

# Hospice Care Service Bereavement Support



SILVER CHAIN

EVERY MINUTE. EVERY HOUR. EVERY DAY. WE CARE.





# Bereavement Support

This booklet provides you with information to help you understand your grief and assist you in dealing with practical issues that may arise during this time. Silver Chain Hospice Care Service provides the following support services:

## Crisis Care

Crisis Care is available on 9223 1111 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Crisis Care offers telephone counselling and provides information on the nearest services available to you.

## Chaplaincy

Our Chaplains are available to offer their care and support. They can be contacted on 9242 0289.

## Counselling

Silver Chain provides a free counselling service both prior to the death of your loved one, and during the difficult period immediately after your loss. Our Silver Chain nurses will assist you if there are concerns at this time.

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WE EXTEND OUR SYMPATHY TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

“THE PAIN OF GRIEF IS JUST AS MUCH A PART OF LIFE AS THE JOY OF LOVE; IT IS PERHAPS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE, THE COST OF COMMITMENT. TO IGNORE THIS FACT, OR TO PRETEND THAT IT IS NOT SO, IS TO PUT ON EMOTIONAL BLINKERS WHICH LEAVE US UNPREPARED FOR THE LOSSES WHICH WILL INEVITABLY OCCUR IN OUR LIVES AND UNPREPARED TO HELP OTHERS TO COPE WITH THE LOSSES IN THEIRS.”

- Parkes, Colin Murray (1987). Bereavement. Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.



# Experiencing Grief

**Everyone knows the pain that accompanies significant loss, separation or sudden changes in our lives. While people experience such events differently, the death of a loved one, particularly a spouse, child or other family member is an intensely emotional time in anyone's life.**

One's own life and those around them are thrown off balance emotionally, physically, spiritually and psychologically. Life will be forever different, emotional turmoil is created, and the necessary re-adjustment to life without your loved one definitely takes time.

This normal experience of an event familiar to all of us is simply called "grief", though many parts of it can be complex and overwhelming.

Often tragic or sudden circumstances surrounding the death of a loved one can intensify emotional reactions. The recovery of control over our lives and our return to a sustainable and manageable lifestyle can be more complicated as we adjust to living with only the memory and the absence of our loved ones.

Even when the death of a loved one is expected, the actual event can still come as a shock, sometimes leaving us with feelings of numbness and disbelief. Many of us go through periods of guilt, depression, anger, as well as emotional swings through relief, calm and acceptance and then a return to more distressing feelings.

Feelings of sadness, anger and loneliness, changes in sleeping and eating patterns and withdrawal from normal social activities are all common signs that a person is grieving. Photographs, personal belongings of our loved one, certain places and events can all be strong reminders of the deceased. Special dates in the year and anniversaries will also trigger emotions of sadness and longing.

Such feelings are to be expected, however, being prepared, being among supportive family and friends and seeking out appropriate support are all helpful ways to manage one's life at this time.

## The Grief Counselling Team

Silver Chain Hospice Care Service has a team of qualified and experienced counsellors who are available for individual counselling in a confidential setting in metropolitan Perth. For some people, counsellors will refer clients when seeking a more appropriate agency for their particular needs.

## Finding The Right Support

Among the many ways of coping is talking: a very simple yet effective way of returning to a more normal way of life.

A friend or family member who is an attentive and supportive listener may be readily available, however, there are other options worth considering. This is particularly important if you are feeling isolated or have a sense of being overwhelmed.

Counsellors have training and experience that can be useful when trying to bring some order to the confusion of thoughts and emotions that the death of a loved one can cause to anyone's internal world.





