showing their beautiful butterflies*

# Helpful Hints - How to Support a Grieving Family

Death is a difficult subject, one which is frightening and unfamiliar to many people. Sometimes it is hard to know what to do or say to someone whose young child has died. You may feel awkward, uncomfortable or even afraid. But don't let your own sense of helplessness keep you away. Silence and distance can be so hurtful, not only to the parents, but also to you and your relationship with them.

As you cared about your friend or family member before the death of their child, show them, in some way, that you still do. Your understanding and support will make a difference.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

Be there. Come to the house or call to say: "I care and I want to help."

Listen! Even when talk about the baby or young child or circumstances of death make you uncomfortable. This is not about your comfort.

Remember that it is usually the simple things that mean so much.

Freely recall the baby or young child by his/her name. This is an important way of acknowledging the child's existence and importance.

If you have organisational skills, take the initiative and be an organiser. Put together a list of friends and relatives willing to bring meals to the bereaved family for several weeks after the death. Be available to run errands, clean the house and even feed or walk the dog.

Consider both the practical and emotional needs of any siblings. How long has it been since Jack ate anything? Does Amy need someone to cuddle? Organise 'play dates' with your own children.

If you would like to give the bereaved parents a gift, consider a locket for the child's picture, a special box in which to keep mementos of the child, picture frames (especially for siblings) or framed poetry, or a vase for flowers.

Consider how long you think it would take to "get over" the death and then forget it! In fact, there is no time limit. Grieving is tough work that takes much longer than most people expect. Most parents say it takes two to three years to feel 'half normal' again and, even then, there is the strong need to remember and maintain the strong bond with their child forever.

Remember important days such as birthdays and the anniversary of the death. A call, a visit or a card can mean a great deal to grieving parents who are wondering if anyone else remembers.

Do feel free to say any of these things:

- I'm sorry.
- I can't begin to imagine your pain.
- I feel so sad that you have to go through this
- This must be extremely difficult for you
- I want to do whatever I can to help you. What can I do?
- Talk for as long as you want. I have plenty of time to listen.



# Remembrances

## **James Thomas Geoffrey Rowe**

08/08/2001 – 19/10/2001

Rest in peace my baby boy  
with your beautiful twin sister Alison.  
Missing you every day,  
Love from Mummy, Dylan & Tayla XXX

## **Leila and Gracie Higgins**

20/09/2010

Happy 8th Birthday to our darling girls.  
Our love for you will never cease,  
You are our missing pieces  
All our love, Mum, Dad, Tom, Harry and Max. xx

## **Melati Kadek Kartawa**

14/10/2013 - Born Sleeping.

To our darling little girl, wishing you a heavenly 5th Birthday,  
it's hard to believe it's been 5 years  
when it seems like yesterday we held you in our arms  
and had to say goodbye to our beautiful precious girl we had so many hopes and dreams for,  
a piece of our hearts that can never be fixed or replaced.  
We miss you more than words could ever speak & loved beyond the moon and the stars.  
Sending all our love, cuddles and kisses to you today, always & forever  
Mummy, Daddy, Indanah and Zaidee.

## **Thomas James Marshall**

12/11/2000 to 17/11/2000

Remembering your 18th Birthday.  
Most people only dream of angels, we held one in our arms.  
Mum, Dad, your twin sister Ruby and Ollie xxx

## **Oscar Mark Welsh**

12/11/2011

One beautiful baby  
With two loving brothers  
They are Mum and Dad's three boys  
This year, Sam turns four  
In our family of five  
Angus turns six  
And you are seven.  
We love you and remember you every day.

## **Lucas Tobias Davie** - our precious butterfly

Stillborn 29/11/2011 - 33 weeks

Another year - still the same heart ache ..  
We miss you dearly and wish you could be here running after your 3 sisters.  
Love you always  
Daddy, Mama, Laerke, Malou & Asta

## Parent/Peer Supporter Training Melbourne 2018

One way bereaved parents are able to deepen meaning around their baby/child's memory is to participate in some volunteer training to be a parent/peer supporter. This is most frequently carried out via phone contact but a number of parents sometimes meet for coffee and there is also scope to help out with support groups.



