



ANNUAL REPORT GRIEFLINK INCORPORATED

June 2019- July 2020

GriefLink.org.au



Annual Report GriefLink Inc 2019-2020

On August 14th 2019, I presented the first Annual Report of GriefLink Incorporated following GriefLink's incorporation on March 21st, 2018. It is now my honour to present the second Annual Report of GriefLink Incorporated on behalf of the GriefLink Management Committee.

At the meeting last year, as we farewelled long-standing committee member Michael Bull, it was decided to seek to expand the committee membership. We have been very pleased to welcome Katherine Hodgetts, Kate Obst and Caitlin Hennessy as new committee members. Nicholas Procter was unable to join the committee but continues to provide invaluable advice to GriefLink.

Last year I reported on the 2018-2019 Suicide Prevention Community Grant which enabled us to considerably expand the suicide-related information on GriefLink. Having completed the project, we decided that we would launch the pages with a community event, which took the form of a public forum "*No shame. No Blame. Surviving suicide loss.*" presented jointly with the Hawke Centre, University of South Australia on November 28th 2019. We are very grateful for the support of Jacinta Thompson and her team at the Hawke Centre, to our panelists Jill Chapman, Nicholas Procter, Ian James and John Dawkins, and our moderator, David Roach. All the committee provided support for the event, and the evening concluded with drinks and nibbles at the Hawke Centre.

During the latter part of 2019, David Roach and Mary Brooksbank met with a number of key people in the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist, Wellbeing SA and the Mental Health Commission to promote the resources that have become available on GriefLink. All South Australian Funeral Directors were sent examples of the revised downloadable pamphlet as well.

Last year, at the conclusion of my report I wrote *“I think, as we look ahead, 2019 and 2020 will be a time of consolidation of all the work we have done in the last year “*. I don’t think we could have had any inkling of how 2020 would unfold!

One of the first events of significance to GriefLink was the reconvening of the Palliative Care Clinical Network (PCCN). In the South Australian Palliative Care Plan 2009-2016, palliative care services had been charged with developing a *“Health in Grief and Loss Plan”* for South Australia, but this work had never been started. One of the first actions of the new PCCN was to form a Bereavement sub-group to take up this work, and as well as palliative care bereavement counsellors, GriefLink was invited to join the committee. We were initially asked to provide a survey of bereavement support services in South Australia outside SA Health, most of which are listed as resources on our pages. This report then formed the basis of a further paper outlining the elements that would be needed in a state-wide plan for bereavement support.

The SA Health and Wellbeing budget allocations to palliative care projects have allowed for the development of some initial work on a Bereavement Plan. The immediate role for GriefLink in this plan is to turn our pages into audio versions, but we continue to be represented on the Bereavement Project team (Mary Brooksbank), and the PCCN Bereavement sub-group (Mary Brooksbank and David Roach) to engage in further planning for a state-wide public health approach to bereavement and grief.

In this palliative care funding allocation, a project looking at bereavement and grief in Residential Aged Care was awarded to Flinders University Research Centre in Palliative Care, Death and Dying directed by Professor Jennifer Tieman, and GriefLink was invited to become a partner and create a new page based on their findings. This project is due to finish in December 2020, and Katherine Hodgetts has taken on the role of Project Officer to create an initial draft of the page.

Even before 2019 ended, South Australia was experiencing devastating bush fires, and this situation only worsened as the summer progressed, with Kangaroo Island and vast areas of the eastern coast of Australia involved in catastrophic

fires. GriefLink responded with a post on the Home page, offering our support for the terrible losses people had endured.

And then came the coronavirus, COVID-19. Virtually without warning, we were suddenly caught up in a global pandemic, with devastating consequences. Although Australia has fared better so far than many other countries, the high lethality of the virus has resulted in a significant number of deaths, particularly in aged care settings. The highly infectious nature of the virus has further meant that families have been separated, often without an opportunity to say 'goodbye' to a dying loved one, and the ability to attend funerals has been severely restricted. The ongoing implications for grief following bereavement are yet to be seen.

The mental health resources of people have also been severely tested with lock downs, loss of businesses, and rising unemployment. In April 2020, Dr John Brayley, Chief Psychiatrist, invited GriefLink to join the SA Mental Health Virtual Support Network. The grant offered allowed the rapid development of an information page *Facing Coronavirus*, with a list of additional helpful resources. This page is flagged through a post on the Home page which also directs readers to the SA Mental Health Helpline.

