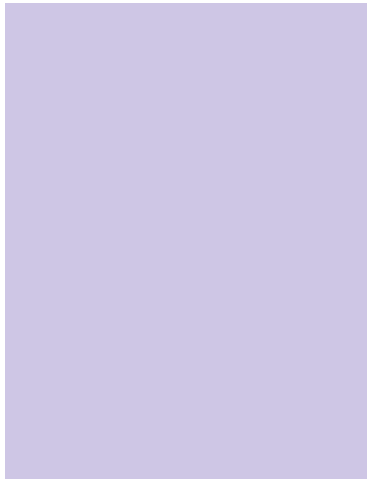
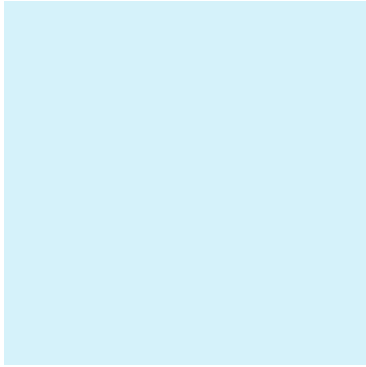


THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS VICTORIA INC.

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 – 2025





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BY THE NUMBERS

SUPPORT

Total Groups: 28	Support Group Meetings: 262	Attendances: 1,690	Grief Support Calls: 1,202	Other Calls: 1,717
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MATERIAL SENT

TCFV Magazine: 1,580 posted 12,299 emailed	Information Packages: 188	Anniversary Cards: 1,432	Between Friends eNewsletters: 36,523
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EVENTS

Member events: 28	Participants: 658	Volunteer Hours: 18,698
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SOCIAL MEDIA

Website Visits: 464,056	Instagram Followers: 5,003	Facebook followers: 33,600	Sibling Website Visits: 13,555
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BOARD REPORT

As we reflect on the past twelve months, it is clear that 2024–2025 has been a year of change, growth, and renewal for The Compassionate Friends Victoria.

At the heart of every decision has been our commitment to compassion. We know that the families who come to us are often facing the most devastating moments of their lives, and it is our role to provide support that is professional, sustainable, and deeply human.

Strengthening Our Foundations

This year, the Board and CEO Alex Hamilton undertook an important review of our staffing and office structure to ensure that TCFV remains strong and sustainable into the future. These changes were made with care, always with a focus on how best to serve our members.

The new structure allows us to bring specialist skills into key areas: administration, volunteer support, event coordination, and sibling support. This has given TCFV renewed energy and capacity to deliver services, while creating a more welcoming environment for our members, volunteers, and visitors.

Honouring the Heart of TCFV

We acknowledge that change can be unsettling. Some of our long-term volunteers have stepped back during this period of transition, and we honour the significant contributions they have made. At the same time, we celebrate the resilience of our community and the willingness of new volunteers and staff to step forward with compassion and dedication.

What has not changed—and what never will—is the central role of our lived-experience volunteers. They remain the heartbeat of our organisation, walking alongside those newly bereaved with empathy and understanding that only comes from lived experience.

Building for the Future

Despite the shifts of the past year, our core work has not only continued but strengthened. Our support groups, grief support line, events, and sibling initiatives

are reaching more people than ever. Each contact, whether through a phone call, a group meeting, or a drop-in visit, is a reminder that no one has to walk this road alone.

Looking ahead, we are focused on consolidating the positive changes of this year and expanding innovative ways to support grieving families. We will continue to build partnerships, strengthen our volunteer networks, and ensure that our support is accessible to all who need it.

Passing the Baton

As this will be my final report as President, I want to express my deep gratitude. It has been a privilege to serve this community and to work alongside such dedicated board members, staff, and volunteers. While I step down from my role on the Board, my commitment to TCFV and its mission remains strong.

With Alex Hamilton's leadership and the dedication of our staff, Board and volunteers, I have no doubt that the future holds great achievements. TCFV will continue to light the way for grieving families, ensuring that no one ever has to walk this journey alone.

Kevin Purvis
TCFV President



RHYS HARMER AWARD WINNERS 2024 – Jan Harrison and Ronda McIntyre

Jan Harrison lost her only child, Melissa (19), to suicide in 1995. She began volunteering at TCFV in 1997, completing Telephone Listening training in 1998 and Group Leadership training in 1999. Since then, Jan has contributed in countless ways: support group leadership (including the Suicide Support Group and Canterbury groups), TCFV telephone support, board membership, public speaking, retreats and workshops, art projects, and even helping design the current TCFV logo. For 10 years she co-led the Box Hill Suicide Social Group, ran wellbeing sessions at retreats, and most recently presented on “The Death of an Only Child” at a Topics around Grief workshop.

Ronda McIntyre lost her 5-year-old son Troy in 1987. In 1989 she founded a Horsham Wimmera support group, leading it for 35 years and offering phone support across western Victoria with co-leader Di Lewis. Together they advocated for rural bereaved families, working with hospitals, police, and hosting forums on suicide and on families’ experiences with professionals. In 2011 Ronda reflected that her TCFV work had shaped her life and helped her find meaning after Troy’s death. She continues as a regional contact today.

Jan and Ronda – your decades of service in memory of Melissa and Troy have supported countless families. You are most worthy recipients of the Rhys Harmer Award. Congratulations and thank you.



L-R - Kevin Purvis TCFV President, Sue Stebbins TCFV Volunteer, Jan Harrison, Ronda McIntyre, Andrew McNess TCFV Operations Manager, Alex Hamilton TCFV CEO.)

