

TCFV POLICY STATEMENT

Inclusion of Chosen Family and Partners

O.U.R Bereavement Group (Collaborative Pilot)

Dated 26th February 2026

1. Purpose

This policy outlines The Compassionate Friends Victoria's (TCFV) position regarding the inclusion of "chosen family" and partners within the O.U.R Bereavement Group, a peer-led pilot program delivered in collaboration with The Queer as Death Collective.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide governance clarity regarding eligibility
- Ensure alignment with TCFV's mission
- Maintain scope integrity
- Safeguard against unintended service expansion

2. Program Context

The O.U.R Bereavement Group is a defined 6-session pilot designed as a culturally safe, identity-informed peer space for LGBTIQ+ and BIPOC individuals.

The program is delivered:

- In collaboration with The Queer as Death Collective
- As a co-branded initiative
- As a discrete pilot program
- With evaluation and review

This group is not a core standalone TCFV program and does not automatically expand TCFV's general eligibility framework.

3. Rationale for Inclusion of Chosen Family

TCFV recognises that within many LGBTIQ+ and culturally diverse communities:

- Individuals may experience estrangement from biological family.
- Chosen kinship networks function as primary family.
- Legal recognition of relationships may historically have been unavailable.
- Relational bonds may be defined by lived attachment rather than biological status.

Trauma-informed and culturally competent practice recognises relational depth as the defining factor in bereavement impact. Accordingly, within this pilot context, chosen family may be included where the relationship constituted a primary family bond.

4. Inclusion of Partners

The inclusion of partners within this program reflects:

- Recognition that, for many participants, a partner represents the primary attachment relationship.
- Historical inequities in legal recognition of same-sex partnerships.
- The central role of partnership within queer kinship structures.

This inclusion is contextual to this identity-based collaborative pilot and does not represent a broader expansion of TCFV services into general spousal or adult bereavement support.

5. Eligibility Parameters

Participation in the O.U.R Bereavement Group is limited to individuals grieving the death of:

- A child
- A sibling
- A partner
- A primary chosen family member

Eligibility is based on:

- Bereavement through death
- Primary family attachment
- Relational depth and familial identity

“Chosen family” is defined as:

A person who held a primary, family-level role in an individual’s life, regardless of biological or legal connection, and whose death represents the loss of a core familial relationship.

Friendship or general community loss does not fall within scope.

6. Governance Safeguards

To maintain organisational integrity:

- Eligibility confirmation is required during registration.
- The group is peer-led and not clinical therapy.
- Referral pathways are provided for higher-acuity support.
- The program is time-limited and evaluated.
- Any continuation or expansion requires Board review.

7. Risk Management

Identified risks:

- Scope creep beyond primary family bereavement.
- Perceived inequity of access.
- Confusion regarding TCFV’s broader remit.

Mitigation:

- Clear public eligibility criteria.
- Board oversight.
- Explicit framing that this is a collaborative initiative.

8. Alignment with TCFV Mission

TCFV has always centred significant relational loss within family systems. The inclusion of chosen family and partners within this collaborative pilot:

- Reflects trauma-informed practice.
- Demonstrates cultural competence.
- Upholds relational depth as the defining principle.
- Maintains alignment with constitutional intent.

This policy confirms that participation parameters in this pilot do not amend TCFV's core service model unless formally approved by the Board.

9. Review

This policy applies specifically to the O.U.R Bereavement Group pilot and will be reviewed following program evaluation.