# Grieving Children

**How children understand death and how they deal with the death of one of their family members depends greatly on their age. While their understanding will not be that of an adult, especially if they are very young, their grief needs to be taken seriously and given every attention, support and reassurance.**

Here are some matters for older members of the family, especially parents, to consider when they are thinking and deciding about the welfare of children at this time of bereavement:

- Being honest, accurate and truthful in answering children's questions, no matter how difficult and painful the inquisitive questions might be. Sometimes, younger children can ask rather odd questions: they all deserve an honest answer! Be aware that "nice" answers, "Gran has just gone on a holiday to heaven" can create further confusion and unwanted fears in a child. Consider how a short, simple but truthful response may be more effective.
- Showing emotion, crying and being sad around children often troubles families at this time. Every family will be different in how they deal with this and getting the balance right is a vexing issue. Being open about your sorrow and tears does help children understand that emotional responses like crying are normal and being sad won't last forever.
- Remember that children deal in the concrete rather than the abstract. So what tangible, practical things can you do that will reassure and support the children in your family? Consider that photos, sharing memories, particular mementos, even the simplest item that might be a significant reminder of the loved one, can all be valuable ways of helping a child at this time.
- Children prefer life to be predictable and routine, which helps them to feel secure. Keeping to as many of the family's routines as possible at this time can often be really useful. Getting back to school, playing with friends and watching their favourite programs are just some of the "normal" routines that require some decision-making in the family. This reassures children that life does go on and their world will continue to be happy even though the loved one is not there with them.
- As with every member of the family, seek professional help if you become concerned about the welfare of a child in the family.

- Be respectful of children's feelings and how they express them. These feelings will be different from adults and this difference has to be recognised. While honest and helpful explanations will reassure a child, the value of a cuddle, of spending time with them, by reading a story or playing a game can often be more appropriate and effective than the best of wordy explanations.

Finally, remember that children are very resilient, and when you and your family give them the right mix of reassurance, explanations, respect for their feelings and lots of loving attention, they are more likely to recover from your family's loss than most of the older family members.

## Programs For Bereaved Children

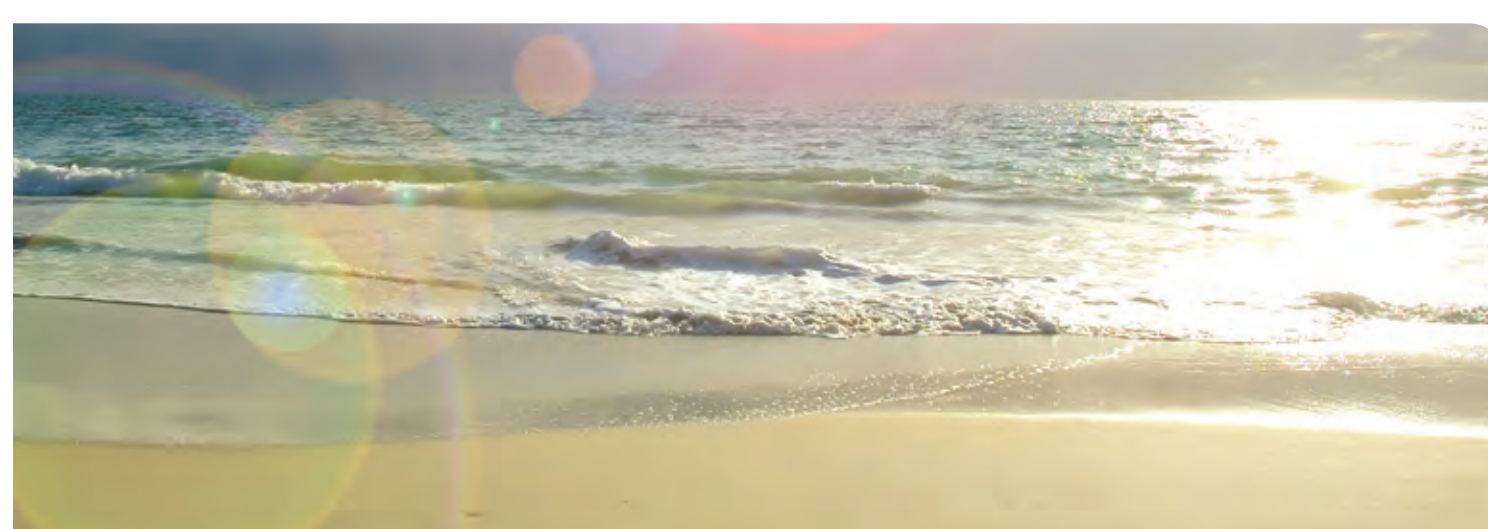
When seeking assistance outside the family, the needs of children will vary a great deal according to their particular age group and such factors as the time since the death, circumstances of the death and the relationship of the child to the deceased loved one.