SIBLING REPORT

We're proud to have a dedicated Sibling Services Coordinator at TCFV — a role made possible through the incredible support of the Jared Dunscombe Foundation, members of whom visited our Canterbury Centre in recent weeks (including Jared's sister Jonelle, seated, second from right).

The coordinator role is warmly and ably delivered by Jude Chrisan (standing, directly in front of the stain glass), bereaved brother of Joel, 20.

Losing a sibling is a unique and often isolating grief. Thanks to this role, we're able to offer understanding, connection, and hope to bereaved siblings across Victoria. This important work honours Jared's legacy and ensures that no sibling has to walk the path of grief alone.





CEO REPORT

Letter from the CEO:

Alexandra Hamilton

The Compassionate Friends Victoria

Dear Friends,

This year, The Compassionate Friends Victoria has continued to do what we do best: walk beside grieving families. Every phone call on our grief line, every group meeting, every remembrance event, every social get together, and every quiet cup of tea shared in our Centre is a reminder of why we exist.

The courage it takes for a family to reach out for the first time cannot be overstated. In 2024/25, 176 families made that brave step. From that first contact, they found not just reassurance but a community of people who truly understand.

Behind this work is a small but deeply committed team; every staff member bringing professional expertise and the strength of lived experience. They, along with our incredible volunteers, hold families through their darkest days, whether it's a late-night phone call, a welcome into a support group, or the coordination of statewide remembrance events. This year, we also restructured our team, creating dedicated roles to strengthen our services into the future, broaden our reach, and build the foundations of our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. That plan, shaped by our Board and members themselves through surveying, ensures we are moving with the times and supporting people where they are.

We asked our members what mattered most to them, and their voices now guide our path. 134 members shared their experiences through our 2025 survey. The responses were humbling and clear:

- **Support groups remain a lifeline:** 70% said they were the most important part of their journey with us.
- **Families want more** panel discussions on grief, creative workshops, outdoor retreats, and sibling-specific supports.
- **Barriers remain** some families struggle with costs, some find it hard to step into a new group, others need us to be more accessible and diverse.
- **Hope is powerful** with nearly 80% wanting to contribute to creative projects, showing how storytelling, writing, and art help keep their children's memories alive.

These insights are already shaping what we do. We developed grief support magnets as a simple, tangible tool families can place in their homes reminding them and their loved ones that support is just a call away. We are also working on new sibling programs, thanks to the Jared Dunscombe Foundation and exploring more ways to connect with the 18-30 cohort of bereaved siblings.

Our retreats and remembrance events remain deeply meaningful touchpoints. The partnership retreat with SMCT created a safe haven for families to grieve and heal together, while our Candlelight Service, delivered with Guardian Plan, united families across Victoria and streamed nationally through the TCF network. These moments remind us that grief is lifelong, but so too is connection.

Looking forward, we are taking a bold step: membership is now complimentary, ensuring every family, regardless of financial circumstance, can access our support. At the same time, we are preparing to launch **500 Hearts**, a campaign to build a sustainable

base of support so that families never bear the burden of funding their own care. Each “heart” represents someone standing with the bereaved; a powerful symbol of love, remembrance, and resilience.

But the demand is growing, and the truth is, it cannot fall to bereaved families themselves to fund the organisation they need. That is why support, whether as a donor, partner, or advocate, matters so deeply. With sustainable funding, we can expand groups to meet rising demand, create more specific programs Statewide for parents, siblings and grandparents, improve accessibility, and ensure that when the next family calls, we are here to answer.

To our volunteers, members, staff, donors, partners, and board - thank you. Your compassion keeps our doors open, our phone lines answered, and our circle of support growing and for that, we are forever grateful.



*With gratitude and determination,
Alex Hamilton*

OUR BOARD



Kevin Purvis - President

Kevin is a recently retired Primary School teacher. Prior to that he worked in pastoral ministry for more than 20 years, in various Baptist Churches and Chaplaincy positions. In both these roles he gained wide experience in committees and boards of management. He has three daughters and four grandchildren, enjoys lawn bowls, cycling and is a member of the Croydon Film Society.

Kevin is the bereaved father of Stephen, who died by suicide in 2001. The Compassionate Friends was a great support when Stephen died and Kevin looks forward to joining his wife Jenny, who leads one of the bereaved parent groups, in contributing to this important work.



Amanda Bond - Vice President

Amanda is an executive leader with more than 25 years of experience in health, aged care, disability services, out of home care and health insurance. She is currently the CEO of CareChoice a specialist disability, youth and private aged care service provider supporting people with multiple and complex needs with around the clock care, support coordination and behaviour support services. Amanda has also held many executive roles within healthcare at Peninsula Health and private health insurance sectors with Australian Unity and Medibank Private.

As a values-driven leader, Amanda is motivated by social equality and strives to ensure people have access to quality support services in line with their specific needs, at their time of need. Amanda has volunteered as a peer support phone worker with TCFV since 2021 and is passionate about helping others in their grief journey. Amanda holds a Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) and completed an EMBA and the AICD Company Directors Course. Amanda is the bereaved mother of Matthew (2), who died in a driveway accident in 2011. She also has two daughters and enjoys travelling, sailing and spending time with her family and friends.



Gaurav Gulati - Treasurer

Gaurav is a finance and risk professional with over 15 years of international experience across the banking, finance and education industry. He is a qualified public accountant and a proud member of the Institute of Public Accountants (IPA). Gaurav brings a wealth of expertise in treasury management, financial governance, regulatory compliance, and business operations to his role as Treasurer of The Compassionate Friends Victoria (TCFV).

His career includes senior roles at global financial institutions and banks, where he led complex projects in strategic transformation, internal audit, risk management and KYC/AML remediation. He has also worked in the education sector, where he applied his analytical and operational skills to improve efficiency and support student-centred services.

