

# Sands Annual Report 2021

Miscarriage, Stillbirth &  
Newborn Death Support

# Report from the Chair & CEO

Sands was built through the hard work and perseverance of bereaved parents across Australia, and it has provided comfort, guidance, and hope for so many for more than 40 years. We are incredibly proud of this history, so it is bittersweet to deliver this final annual report for the organisation.

This last year has seen us merge with Red Nose on November 30th, 2020, taking peer support to a new level and providing bereaved families with a suite of services to meet their needs.

It has been a year that was full of highs and lows. It has seen us respond to COVID 19, which brought significant increases in demand for support when our volunteers were facing personal difficulties that reduced their capacity to help. These circumstances required innovative thinking as we looked to provide opportunities for connection and support using digital platforms. Whilst it hasn't worked for everyone, it has delivered much-needed support to many newly bereaved families.

**We have been proud to be able to keep supporting families through lockdowns. It has been heartening to have seen families join our online forums and groups as they grappled with their grief.**

We were even brave enough to tackle our first virtual Walk to Remember. We would all agree it was not the same as the opportunity to meet face to face, but it did provide an option for the many families who found themselves in lockdown on October 15th.

None of this would have been possible without the inspiration of the staff and volunteers who went before us and the staff and volunteers of today who worked so hard under very trying circumstances.

**We are incredibly thankful to you all.**



Jackie Mead  
CEO



Rachel Green  
Chairperson

# The Sands Legacy

(Total based on 2018-2019 figures)

**1.1**  
Million

Volunteer Hours

Over  
**8000**

Engagements with  
bereaved families

**100**  
Thousand

Website visits

# Looking back

**In presenting the 2021 Sands - Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Newborn Death Support Ltd Annual Report we acknowledge the Sands legacy and impact Sands has made in caring and advocating for bereaved families throughout the past 40+ years and thank Members, Volunteers and Staff who have contributed to this final Sands Annual Report, sharing their personal connection with Sands.**

Pregnancy and infant loss were once so common it was believed to be a non-event. Miscarriage was beheld as the 'loss of tissue', not really a baby, and stillbirth and newborn death were often minimised with comments like, "Well, you didn't know the baby."

## **Numerous practices confirmed these opinions:**

- Parents were not offered the opportunity to see or hold their baby
- Funerals were not held for these babies
- Stillborn babies and babies who died soon after birth were placed in communal burial sites as arranged by the hospital who liaised with a funeral director; stillborn babies were not offered 'birth' certificates
- The common support was to tell a mother, 'go home and get pregnant again soon'.

This invisible grief was silenced or discussed in whispers between women without community support.

However, in the late 1970s parents with longings in their hearts and others who were distressed by the lack of acknowledgment of their losses came together for their own support and from this developed their wish to support others not only with personal grief support but attempts to address community attitude and change in processes that failed to acknowledge their experience of loss.

# The Seventies

**Year: 1974**

**State: NSW and QLD**

I lost my firstborn son, Christopher John Pain, on 7th June 1974 in New South Wales. I did not receive a comforting word from anyone and was told to forget “it” happened, which I tried desperately to do. I always believed there was something very wrong with me, as I just couldn't forget him. I loved him with all my heart and soul. Forty years later in 2015, still believing something was wrong with me, I found Sands in Queensland. Wow! Sadly, I'm not alone, and there is nothing wrong with me.

Sands gave me comfort and reassurance that grief is a lifetime journey and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Sands also taught me that the depth of your love for your baby is what makes the pain so unbearable. Our volunteer days at Sands are now my days spent with Christopher and his family of people who care and understand completely.

**- Ann Pain**

Our volunteer days at Sands are now my days spent with Christopher and his family of people who care and understand completely  
– Ann Pain

# The Seventies

**Year: 1979**

**State: Western Australia**

In 1979 in Western Australia, the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women invited a small group of women to share their stories.

Supported by Libby Lloyd, it quickly became evident that the support offered by peers was incredibly valuable to these bereaved mothers. With this in mind, newspaper publicity and advertising occurred, expanding the group. Before the end of the decade, the group became known as SANDS (WA), which stood for stillbirth and neonatal death support.

**Year: 1979**

**State: Victoria**

In 1979, A.M.E.N.D. was formed in Wodonga by Alice Coleman and in October 1981 in Ballarat, Janette Reynolds and two other bereaved mothers, Maureen Myers and June Jens, established a stillbirth support group. Janette subsequently attended the meeting at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne in 1983 where support for Sands in Victoria was initiated.