Begin with finding information, support and advice for the adult/parent who is caring for the bereaved child. Sometimes this is all that is needed, particularly if the adult support is ongoing and easily available.

However there are programs that can assist children directly and support the care provided at home.

The best ones are conducted by appropriately qualified professionals who run child specific and age appropriate programs, and are adult/parent friendly.

Information can be sought through the school, family GP, health/hospital services or a recognised counselling practitioner. Some children prefer anonymous contact through telephone or internet services. There are some very useful internet sites through *Beyondblue*, Cancer Council and similar organisations. Naturally, parents would check these out themselves and monitor their use.





# Funerals And Wills

**When a family member dies there are matters that must be attended to, most of which you may never have encountered before. Many decisions have to be made at a time of considerable personal stress. Family and friends can help you deal with these and they may appreciate having a practical way to be of assistance to you.**

**The following general information may be helpful. There is also a list of contact numbers included in this booklet where you can get more detailed information and advice.**

## Funeral Arrangements

Making arrangements for a funeral may initially seem to be difficult or a burden, but it often gives a person who is bereaved something to focus on and can be an important and special way to say goodbye.

Deciding on a funeral director is a matter of personal choice.

One thing you may need to consider is cost, as this does vary between firms. If you believe you may not be able to afford the cost you can contact your local office of the Department of Child Protection, or call 1800 854 925 prior to the person dying. They may be able to arrange a funeral using their contract firm if certain strict financial criteria are met.

Alternatively, you can discuss this with a funeral director who may arrange payments over a period of time.

The funeral director will advise you as to what needs to be done and will take responsibility for arranging the service according to your wishes.