As Treasurer of TCFV, Gaurav is responsible for ensuring the financial integrity and sustainability of the organisation, while supporting TCFV's mission. Gaurav believes that strong financial stewardship is not just about numbers—but about empowering organisations to fulfil their purpose with integrity and impact.

Beyond his technical skillset, Gaurav is deeply passionate about mental health advocacy and the healing power of connection. In his personal time, Gaurav enjoys travelling, photography, and exploring topics related to self-development.



Claire Kuhnell - Secretary

Claire has completed a Bachelor of Counselling and is working in the mental health and disability field with EACH. Claire is a bereaved sibling of Benoît (d. 1985) and François (d. 2019) who both died by suicide. Born in France, she migrated to Australia and has been a member of the Compassionate Friends Victoria since 1995.

Claire completed the TCFV telephone counselling and group leader training and was a support person for the Glen Waverley bereaved-by-suicide support group. After a break from TCFV due to moving back to France for a couple of years and raising a young family, Claire rejoined TCFV and has been co-facilitating the siblings support group since June 2010.

Claire has participated in various projects including an art exhibition on the aftermath of suicide and an outreach peer-to-peer suicide support program led by TCFV and the Life Is Foundation.

OUR BOARD continued



Sonia Aberl - Member

Sonia is a Sibling Board Representative at The Compassionate Friends Victoria and has completed a degree in Psychology and a Graduate Diploma in Grief and Loss Counselling. Sonia also has experience working in the areas of information, communication and technology within the disability and aged care sectors, working primarily in IT business management and product/project management roles.

Volunteering since 2013, Sonia was on the TCFV Board from 2014 – 2017 and then became involved in co-ordinating special projects, including a number of grant applications, and the implementation of TCFV's IT Strategy. Sonia re-joined the Board in 2023 and is also a member of the Bereavement Advisory Committee and volunteer supervisor for the Sibling Chat Service. Sonia is the bereaved sister of David (29). She also has two children and enjoys reading, basketball and spending time with family and friends.



Bruce Houghton - Member

Bruce and his wife Catrina are parents of three sons, Liam, Rylie and Nick. They tragically lost Liam in 2011 due to a catastrophic cardiac event. They connected with TCFV shortly after and have remained passionate supporters of the organization since. Bruce is currently a Group Leader at the TCFV Bayside Support Group. He also assists with oversight of the Group Leader role and helps with incidental tasks such as writing magazine articles under the banner of 'Group Leaders in Focus' and running spirituality seminars/workshops. Bruce has previously been on the Board of TCFV and returns to the Board in 2022 with renewed vigour and zest. Away from TCFV, Bruce is a semi-retired Company Director, a member of the Glen Huntly U3A Recorder Ensemble, an average pianist and a very average golfer.



Christy Roberts - Member

Christy is a life and leadership coach, global trainer of self-directed healing practitioners, a certified grief educator, and founder of Creating Change. With over 30 years in facilitation and leadership development, she specialises in mental, emotional and psychosocial well-being, helping individuals and leaders navigate grief, trauma, and transformation. Christy is the bereaved mother of Aaron (18), who died in a car accident in 2020. She is dedicated to supporting others in their grief journey and fostering healing and connection. As a board member of The Compassionate Friends Victoria, Christy brings her expertise in coaching, healing, and leadership to strengthen the organisation's mission. She is a six-time Australian Small Business Champion Awards finalist and winner of the Alternative Therapy category. Christy enjoys gardening, swimming, and personal development and is passionate about resilience, connection, and growth.



Ann Smith - Member

Ann is an experienced board member and former long serving senior executive with the Australian Public Service who is now delivering executive coaching, leadership development and facilitation of complex strategic and organisational people issues. Ann has led teams managing the \$5 billion Health and Hospital Infrastructure Program and the \$4.5 billion Elective Surgery and Emergency Departments National Partnership Agreements with States and Territories. Ann's most recent role in the public service was leading the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC). Ann was recognised for her work leading VACRC with her induction into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women for her leadership through disaster. Ann draws on a career in health delivery including Intensive Care Nursing and CEO of private hospitals. Ann is the bereaved mother of Danni (26) who took her own life in 2015. Ann lives with her husband and Danni's brother, enjoying beachside Altona.



Robyn Reeve - Regional Representative

Robyn works as an Employment Consultant in Ballarat. Robyn was introduced to TCFV by the then group leader of Ballarat after the death of her son Jacob.

Robyn did the Group Leader Training in 2009 to step in and take over leadership of the Ballarat Group and has been in that role ever since. Robyn has a community spirit both in Australia and in Africa, where she has volunteered on many occasions in the remote communities of Zambia and South Africa. Robyn is passionate about supporting people from all walks of life and has recently joined as a support person for the new Online Suicide Support Group with TCFV. Robyn is excited to see where this next journey with TCFV takes her in supporting bereaved families in times of need. Robyn is the bereaved mother of Jacob aged 16, who died by suicide in August 2002 and Kate aged 22, who was murdered in October 2002.



Rhonda Galbally - TCFV Patron since 2004

Dr Rhonda Galbally has spent more than 25 years as a CEO in non-profit, educational and community organisations, including as the founding CEO of 'Our Community'. This is a gateway of tools, information, advice and training to improve governance and to help Australia's 700,000 community groups find funds, grants, insurance, business partners and board members. Rhonda Galbally has received a number of awards in recognition of her work in social and disability advocacy. She was recognised with an Order of Australia in 1991. In 2005, she was inducted on to the Victorian Honour Roll of Women, and in 2012 she received the Prime Minister's Outstanding Achievement Award at the National Disability Awards. In 2019, she was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC).