Red Nose's Karyn Tait currently holds the Parent Supporter Training portfolio. If there's enough interest she is hoping to hold the next Parent/Peer Supporter Training in Melbourne in **November 2018**.

You are able to participate in the training even if you aren't sure that this is something you could do. It could be part of what you do to discover if this is a direction you would want to take either presently, or at a future time.

*If it has been at least 2 years since your most recent bereavement, and this is something you would like to explore further, then Karyn would be pleased to hear from you. Her email is [karyntait@rednose.com.au](mailto:karyntait@rednose.com.au)*



*Magpie Cottage*, together with a second house known as *Milnedale*, are comfortable farm houses located near Wonthaggi, Victoria (approx. 1½ hours south-east of Melbourne and 2½ hours from Geelong).

The owners, with the help and generosity of the local community, have renovated both properties – they are now charming and welcoming spaces being offered to bereaved families, **free of charge**, who are in need of some time away and an 'escape to the country'.

The properties are surrounded by beautiful gardens where families can spend time in the relaxing surrounds.

The accommodation is a nice drive away from the localities of Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Phillip Island and surrounding areas, for those wanting to explore further afield. Interstate families are also invited to stay.

If you are a family bereaved of a baby or child and interested in booking *Magpie Cottage* or *Milnedale*, please contact Tracey Paech at Hope Bereavement Care on ph (03) 4215 3358. She will then assist you with the next part of the booking process.





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# Calendar

**OCTOBER**

- 4 Empty Arms Group 7.30pm
- 5 Children's Memory Morning 10.00am
- 9 Drop in Group 10.00am
- 10 After Suicide Loss, Early Bereavement Group, 6.00pm
- 14 Walk of Hope, Rippleside Park, 10.00am
- 16 After Suicide Loss Group 6.00pm
- 17 After Suicide Loss, Early Bereavement Group, 6.00pm
- 24 After Suicide Loss, Early Bereavement Group, 6.00pm
- 31 After Suicide Loss, Early Bereavement Group, 6.00pm

**NOVEMBER**

- 8 Empty Arms Group 7.30pm
- 13 Drop in Group 10.00am
- 20 After Suicide Loss Group 6.00pm

**DECEMBER**

- 3 Hope Remembering Service, Ukrainian Hall Geelong West, 7.00pm
- 6 Empty Arms Group 7.30pm
- 11 Drop in Group 10.30am
- 11 After Suicide Loss Group 6.00pm

## Dates for Your Diary

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2018 –**  
**Walk of Hope**  
 10.00am at Rippleside Park

**Monday 3rd December 2018 –**  
**Hope Remembering Service**  
 7.00pm, Ukrainian Community Hall,  
 57 Pakington Street, Geelong West

# Support Groups

## Empty Arms: Parent Support Group

For families and friends who have suffered a loss from miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death, either recently or many years ago.

Contacts:  
Geelong Support Group  
Hope Office: Tracey 4215 3358 / 4215 3352

## After Suicide Loss Support Group

This group aims to support any person who has experienced the death of a loved one through suicide. Meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:00pm-8:00pm at Kitchener House.

Contact: Support After Suicide Geelong Region  
Hope Office Ph: 4215 3358

## The Compassionate Friends

For parents who have lost a child at any age due to any cause. Informal get togethers held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. Hope and TCF also host a Drop-In Group every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 10.00am.

Group Facilitators: Kim & Rhonda  
Contact: Jan & Norm McNess Ph: 5243 6906

## Drop In Group

The Drop In Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10.00a.m. It is an opportunity for those who have experienced the death of a child to meet informally. Jointly run by The Compassionate Friends and Hope Bereavement Care.

Contact: Hope Office Ph: 4215 3358

## Road Trauma Support Services Victoria

This service aims to offer assistance for people involved in, or traumatized by, road deaths/accidents.

Contact: Road Trauma Support Services Ph: 1300 367 797

## Red Nose Grief and Loss

(formerly SIDS and Kids)

**24 hour**

**Bereavement Support & Information**

**1300 308 307**

The Geelong area offers a number of support groups giving comfort and understanding, which are run by volunteers who have also suffered the loss of a loved one.

All groups have a strong network of phone contacts and support.

A library service is also available.