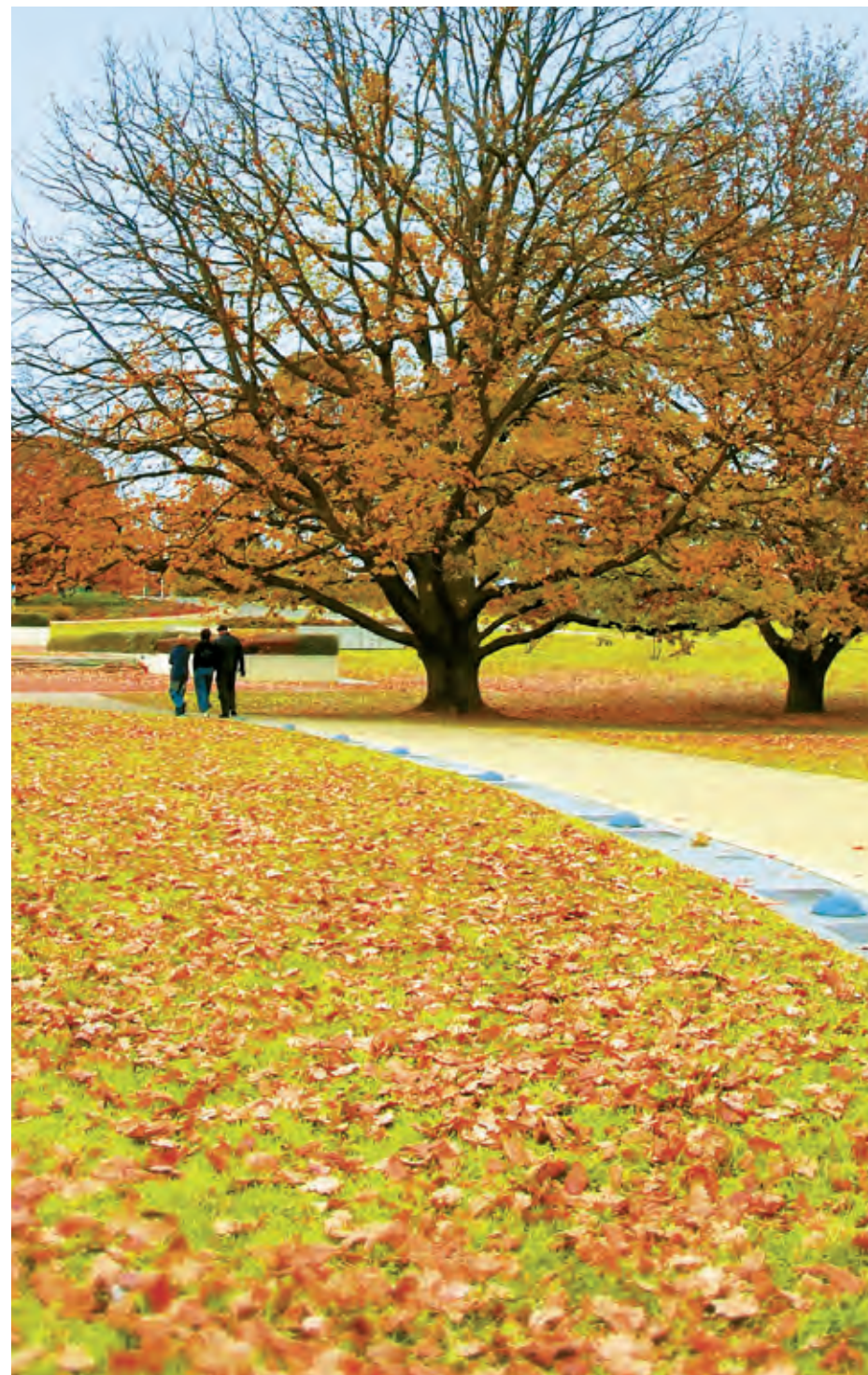
## Registration Of Death

Your funeral director usually organises to collect a signed Death Certificate from the attending doctor. They will then lodge this and the other required information about the deceased with the Registrar Generals Office.

This includes:

- Surname and given names.
- Date and place of birth (town and country).
- Father and mother's surnames, given names and occupations.
- For each marriage: place, date and to whom married.
- Names and ages of all children in order (including deceased children).

The funeral director usually arranges a copy of the Certificate for the next of kin. This may take two or three weeks.



## Wills

After contacting the funeral director one of the first things to be done is to locate the Will as this may contain instructions for the funeral. You will then need to contact the Executor named in the Will who, with legal advice, will handle the settlement.

If a Will cannot be found you will need to seek advice on Intestacy, ie when a person dies without leaving a Will. This will include how to initiate a more extensive search, who will inherit and how to apply to the Court to administer the estate.

Remember you may need to remake your own Will.

Suggestions for other legal matters:

- Statutory Forms (6) – obtained at a Newsagent or the Internet.
- Copies of Wills certified by Justice of the Peace – obtained from a Post Office or the Internet.

## Advice on Wills and Intestacy can be provided by:

Citizen's Advice Bureau, Legal Aid Commission, a private solicitor, or one of the trustee companies.



# Practical Matters

Once the funeral and immediate issues have been attended to, there are other important things which have to be done. These come at a time when you may still be emotionally fragile and have difficulty thinking clearly. They may also seem unimportant. You could ask a friend or relative to do some or all of these things for you and they may appreciate the opportunity to help.

While there are some people who must be notified when a person dies, there are others who you might like to contact as well. This can save you the distress of receiving letters, etc addressed to the deceased.

The following list may look a little daunting but remember not all need to be notified immediately. Notification sometimes requires a Statutory Declaration form.

- **Centrelink**

Notify as soon as possible if you or the deceased person have been receiving a pension or benefit.

- **Electoral Office**

Federal, State and Local Government.

- **Banks & Building Societies**

Contact your local branch, explain your situation and ask to make an appointment to come in. This saves you having to broach the subject at the general enquiries counter and allows the bank to have all the necessary forms organised prior to you arriving.

You will need to take details of accounts, mortgages, etc with you, as well as a copy of the Death Certificate.

- **Taxation Office**

A final tax assessment may have to be completed.

- **Government Authorities**

Shire/City Councils, Synergy, Telstra, Water Authority, etc - to change name of accounts.

- **Insurance Companies**

House, contents, car, superannuation - contact the company for advice on how to continue coverage.

- **House**

Transferring the title of your own home depends on who is currently named on the title and is usually dealt with by the Executor. If it is mortgaged you will need to contact the financial institution that holds the mortgage to discuss repayments.