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Performance

For the fiscal year 2024/2025 ("FY25"), TCFV recorded a surplus of \$22,388, compared with a budgeted deficit of approximately \$10,037. This result reflects both the impact of the organisational restructure and a stronger focus on managing costs.

When compared to the fiscal year 2023/2024 ("FY24"), revenue decreased by \$38,849, while expenditure decreased by \$71,274. Importantly, the restructure undertaken during FY25 has delivered a meaningful reduction in ongoing operating expenses, providing a more sustainable financial footing for the organisation.

Revenue



The total revenue for FY25 amounted to \$665,315, representing a decrease of 5.5% compared with \$704,164 in FY24. The main variances were:

- **Government Grants and Assistance:** With no one-off government funding this year, total government funding decreased by 6.6%, representing 71.3% of total revenue in FY25.
- **Donations:** Donations amounted to \$61,740, compared with \$93,324 in FY24. While this is a decrease of 33.8%, donor engagement activities remain strong, and initiatives are underway to stabilise this revenue stream.
- **Non-Government Grants:** Total non-government grants recognised in FY25 were \$61,350, reflecting support from our valued partners such as Geelong Cemeteries Trust, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, and the City of Boroondara.
- **Fundraising:** Fundraising revenue totalled \$51,555, representing 7.7% of revenue compared with 8% in FY24. Increased focus on lower-cost community fundraising and digital campaigns helped offset the absence of large-scale events.
- **Member Fees:** Membership revenue was \$16,543, consistent with previous years at around 2.4% of total revenue.

Expenditure



Total expenditure for FY25 was \$642,927, compared with \$714,201 in FY24. The restructure delivered significant savings, with several categories of expenses reduced compared to prior years.

- **Employee Expenses:** Employee costs amounted to \$457,438, down from \$515,301 in FY24. The reduction reflects streamlining of staffing structures during the organisational restructure while maintaining capacity to deliver core programs.
- **Depreciation:** Depreciation expenses totalled \$18,009 in FY25, compared with \$28,160 in FY24.
- **Centre and Volunteer Expenses:** Costs in this category were \$129,120, reflecting continued efforts to control spending while still supporting volunteer engagement.
- **Finance Expenses:** Finance expenses increased further to \$13,662, compared with \$11,630 in FY24, as a result of improved cash management strategies.



Highlight and Impact of the Restructure

The organisational restructure has contributed positively to TCFV's financial position in FY25 and for Long-Term Sustainability.

- **Improved Cost Management:** The changes have supported a significant reduction in expenses across staffing and operational categories.
- **Enhanced Efficiency:** The streamlined structure has enabled resources to be allocated more effectively, ensuring continued delivery of core services.



Budget for FY26

For 2025/2026 ("FY26"), we anticipate a stabilisation of revenue streams, with modest growth expected in donations and grants. Expenditure will continue to be carefully managed to consolidate the savings achieved through the FY25 restructure and we are budgeting for a surplus of \$44k.



Conclusion

FY25 was a year of adjustment, marked by the organisational restructure and a clear focus on bringing expenses down. While revenue decreased due to the absence of one-off government funding, the reduction in expenditure demonstrates our ability to adapt to financial pressures and operate more efficiently.

TCFV ended FY25 with a net surplus, the structural changes made this year provide a strong foundation for financial sustainability. Moving forward, we will continue to prioritise expense management, while also strengthening our fundraising and donor engagement efforts to diversify revenue.

SUPPORT GROUPS

In the most recent bi-annual Member Survey, conducted to evaluate service effectiveness and member satisfaction across all support offerings, bereavement support groups were ranked as the most helpful and valued service provided by The Compassionate Friends Victoria.

To some extent, this high ranking is to be expected, given the centrality of groups in TCFV's service delivery model. The key benefits that members cited, though, point to how groups encapsulate a broad range of peer-based strengths:

- Emotional connection and shared experience with others who have endured similar losses
- Safe, non-judgmental environment facilitated by trained peers
- Consistency and accessibility across both metropolitan and regional locations
- Opportunities for long-term emotional and psychological restoration through recurring participation

The survey findings serve as a strong validation of the organisation's peer-led approach and confirm that support groups remain the cornerstone of member engagement and recovery.

During the reporting period, The Compassionate Friends Victoria recorded the following key operational outputs:

- *Group Facilitation:* A total of 262 bereavement support group meetings were conducted across metropolitan and regional locations, ensuring consistent and widespread service accessibility.
- *Participant Engagement:* These group meetings generated 1,690 total attendances, highlighting sustained and meaningful engagement with our core service offering.

- *Volunteer Engagement:* Over 1,200 hours of volunteer time were contributed to the groups sphere, reflecting the continued strength and commitment of TCFV's peer-led support model.

These figures underscore both the operational scale and the continued relevance of support groups as TCFV's most impactful service stream.

The mode of delivery for bereavement support groups, meanwhile, is subject to ongoing review to ensure alignment with the evolving needs of our members and broader best practices in peer-led support. TCFV remains committed to maintaining contemporary, accessible, and inclusive delivery formats—including in-person, online, and hybrid models—so that all bereaved individuals can access support in the way that is most appropriate and effective for them. Regular evaluation and member feedback are integral to this process, ensuring the organisation continues to deliver high-quality, responsive services in a dynamic social and technological landscape.

A notable example of this adaptability was demonstrated by the Mildura Support Group, which invited representatives from the local police to participate as guest speakers. This initiative fostered open dialogue around grief in the context of sudden and traumatic loss, helping to build trust, improve community understanding, and support the healing process.

