

Grief Support AGM Chair Person's Report 2019-2020

Once again it has been a busy year for Grief Support Services. Client sessions have increased from 1901 in 2018-2019 to 2121 in 2019-2020. The service continues to be provided by a mix of volunteers, students and paid staff, under the excellent management of Janet Baird the Service Manager/Senior Counsellor. I would like to thank all the staff (volunteers, students and paid staff) who have worked so willingly and hard to ensure clients receive a top-class service from GSS.

There have been changes of staff and on the Board. During the year we welcomed Jen Murray as, the fundraising co ordinator and Angela Werder as a new Board member responsible for overseeing fundraising. Both have a big impact on the ongoing financial health of Grief Support and its ability to provide leading services to the community. We farewelled Craig Wilson and Yvonne Lambert from the Board. I would like to thank them for the commitment and positive impact they had on the governance of GSS during their tenure.

Last year's proposal to the DHB to increase the suicide post vention contract was successful in December 2019. The second half of the year saw us recruit and begin to deliver on the contract. Over time we expect the service to provide significant support to a wider group of the community who have been bereaved by suicide.

Fundraising is a constant activity for GSS. This year we raised \$160,243 from donations, fundraising and similar sources. The Board would like to thank the organisations that have generously given in response to our requests. Without community generosity services would not exist for most of our clients. We continue to ask clients to pay according to their ability to do so. This year clients donated \$6873 compared to \$8473 in 2018-2019. This amount goes some way to allowing us to provide counselling services for more people.

Any report for 2019-2020 would not be complete without a comment on the most disruptive event to affect the world in many years. Covid 19 challenged us to continue to provide services without the face to face contact fundamental to how GSS operates. Staff and clients can be proud of how rapidly they adapted to the quickly changing circumstances. For a couple of years GSS has been moving to using technology to maintain records and manage appointments. Covid 19 saw us using Zoom and telephone consultations for clients. Further, Dawn Picken organised an online Zoom fundraiser during the shutdown. It is great to see the organisation being imaginative and technology forward, to provide opportunities that would not otherwise have been possible.

Bronwyn Jackson
October 2020