- **Car**

(i) Driver's Licence: Return licence with letter to the Department for Planning and Infrastructure stating the date when person deceased.

(ii) Vehicle Registration: Where a Will exists, to transfer the registration or allow disposal of the vehicle through the Department for Planning and Infrastructure you require:

- Current registration papers for the vehicle.
- A statutory declaration from the Executor or Administrator of the Will.
- Proof of identity, eg Driver's Licence, Birth Certificate, etc.

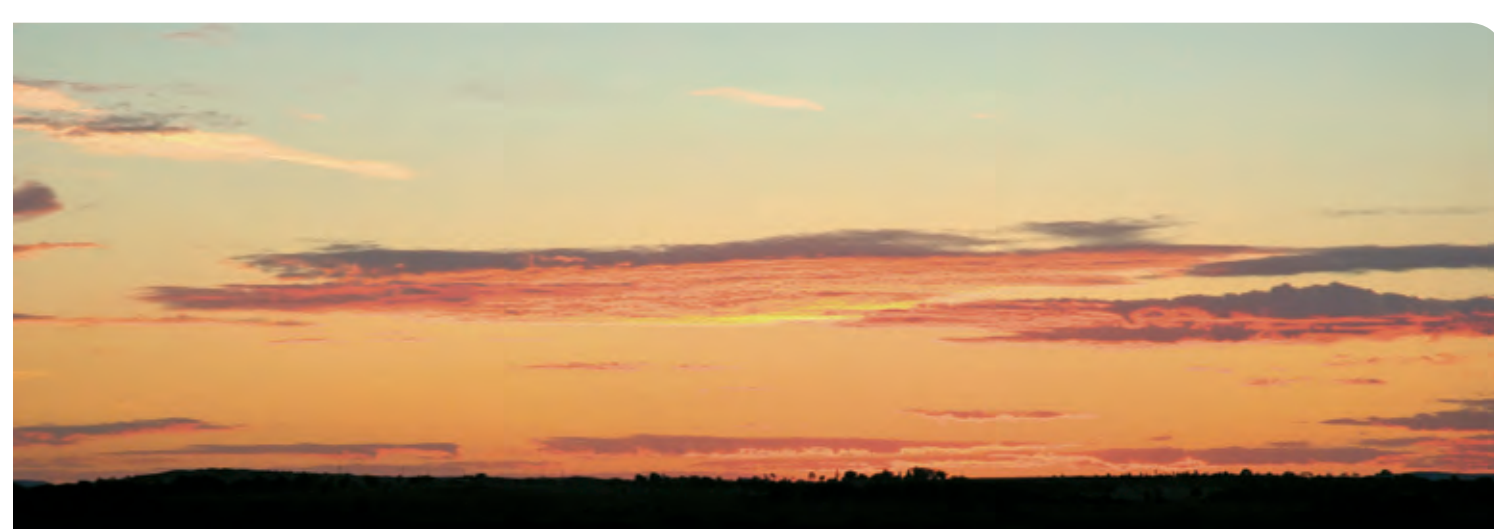
Where there is no Will, to transfer the registration or allow disposal of the vehicle through the Department for Planning and Infrastructure you require:

- Current registration papers for the vehicle.
- Statutory Declaration from the legal next of kin, ie husband, wife, son, daughter, mother or father.
- Proof of identity, eg Driver's Licence, Birth Certificate, etc.

If there is a delay in the granting of probate you may need to transfer the registration into the name of "The Estate of the Late...."

- **Others**

Health insurance, RAC, ambulance cover, etc, need to be notified of changes to the membership. Clubs, unions and other professional bodies may also need to be contacted.





# Financial Matters

It is not within our scope to offer advice on financial matters. However, we are aware that the death of a loved one can result in confusion over finances and even hardship.

Information and advice on finance and financial matters can be obtained through:

- **Centrelink**  
[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

Centrelink has social workers that can assist you. Even if you do not currently receive a benefit you may be eligible for short or long term assistance. For disability, sickness and carers assistance call 13 27 17. For bereavement assistance call 13 23 00.

- **Department of Veterans' Affairs**

If you are receiving or believe you are eligible to receive assistance from the Department, contact 13 32 54.