In-person support groups are our foundational and continually resonant group format, but online support groups play an essential role in overall accessibility and approachability of group support. As Angela Peat, facilitator of one of TCFV's online support groups, observes:



"(T)he online meetings are perfect as [attendees] don't feel that they want to attend an in-person group at the moment... This is brilliant as I always felt that the connections people make online lead onto future interactions with others. Connecting with others is what helps with healing after loss, as people feel very isolated".

TCFV offers online support across all bereavement types, and also offers art therapy in this format. For the 25-26 year, we are moving towards the establishment of an online support group that caters specifically to bereaved sibling issues.

Service challenges continue to be creating and maintaining community awareness of group offerings, and – not unrelated – ensuring leadership succession across groups. On the awareness front, Facebook local community noticeboards have proven a particularly fruitful and non-resource intensive platform, attracting new participants particularly to regional groups.

Andrew McNess





IT ANNUAL REPORT

In the previous year, TCFV has once again undergone many changes, and this has been reflected in our IT systems. We have discontinued the previous iterations of TCFV memberships, and they have been replaced with new systems, as has the payments and invoicing systems. Our databases and systems have likewise been updated to account for these changes. We have continued to update and change our systems to stay up to date and will continue to do so.

• Continual IT Support

We have continued to provide consistent IT support to all TCFV staff and volunteers. This includes addressing day-to-day technical issues, refining workflows, and improving overall system functionality. The goal remains to keep systems stable and responsive, while offering timely help to users of varying technical backgrounds.

Alongside this, we have enhanced database functionality, including the creation of new forms to support staff and member engagement. Support for email campaign delivery has also remained a priority, helping TCFV communicate effectively with its community. Additionally, we will upgrade and maintain our computer hardware as needed, ensuring all devices are as dependable and efficient as possible. Finally, we will continue to monitor and manage the integrations between key systems to ensure they continue to properly function.

• Cybersecurity & Compliance

Cybersecurity remains a top priority. We have built upon the successful implementation of the data security plan and continue with effectively monitoring our systems and ensuring the timely updating of anti-virus software, firewalls, and firmware across our systems.

• IT Lessons

We have expanded on wiki documentation and the quantity of short training videos for commonly used features. We have also made available direct lessons held over video chatting services and in person. Due to differing levels of expertise between staff, this has primarily been taking place as one-on-one sessions.

The methods by which TCFV engages with and promotes itself to the community have continued to evolve over time. I look forward to another productive year supporting the important work of TCFV and its community.

Jesse Bendel

COMMUNITY EDUCATION / GUEST SPEAKER PROGRAM

Throughout the 2024/2025 financial year, our Community Education and Guest Speaker Program has continued to grow in reach and relevance, deepening our impact within workplaces and local communities.

A significant milestone has been the revitalisation of the program's presence on our website. The former *Education* section has been relabelled as *Community* — with clearer, more accessible information outlining the breadth of support we offer. Many of our members and partners were previously unaware of the scope of the program - or how it could assist them, so renaming the *Community Education* program the *Guest Speaker Program* has helped clarify its purpose and strengthen its visibility.

The new online hub now features a comprehensive overview, including bios and photos of our dedicated volunteer speakers, practical information about grief education for workplaces, and guidance on how we can support members navigating grief when returning to work. This refresh ensures our resources are more easily found and better understood by those who need them most.

Another highlight has been the relaunch of the **Compassionate Business Awards** — recognising organisations that demonstrate exceptional understanding and support for bereaved employees and customers. After several years on hold, this initiative once again allows us to publicly celebrate businesses making a meaningful difference. Recipients are acknowledged through certificates and promotion on our website and social media channels.

Over the past year, our speakers and outreach initiatives have helped us connect with more than 300,000 people. This remarkable reach has been amplified through opportunities such as appearances on ABC Local Radio in Southwest Victoria and our CEO, Alex Hamilton, being invited to share insights on a widely listened-to podcast.

Every presentation, media interview, and community conversation strengthen awareness of The Compassionate Friends Victoria and ensures that more people know where to turn when they need understanding, support, and meaningful connections for themselves, their families, and their wider networks.

Jane Moschetti



PHONE SUPPORT & CENTRE DROP-IN SERVICES

For those of you who have not visited the TCFV offices in Canterbury recently, we have had a makeover. On the 6th of May, the front office, which faces the busy Canterbury Road, was transformed. Our library, with a variety of books on grief, spirituality, psychology, and self-help was moved, along with some sofas, coffee tables, and a mini-fridge, to the front entrance of the centre. This move, while subtle, has transformed our offices and it provides a welcoming and warm space for all members.

While the changes are still new, we have already been able to utilise this new space for smaller support groups, meetings and small gatherings, and facilitate friendly drop-ins from members and walk-in inquiries. We have seen the changes in the way that members respond to our offices and how passers-by are pausing to see what we have to offer.

We've already been able to provide one-on-one support for bereaved members who need a soft place to rest for a few hours after a particularly difficult grief day. We hope that our new space will encourage more memberships and drop-ins in the future.

The transformations at TCFV are not just aesthetic, and we are always looking for ways to improve our support services, particularly our phone responder services. Currently, we have an amazing group of volunteers and staff who offer peer support for the broader community. In our recent membership survey, we also ran a volunteer drive and have around 20 members who have expressed the desire to volunteer and offer their skills and services. We are hoping to build and grow our phone support services throughout the next financial year.

We understand that the research and literature on bereavement and trauma is always evolving, and at TCFV we understand the importance of making sure that our phone responders are provided with updated materials and support. That is why we are working on making sure phone responders have the information they need to best help callers.

