

## Grief Support Services AGM Chair Person's Report

1 July 2022-30 June 2023

Grief Support Services has had a busy and varied year. Services continue to be provided to any in the community suffering from grief or loss, for free, or for a donation. We also have a contract with Te Whatu Ora (TWO) to provide suicide postvention services in the western Bay of Plenty.

The Board is charged with governing the organisation in a way that ensures sustainability and continuity in service delivery. The 2022 to 2023 year has proved challenging and exciting, as staff and government policy changes impacted our service.

During the year we farewelled, Jamie Winders, a longstanding volunteer, Jen Murray, our very talented business development manager/fundraiser and finally Janet Baird, Team Leader, Senior Counsellor and Service Manager for fifteen years. Thank you for your service and support over many years. Staff have risen to the challenge and taken on additional responsibilities during the change period. My heartfelt thanks to them, without our dedicated and motivated staff the service could not function.

It took us extended time to replace Janet with a new General Manager. We were finally successful and have recruited Ana Toneato to the position. (She took up the role in August 2023, so technically outside the period this report covers!). In the gap I was acting manager, for four hours a day. It has given me a deeper understanding of the complexities of running a specialised small service, in a field where there is huge unmet need.

Jen continues to provide her fundraising expertise to Grief Support, as a subcontractor. The Board would like to thank her for this support, as fundraising is a critical part of ensuring our sustainability.

The staff at Grief Support is a mix of paid qualified Counsellors, students and volunteers. All ably organised by the administration team, who job share. Our SLS peers provide support to those bereaved by suicide.

The camaraderie of the team sees it through work times that can be challenging and often very busy.

Covid 19 has continued to haunt us, with staff sickness and clients missing appointments, due to catching Covid and its after effects.

The Board has also gone through some significant changes, reflecting the demands of the year. We farewelled, Cathy Sheely, Ashley Perera, Ingrid Jensen and Sharron Harris. My thanks to them for their insights, opinions and support during their tenures. In December 2022 we lost Dawn Picken, who had contributed a lot to the Board in her three-year tenure.

Dawn passed away at Xmas time and is missed by the community, her friends, family and Grief Support.

At the time of writing the Board has five members, Bronwyn Jackson, Eddie Jackson, Philip Brown, Lynne Cotter and Rosalie Liddle Crawford. The skills mix feels right for developing Grief Support to the next level, to better meet the community need. My thanks to Eddie Jackson for his role as treasurer and Philip Brown as vice chairperson. The organisation is on a sound financial footing, allowing us to weather some adversity and changes while still operating at full pace.

I am looking forward to seeing the Board work on implementing our next strategic plan, as many of the changes made this year give us the resiliency to move the service forward, through unsettling and changing times. Unsettling, as TWO policy, changes and refocus shifts public health. Our contract continues to be renewed, a reflection of the value of this work and the staff who deliver on it. Inflation puts pressure on the ability of donors to support their charities. Our waiting list continues to be a challenge. One that reflects community need and one we would prefer not to have as we would like our services to be able to meet demand quickly.

I would like to thank our Governors, Debbie Pennlington, Eddie Jackson and Philip Brown. The role is described in our constitution, and is usually titular. However, they provide a great back stop and steadying hand should it be needed.

There are many in the community who have supported us this previous year, including tradespeople who have given time and services for free or reduced rates. Our landlord is ready to help with building issues and supports us in any way he can. Our philanthropic funding (facilitated by Jen Murray) is the life blood of the organisation. Without the support of these organisations we would not be able to function. This year we received grants from; Acorn Foundation, ANZ staff foundation, Bay Trust, COGS, Lion Foundation, Lotteries NZCT, Pub Charity, TECT, Trustpower (now Mercury) and TCC. We also received donations from clients and corporates such as Cooper Young and DMS.

Thank you for your kindness.

This last year has tested our resiliency and commitment to Grief Support. The service and staff have come through a time of big change and steady growth. They continue to provide a first-class service to the community and make a real difference to the clients of Grief Support and the wider community. The Board is in good shape to direct the upcoming challenges of growth and stability in the face of changing health and community needs.

Bronwyn Jackson  
Chair Person  
November 2023