In the early months of 2020, it was becoming apparent that despite the updates of 2018-2019, GriefLink was not easily found on a Google search. Our new web analyst, Scott Sharrad, pinpointed a number of corrective actions, and those that need to be undertaken by James Anthony Consulting, including improving the page printing function, have been able to proceed thanks to the COVID-19 Phase 1 and 2 grants from the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist. There has also been extensive page and backend editing work that has been required to be undertaken by the committee to improve our search profile. Gillian Laven undertook training with Scott Sharrad, and this editing is now being carried out by Katherine Hodgetts in addition to her editing of all pages prior to creating the audio versions.

Having missed out on a second Suicide Prevention Community Grant in 2019-2020, we were strongly encouraged to apply for the 2020-2021 round, and we were successful in this process. A slightly more streamlined Suicide Prevention Reference Group has been reassembled, and the project will involve the creation of two podcasts for use on the web site and for wider circulation, the addition of a new page on *Suicide, grief and childhood abuse*, and completion of the audio project for all pages. Once again Katherine Hodgetts has taken on the role of Project Officer.

There is no doubt that there is an increased awareness of the need to provide education about grief, and support for those people who are struggling with grief. GriefLink has had a key role to play because it spans all areas of death-related grief within our health system and community. The GriefLink web site is now linked as a resource from the SA Health Palliative Care pages, as well as from the Mental Health pages which are supported by the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist and has also been linked from a new SA Government Death and Bereavement information site.

Working alongside the SA Wellbeing Bereavement Project and Flinders University Research Centre in Palliative Care, Death and Dying have created new opportunities for collaboration. Looking ahead, once some of the immediate project work is completed, the GriefLink Management Committee plans to hold a strategic planning session in the New Year to ensure the ongoing relevance of GriefLink. It is encouraging, though, that we have once again retained our status with Health-on-net.

It only remains for me to thank our sponsors and supporters. Once again Alfred James Funeral Homes has provided much needed sponsorship which helps maintain GriefLink outside the framework of grants. I would like to particularly acknowledge Graham James, and all that he has brought to supporting bereaved South Australians over many years.

The 'in kind' support provided by the University of Adelaide and AnglicareSA continue to sustain our work, and we are very grateful.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the members of our volunteer GriefLink Management Committee for their ongoing commitment and enthusiasm for GriefLink, despite all the additional hardships of this year. I hope we can all look forward to a more orderly, but productive, year ahead.

Mary Brooksbank

Chair, GriefLink Management Committee

16th November, 2020

GriefLink Management Committee 2019-2020

Dr Mary Brooksbank AM, MB BS, FRACS, FChPM

Honorary Fellow, University of Adelaide

Retired Director of Palliative Care, Royal Adelaide Hospital and Medical Director, Mary Potter Hospice, Calvary North Adelaide Healthcare (1995-2009)

Retired Chair, Palliative Care SA (2010-2016)

Committee Chair 2018 ongoing

David Roach OAM, BA (Soc Wk), MSW

Retired Palliative Care social worker, with a particular focus on grief and bereavement.

Retired Lecturer, Social Work (Grief and Bereavement), Flinders University,

Founding member of GriefLink

Committee Deputy Chair 2018 ongoing

Dr Teresa Burgess, PhD

Postgraduate qualifications in Primary Health Care, Higher Education and Nursing Management.

Senior Lecturer, School of Public Health, University of Adelaide

Coordinator, research courses in the Master of Public Health, University of Adelaide.

Founding member of GriefLink

Committee Secretary 2018 ongoing

Dr Jaklin Elliott, PhD

Senior Lecturer and Post-Graduate Coordinator, School of Public Health, University of Adelaide

Program Coordinator (Research/1st year liaison), Graduate Program in Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Adelaide

Dr Gillian Laven, PhD (Health Sciences), BHLthSc, Grad Cert (Higher Ed)
Retired, Adjunct Lecturer, Adelaide Health Simulation, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Adelaide
Founding member of GriefLink

Michael Traynor
Manager, Loss & Grief Services, AnglicareSA

Dr Katherine Hodgetts PhD (Psychology), BA (Hons)
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Public Health, University of Adelaide

Kate Obst BPsych (Hons)
Combined PhD/Master of Psychology (Health) Candidate, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Adelaide

Caitlin Hennessy BHLthSc
Lived experience, LGBTIQ+ mental health ambassador

GriefLink Suicide Prevention Reference Group 2020-2021

Prof Nicholas Procter	University of South Australia
Ms Jill Chapman	MOSH (Minimisation of Suicide Harm)
Ms Chez Curnow	Country SA PHN
Ms Megs Lamb	Multicultural Communities Council SA
Mr Ian James	OCP (Office of the Chief Psychiatrist)

Project Officer

Dr Katherine Hodgetts (2020-2021)