We also had our first "monthly phone responder check-in" this June, 2025. This is an ongoing online meeting, facilitated by our volunteer support and engagement coordinator Natasha, and is an open space for phone responders to check in with each other, share stories,

offer advice and tips for dealing with challenging calls, and providing ways to connect and build community. When we "walk beside families, together" we also acknowledge that we walk beside our volunteers, staff, and members.

Amongst our phone responders, we have a wealth of knowledge, experience, and service. Julie Witts, who has been a phone responder since 2010, who marks her 15th year of service with TCFV this year, has found being a phone responder to be rewarding despite its challenges. "Over the years, I have been privileged to share many stories that are sad and inspiring, listening to wonderful things callers cherish about their child, sibling, or grandchild and how proud they are of them." Julie points out that, "allowing people who are grieving to say the name of their loved one is something they don't always get to do" and she recalls how valuable these moments are with callers.

As always, our goals at TCFV are to make sure that we can reach as many bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents as possible. We also aim to make sure that the supports we offer reflect the needs of our growing and changing community so that we can care for members for as long as they need us. We see this in the way many new members are opting for hybrid contact with our organisation utilising both online, phone, and in-person options for contact, support, and connection.

Hope Sneddon



Monthly Breakdown of First Contacts

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
January	10	8	12	7	19	14	9	15	12	25	14
February	17	16	12	10	17	11	17	18	25	25	15
March	17	8	16	12	15	7	14	9	17	18	14
April	7	13	14	6	10	4	17	4	22	24	16
May	7	11	12	8	11	9	19	19	19	24	11
June	7	13	14	9	10	10	15	11	11	14	16
July	6	11	12	29	14	17	15	9	20	21	
August	9	23	24	10	14	15	9	17	14	23	
September	13	15	17	18	22	16	5	15	16	19	
October	4	8	18	13	18	11	11	15	16	19	
November	10	15	8	12	8	8	15	17	13	11	
December	10	14	10	13	2	6	8	21	10	9	
Total	117	155	169	147	160	128	154	170	195	232	86

12 Monthly Breakdown of Member Referrals from July 24 to June 2025

Month	CORONER	TCFV MEMBER	FAMILY/FRIEND	INTERNET	COUNS, PSYCH, DOC	HOSP/ PALLCARE /HEALTH CARE CENTRELINK	FUNERAL HOMES	OTH ORG	ROAD TRAUMA SUPP'T	RADIO-MEDIA	POLICE	UNKNOWN
July	4	1	6	5	2			3				
August	2		4	8				3			1	5
September	1	3	5	7				1			1	3
October		2	5	1	4			3				2
November	2		1	5	1						1	1
December	1		3	3	1				1			
January	1	1	4	3	1			1			1	2
February			2	9	2							2
March	1		3	4	2							4
April			3	6				1			1	5
May			5	4	2							
June	3	1	2	7	2	1						1
Total	15	8	43	62	17	1	0	12	1	0	5	25

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

We extend our sincere gratitude to all our volunteers who dedicate their time, energy, and talents to supporting our community with kindness, care, and compassion. Your commitment strengthens every aspect of TCFV's work, and we are deeply appreciative of the difference you make.

In March 2025, the role of Volunteers Support and Engagement Coordinator was established and appointed to me. Since then, a range of services, activities, and initiatives have been delivered, enhancing the volunteer experience and strengthening our capacity to serve the community.

The Boroondara Expo in May provided an excellent opportunity to welcome new Community Volunteers to our association. Their contributions have been invaluable in assisting staff with tasks such as data entry, research, media, and administrative support. In just three months, eight new volunteers have been successfully onboarded.

As part of National Volunteer Week in May, we hosted a volunteer appreciation event at LIDO Cinemas, screening Sir David Attenborough's documentary *Oceans*. This gathering was both a celebration of our volunteers' service and an opportunity for them to connect socially, reflecting the power of community and shared purpose.

We were also proud to celebrate Kevin Purvis, recipient of the Boroondara Volunteers Award (May 2025), in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to TCFV and his invaluable behind-the-scenes contributions. Unable to attend the ceremony, I accepted the award on Kevin's behalf and shared his heartfelt speech, which resonated strongly with the audience while also highlighting TCFV's important work — something Kevin has always championed.

In June, we introduced monthly Zoom check-ins for our Phone Responders, providing regular opportunities to connect with peers, discuss challenges, share updates, and access resources to support them in their roles. During this period, we also welcomed new volunteers to the team, further strengthening our capacity to provide support.

Within the Centre, we also welcomed additional volunteers who have quickly become valued members of the team. Working quietly in the background, Community Volunteers continue to contribute vital skills and support, enabling staff to perform their roles effectively and helping us extend care to the wider community.

Looking ahead, the approval to transition to a 9am to 10pm support line (from a 24-hour line) in the coming months represents a significant achievement. This change will better support our volunteers by reducing the risk of crisis calls being directed to them, ensuring a safer and more sustainable service model.

To all our volunteers, whether you work behind the scenes, answer calls on the phone lines or bring warmth to our Centre in person, your generosity, compassion, and dedication remain at the heart of our mission.

Natasha Ballingall



COMMUNICATIONS

Compassionate Connections Magazine

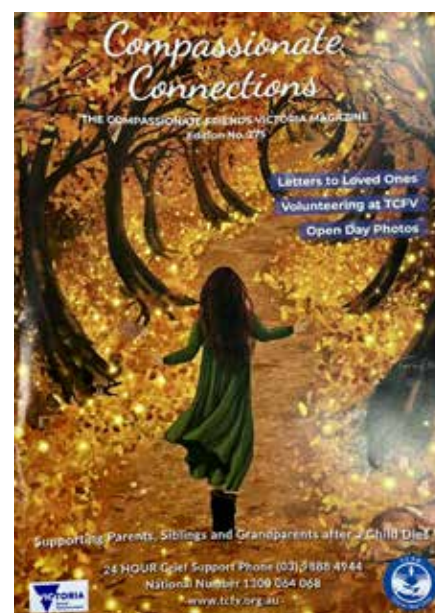
In September 2024, we proudly launched *Compassionate Connections*, our newly designed quarterly magazine. This fresh, seasonal publication reflects the cycles of the year, featuring articles, poems, and contributions from our members that speak to each season's unique challenges and moments of hope.

