

Grief Support Services AGM Chair Person's Report

1 July 2024-30 June 2025

Grief Support Services has continued to provide grief counselling and support services to those affected by grief and loss in the Western Bay throughout the 2024-2025 year.

As identified and agreed at the 2023-2024 AGM, Grief Support Services Incorporated Society has now changed its business structure to become a charitable trust. Effective from the 2025-2026 year. The work involved in making the change was significant. Our thanks to Russell Mc Veagh for their support in getting the change into documents. Enormous amounts of work have been involved in changing bank accounts, registering the charitable trust, working with IRD, New Zealand Companies Office and Charities Services. This is the final annual report for the Incorporated Society. Next year the Charitable Trust will be in full operation.

Health providers contracted to Health New Zealand-Te Whatu Ora have continued to work with uncertainty in contracting, until this year, where our contract was renewed, unchanged for 18 months. This will bring our contract into line with other similar contracts from Health New Zealand. Our suicide postvention contract with Health New Zealand provides vital support to individuals impacted by suicide and suicidality. Over and above individual counselling, the contract also provides for peer led community groups and networking and support for other organisations working in the field.

The Board has had one change in membership over the last year, Holly Brown has joined the Board. She has a wide and deep professional career, which the Board has put to use as soon as she joined us. Our Board members bring a diverse range of professional experience to contribute to GSS governance. Our meetings bring the skills of all members to the table. Grief Support Services Board members are now, Holly Brown, Philip Brown, Rosalie Liddle Crawford, Amanda Webb, Eddie Jackson and Bronwyn Jackson.

The Board monitors a wide range of KPI's which allow us to target services and identify trends in how our services are perceived and utilised. Some of these KPI's and data include, waiting times, number of sessions provided, number of sessions not attended, demographics and client feedback. We have used this information to inform aspects of the strategic plan. Full details of our performance are recorded in the Manager's annual report.

The strategic plan is now in the early stages of review and redevelopment. As all community organisations have found, post Covid, the economic environment, our clients and the community are changing. We see people who have more complex needs and use our services in times of need. If we had more resources we could support more people. The need is only growing.

Early strategic work has involved scoping the role of General Manager and identifying what other roles are important for the organisation going forward. The staff of Grief Support Services are always the most important resources we have to meet community need. They continue to provide dedicated professional support to a high standard.

Our risk management framework informs decisions at the Board level, it has contributed significantly to the way we prioritise resources and respond to external changes in the health sector.

Inflation continues to eat away our ability to provide all the services we would like. There's a very constrained budget for this year. Financial challenges include a tightening of philanthropic dollars as demands from competing organisations challenge providers to meet all the compelling cases for financial support.

We provide our service to the community through generous support from many, philanthropic organisations, volunteers and donations. Without the support of the many donors, we would not be able to operate at the level we do. I would like to thank them all for their continued support of Grief Support Services.

I would like to thank those donors who have supported us, to the best of their ability even as they face increasing demands for their resources.

- Acorn Foundation
- Bay Trust
- COGS
- Lion Foundation
- Lotteries
- NZ Community Trust
- Pub Charity
- TECT
- Four Winds
- Rano Trust
- Tauranga City Council
- We Care Community Trust
- One Foundation

These donors allow us to continue our services. Thank you.

The organisation operates sound financial management thanks to the staff, the Manager and the Board Treasurer. Financial reports are included as part of the AGM briefing materials. We would like to develop more diverse funding streams, this has proved difficult in the current financial environment.

Health and Safety features on every Board agenda. The Board is always alert to opportunities to improve and make safe, conditions for staff and others who use our services. The working alone policy is one example the team have been refining.

The staff, students and volunteers bring their best to Grief Support Services. Our Manager Ana Toneato resigned before the end of the financial year. Recruitment began immediately. I stepped in to do day to day management for a month. Ruth Barber, the Clinical Lead then took over in an acting role. The role extending into the 2025-2026 year. Our special thanks to Ruth for showing the initiative and energy to give continuity to Grief Support Services. The professionalism of all staff, students and volunteers is very much appreciated and recognised by the Board, referrers, community and clients.

I am looking forward to the coming year as we continue to develop our new Grief Support Services Charitable Trust GSS into a strong, resilient organisation, meeting the needs of the clients and wider community.

Thanks to our Governors, Philip Brown, Debbie Penlington and Eddie Jackson, who fulfil an important constitutional role within the organisation. Debbie is resigning her role as a governor of Grief Support Services Charitable Trust and Grief Support Services Incorporated Society at this AGM. I would like to thank Debbie personally and on behalf of Grief Support Services for her many years of support, in a practical, governance and more recently oversight roles. She has been a quiet, powerful and useful support in the background for many years. Her contribution is appreciated by us all.

Bronwyn Jackson
November 2025