- **Citizens Advice Bureau of WA (Inc)**

Enquiries (08) 9221 5711  
This community service can provide information and referral on many subjects including:

- Taxation and investment advice.
- Legal referral.
- Consumer advice.
- Information on Wills.
- Local Councils.

Some of the larger councils have Welfare Officers who can assist you in financial matters. If your council does not have this facility they will be able to direct you to a community advice centre in your area.

- **Banks**

Banks and other financial institutions, eg: insurance companies or private financial advisers may also assist.

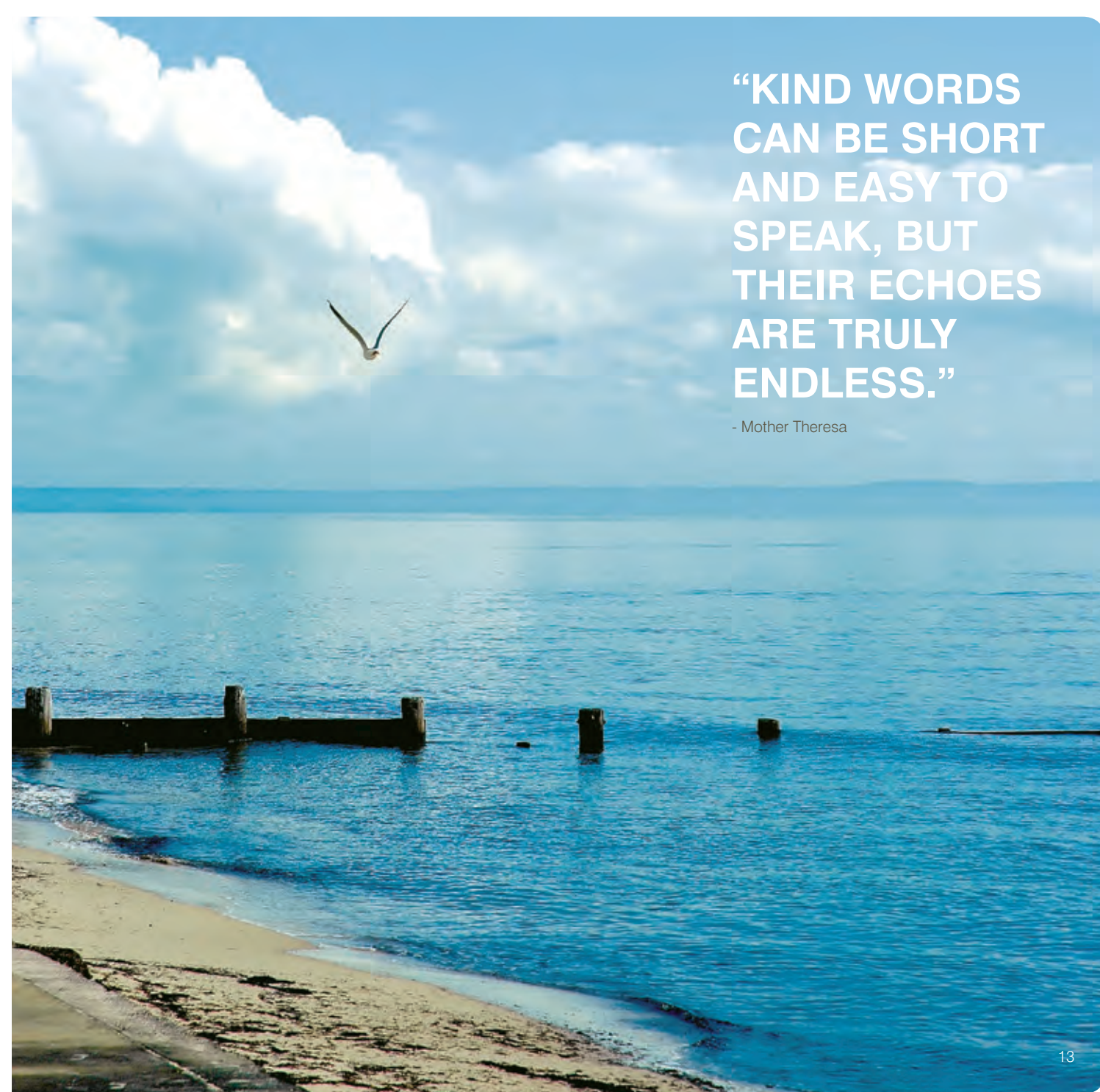
- **Legal Aid Commission, Western Australia**

Perth (08) 9261 6222  
Midland (08) 9274 3327  
Fremantle (08) 9336 9100

An independent statutory body that provides legal aid to people on limited income. Eligibility for legal assistance is determined by a means test. The Commission also operates a Legal Advice Bureau in Perth, suburban centres and all of its regional offices. A nominal fee is charged.