The addition of four full-colour pages in the centre has given the magazine a vibrant new look, which has been warmly received by our community. For the first time, we held a cover competition and were delighted by the number of beautiful entries from members — a testament to the deep connection they feel with this publication.

Mail-out days continue to be an important tradition, with long-time members gathering at the Centre to prepare copies for posting. These days are about more than envelopes and stamps — they offer a wonderful social opportunity to connect over morning tea, share memories, and support each other while doing this meaningful work.

The Winter edition, our latest issue, was emailed to over 4,000 people, with an additional 900 members choosing to receive a printed copy. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Member Maria shared her praise, saying that she rarely reads anything cover to cover since her early days of grief, but the Autumn 2025 magazine was excellent.

Compassionate Connections continues to remind our community that they are never alone — their stories, their children, siblings, and grandchildren are honoured and remembered within every page.



Between Friends E-Newsletter

Our *Between Friends* email newsletter continues to be an important way we keep our community connected and informed. Over the past financial year, our subscriber list has grown from 2,000 to over 4,000 bereaved parents, siblings, grandparents, and community supporters. Each month, this newsletter shares TCFV news, upcoming events and initiatives, that remind people they are not alone. Many members tell us they feel less isolated simply by reading it: even if they live too far away to attend events, it helps them feel part of something bigger and truly understood.



Facebook

In the same period, our Facebook following has grown significantly, from 19,970 to 34,588 followers. Many of our posts now reach over one million people worldwide, spreading messages of hope and understanding to those who need it most. The page has also become eligible for Facebook bonuses, bringing in an extra \$300–\$400 per month to support our work.



Instagram

Our Instagram community has more than tripled, growing from 1,643 to 5,013 followers. This platform allows us to share supportive messages, grief reflections, and events in a visual, accessible way.



LinkedIn

Our presence on LinkedIn, now at 140 followers, helps connect us with professionals and partners who can amplify our mission and expand our reach.

Summary

The growth of our communications channels means we are reaching thousands more bereaved people who might otherwise feel alone. Every comment, message, and sign-up shows that our words make a difference. Many new members tell us they found TCFV through our posts. Some even say they wish they could move to Australia to access the community and support they see reflected in our news and events.

Our communications don't just share information — they offer a lifeline of connection, compassion, and hope.

Jane Moschetti

EVENTS, RETREAT & WORKSHOPS

Run Melbourne - July 2024

In July 2024 TCFV participated in the annual Run Melbourne **fundraiser**. This year, our team raised an impressive \$5,453.60. We are incredibly proud of the nineteen participants, whose dedication and spirit truly shone through as they walked and ran, flying the TCFV flag for all to see.

Bereaved Father's Day Barefoot Bowls – August 2024

Over 20 bereaved fathers came together at Croydon Bowls Club, sharing a day of connection, support, and genuine mateship. Between barefoot bowls and a relaxed lunch, the men found comfort in each other's company, grateful for the chance to gather with those who truly understand. Days like this remind us of the strength found in community and the importance of creating spaces where men can walk this journey together.

Melbourne Marathon & Spar10 Community Event – October 2024

Three TCFV members ran for TCFV in the 2024 Melbourne Marathon: Bronwyn, Jeremy and Annabelle. Bronwyn and Jeremy ran a marathon while Annabelle completed her first half marathon. Special mention to Bronwyn for running her 10th Melbourne Marathon and thereby becoming a Spartan. The three runners helped raise over \$5,000 for TCFV.

The Spar10 event, hosted by South Oakleigh Bowls Club, honoured Bronwyn's journey of resilience after losing her brother Stephen in 2001. Inspired by her achievement of completing ten Melbourne Marathons in his memory, the event highlighted the enduring bonds with those we've lost. Bronwyn's story—beginning with her first steps on the MCG where Stephen once invited her—shows how support from The Compassionate Friends Victoria can transform grief into strength. The gathering created a space of compassion, remembrance, and connection for families.

Grief Retreat – October 2024

Our annual retreat brought together people from diverse backgrounds to deepen their understanding of grief and explore ways to navigate it with greater compassion and connection. Through a thoughtful balance of workshops, reflective activities, and informal conversations, participants found new

perspectives on their grief journeys and discovered the power of shared experience.

Held within the peaceful surrounds of Springvale Cemetery, the retreat created opportunities to build meaningful connections — with each other, with the natural environment, and with loved ones' memories. Planting bulbs outside **Café Vita et flores** was one such moment, offering a symbolic act of remembrance and hope. Many attendees left with new friendships, valuable tools to better support themselves and others, and a renewed sense that they do not walk this path alone.



Day of the Dead – October 2024

Always a cherished annual gathering in honour of **Día de los Muertos**, this special evening brings bereaved families together to share favourite foods, stories, and memories of their loved ones, creating an atmosphere of warmth, compassion, and meaningful affinity that reminds everyone they are not alone.



Oaks Day Drinks, Ladies Only Event – November 2024

A beautiful, heartwarming evening was held at the Centre for Oaks Day, filled with laughter, friendship and wonderful connections. We indulged in delicious food, prosecco cocktails and everyone left with a little something special from the door prizes.



