

Wednesday, 17 May 2023

FOUNDATION GRANT TO HELP BEREAVED TEENS TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Sadly, one in every 20* Australian children will experience the death of a parent before they turn 18. That equates to a child grieving the loss of a parent in every classroom in every Australian school.

This experience has significant impacts on their health and wellbeing, which in turn affects their social and educational development. Yet, too little is known about the scale of this issue and its implications.

National charity, Feel the Magic, is set to play a key role providing support for those impacted by this form of childhood trauma by staging its first Hunter region Grad Camp, made possible through funding support of \$55,000 from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

Feel the Magic provides early intervention grief education programs for kids aged 7 to 18, who experience the death of a parent, guardian, or sibling. Their aim is to create a community where grieving kids and their families feel supported, empowered, and can begin to move forward with their lives.

The Grad Camp will be held from May 19 to 21 at Point Wolstoncroft Sport and Recreation Camp, bringing together 17, 17- and 18-year olds who have lost a parent or sibling.

Under the guidance of psychologists and mentors, the participants will take part in a range of fun physical challenges, activities, and also learn vital skills and strategies to live healthily with their grief through some of the milestones and challenges involved in transitioning to adult life.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair, Jennifer Leslie, said childhood bereavement is a significant and often overlooked social and public health issue in Australia that can have long-term negative impacts on those children throughout their lives.

“While children are in significant need of support after the death of a parent or sibling, they may not receive such care due to changes in their family situation or family roles post bereavement,” Ms Leslie said.

“In many cases, a child’s primary caregiver will be struggling with their own grief and may experience psychological and functional difficulties themselves, which can result in reduced time, attention, and support for the bereaved child.

“This makes the work of Feel the Magic more vital, so that these young people can recover and thrive with the right guidance and strategies in place.

“We are delighted to assist Feel the Magic expand its Grad Camp to the Hunter Region and hope this is just the beginning their work in the region.”

Feel the Magic Chief Executive Officer, Adam Blatch, said they are extremely grateful for the partnership with Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation that has enabled them to bring the Grad Camp to the Hunter region.

“To have this Camp funded is absolutely amazing and it means that 17 campers can take part in the weekend free of charge,” Mr Blatch said.

“In many cases, this will be the first critical step for the Grad Campers to navigate what can be lifelong effects of childhood bereavement. The weekend will enable them to connect, grow and learn as they build the strategies to live healthily with their grief and associated mental health challenges that childhood bereavement can bring.

“Research shows that services and resources that promote resilient adaptation, growth, and connection to social supports can help prevent adverse outcomes.

“However, bereaved youth are an often-overlooked group for whom services are under-resourced. Ensuring access to comprehensive grief-focused care and resources will reduce the harmful impact of childhood bereavement, keep a child’s development on track, and support the wellbeing of grieving children and adolescents.

“We’re also keen to let more people know about our programs and to hear from anyone who may need assistance with their grief from childhood bereavement.

“We deliver all our camps, resources, and strategies free to participants and we measure the impact of our programs, which have resulted in kids experiencing positive indicators across a range of well-being scales including their own reported reduction in feeling overwhelmed when things are difficult.”

Since its establishment in 2003, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation has distributed more than \$25million to 550 projects across regional NSW.

For more information about the services offered by Feel the Magic, go to feelthemagic.org.au

** Statistic provided by Feel the Magic - <https://feelthemagic.org.au/about-us/>*

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