“KIND WORDS CAN BE SHORT AND EASY TO SPEAK, BUT THEIR ECHOES ARE TRULY ENDLESS.”

- Mother Theresa





# Meeting Other People

You may feel that you would like to meet with people who have shared the same experience as you and there are various support groups in Western Australia that can provide this. Many people find these groups provide comfort, support and guidance as well as an opportunity to make new friends.

Listed below are some of the support groups in Western Australia with a brief outline of what they offer, together with telephone numbers.

- **Solace**  
Emotional and social support for bereaved people coping with the loss of their partner.  
Contact: (08) 9359 3892
- **Lifeline**  
A telephone service providing trained counsellors to assist individuals experiencing physical, emotional or spiritual crisis.  
Contact: 13 11 14 (24 hour service)
- **Department for Child Protection**  
Crisis Care (08) 9223 1111 or (1800 199 008)  
Parenting Line (08) 6279 1200 or (1800 654 432)  
Family Helpline (08) 9223 1100 or call your local office for a general enquiry.
- **Canteen**  
Support for young people (12-24 years of age) living with cancer - patients, siblings, bereaved siblings and offspring.  
Contact: (08) 6380 1884
- **The Compassionate Friends of WA**  
A self-help group open to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents.  
Contact: (08) 9486 8711 (24 hour service)
- **Centrelink**  
Check the telephone book for the address and telephone numbers of your local office.  
Family Information 136 150  
Employment 132 850  
Youth and Students 132 490  
Disability 132 717
- **Department of Veteran's Affairs**  
For general enquiries  
13 32 54
- **Migrant Resource Centre**  
Provides information, job training, skills workshops and counselling.  
Fremantle (08) 9336 8282  
Mirrabooka (08) 9345 5755
- **Widows and Widowers Assoc**  
Support group for widows and widowers within the community.  
Contact: (08) 9458 1086
- **ConnectGroups**  
A resource, co-ordinating and networking body for self help groups in Western Australia.  
335-337 Pier Street  
Perth WA 6000  
Contact: (08) 9228 4488  
1800 195 575

# Book List

## Adult

- McKissock, M. (1992) *Coping with Grief*, ABC Enterprises: Sydney.
- Rando, T. A., *Grieving: How to go on Living when someone you love dies*.
- Parker, M., *A Time to Grieve*.
- Tatelbaum, J., *The Courage to Grieve*.
- Sanders, C. M. (1992) *Surviving Grief... And Learning to Live Again*, John Wiley & Sons Inc: New York.

## Children

- Varley, S. (1985) *Badger's Parting Gifts*, Collins: Great Britain.
- Fassler, J. (1971) *My Grandpa Died today: When a Parent Dies*, MacMillan Press: New York.
- De Paola, T. (1973) *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*, GP Putman's Sons: New York.
- Peterson, K. (1987) *Bridge to Terabitha*, Puffin Books: England.
- Metzenthien, D. (1997) *Gilbert's Ghost Train*, Scholastic Press: Sydney.

## Acknowledgements

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- Centrelink
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Legal Aid Commission
- Outstretched Hand Foundation

## REFERENCES

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| McKissock, M. (1992) <i>Coping with Grief</i> , ABC Enterprises: Sydney. | South Eastern Metropolitan Authorities Group, <i>A Practical Guide to Wills and Funerals</i> , (2nd Ed.) Perth. | Outstretched Hand Foundation, <i>Talking to Children About Death</i> . |
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SERVICES  
CALL 24 HOURS A DAY 7 DAYS A WEEK.**

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*Disclaimer*

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