Worldwide Candle Lighting Service – December 2024

On Sunday 8 December, TCFV held the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Service at Bass Care, with over 70 members attending. The evening, sponsored by Guardian Plan and supported by White Lady Funerals, was peacefully led by our MC David Gouldson. Readings, poems, songs, a memorial roll, and a slideshow of loved ones created a moving tribute before candles were lit and photos shared. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed supper together—finding comfort and connection with both old friends and new.



Open Day – February 2025

The 2025 Open Days were a wonderful success, filled with warmth, energy, and bonding. The first event on **Friday** afternoon welcomed a vibrant mix of people—many TCFV members attending for the first time to learn more about what we offer, alongside professionals from the Department of Health, Invoke, Blokes Psychology, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, Transport Victoria, Standby Support After Suicide, and Jesuit Social Services.

Saturday brought together bereaved individuals and families in a spirit of community and compassion, with a surprise visit from Monique Ryan, Member of Parliament for the federal seat of Kooyong. It was a day marked by heartfelt conversations, shared stories, a few tears, and plenty of laughter. Our Open Days continue to be a powerful and uplifting way to begin the year—highlighting the vital role TCFV plays in supporting bereaved Victorians.

Walk to Remember – April 2025

Our Annual Walk to Remember at Princes Park drew around 160 people on a beautiful



sunny Sunday. Families and friends walked in quiet remembrance, many carrying flowers for their loved ones. By the lake, heartfelt speeches and the Parents and Siblings Credo were shared before everyone returned for a relaxed picnic. A flower memorial was left as a gentle tribute, marking a day of love, remembrance, and togetherness.

Bereaved Mother's Day Supper – May 2025

On Thursday 1 May, bereaved mothers gathered at the Centre for a heartfelt evening in honour of Bereaved Mother's Day. Over supper, each mother shared words about her beloved child, with moments of both laughter and tears. The evening was gently hosted by Jane, with support from Hope—who prepared a posy for every guest—and volunteers Catrina and Karen. It was a night of stories, connection, and friendship, made possible by the care of our staff and volunteers.



Winter Solstice – June 2025

On Friday 20 June on the (almost!) shortest day of the year, we gathered once again to honour the return of the light. The event reached full capacity and was an evening filled with warmth, connection, and reflection. We shared generous platters of delicious food, and the mulled wine—kindly donated by Christine Smedley of Mandala Wines—was especially appreciated.

One of the highlights of the evening was the moving **fire release ceremony**. Each person wrote a letter to their loved one, then watched the ashes rise into the night sky—a quiet, powerful moment of remembrance and love.

Workshops

Throughout the year, we held a number of workshops, with sessions on grief proving especially popular. Many of these took place on Saturday afternoons. Three of the more creative offerings included the **Singalong workshop**, Watercolour painting and Vessels for Emotional Healing, a hands-on sewing workshop that explored emotional expression through craft.

On one memorable Monday evening, we welcomed two team members from Blokes Psychology, who spoke to a full house at the Centre about how men experience and process grief—a powerful and insightful session.

EQUITY, INCLUSION & CULTURAL SAFETY

Equity, inclusion, and cultural safety are key elements of TCFV's understanding of what it means to "walk beside families, together". Equity acknowledges that we have different levels of needs, supports, and abilities and when we can acknowledge these differences it allows us to adjust our support of members based on their unique lived experiences. Inclusion, is at the heart of TCFV and this is about making sure that all members from all walks of life, feel welcomed, valued, and supported. Cultural safety is about making sure that we create spaces both in-person and online, where people feel safe to come as they are. These spaces foster respect, mutual understanding, and meaningful connections.

This financial year, also correlated with TCFV's annual membership survey. It is clear that our continued efforts to honour equity, inclusion, and cultural safety are celebrated in our community and we strive to constantly improve our services and adapt them to ever-changing membership needs.

Some strategies we have already put in place are looking at ways to facilitate support groups and support services for queer members and rainbow families. While the current number of queer TCFV members is small, (4% from the recent survey) we hope to grow our membership alongside our services. We have had a great response from queer community members local to Melbourne who already volunteer in the queer grief space, ready to volunteer and help us grow our rainbow support groups and memberships. We are hoping that these groups, events, and strategies will, in the future, extend to regional Victoria and online spaces too.

As we move forward with these strategies for the rest of 2025 and the first half of 2026, we are making sure all our TCFV literature, training materials, and support documents are updated and reflect our continued desire for cultural inclusivity.

In addition to our move towards creating queer and rainbow family bereavement support, we are also looking at how we can support our existing and new male identifying members by developing strategies that give men the support they need to explore their grief in safe and inclusive spaces. We have already had a great response to the Bloke Psychology information night earlier this year, and we hope to have many more.

Most TCFV members are English speakers, and while the need is currently small for support literature and services to be offered in other languages, we are always monitoring this. It is something that we hope to grow in the future should our membership require it.

At TCFV, we are also committed to maintaining a culture of safety and wellbeing through the consistent application of workplace civility principles. We foster an environment where all staff and volunteers are treated with respect, empathy, and professionalism. By promoting open communication, inclusive practices, and mutual support, we ensure that every team member feels valued and safe. Courteous practices such as active listening, respectful dialogue, timely and constructive feedback, and acknowledgement of diverse perspectives are embedded into our daily interactions. Our leadership reinforces these values through clear expectations and supportive policies that address unacceptable behaviour and encourage positive engagement. This culture of civility is essential to our ability to deliver compassionate peer support and sustain a healthy, respectful, and high-functioning workplace.

Hope Sneddon & Andrew McNess





The Compassionate Friends Victoria

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