This new group involved parents who were distressed about the discrimination in burial and funeral practices and lack of certification of the birth of stillborn babies. Thus, community and professional support, promoting the voices of parents, became a significant arm of the indirect support offered by Sands, particularly in Victoria, promoting a raft of changes that were not applicable when a child died after birth.

# The Seventies

## **Each state produced pamphlets regarding such topics as;**

- managing a subsequent pregnancy;
- making decisions after a diagnosis of a problem with the baby during pregnancy;
- understanding reactions after an early pregnancy loss;
- father's/children's/grandparent's grief; and
- understanding the disenfranchised grief of parents whose babies died long ago.

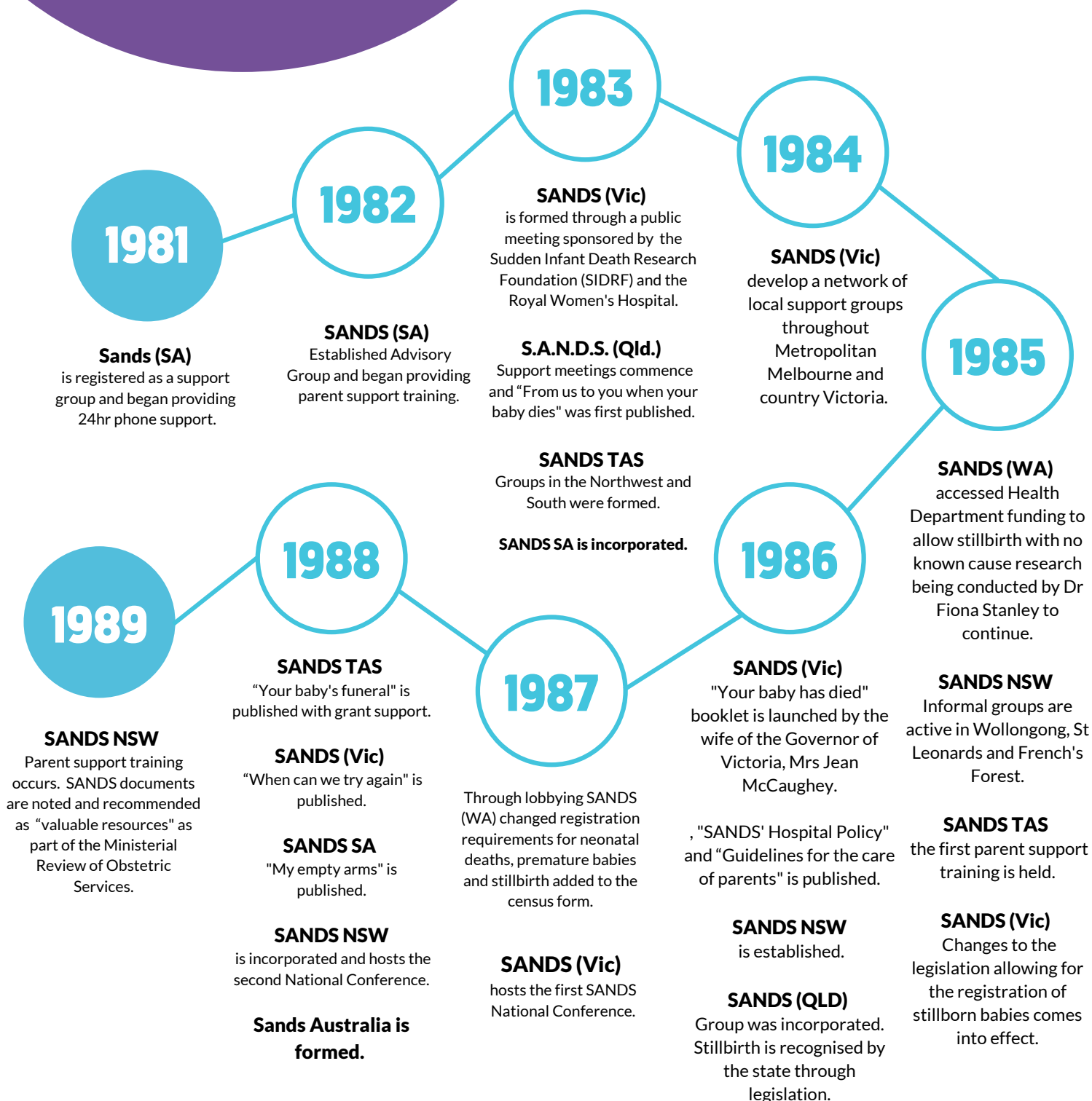
Many parents were able to make some sense of their losses through contributing to these worthwhile projects, seeing this as an opportunity to give back what they had learned to assist others.

Most importantly, providing best-practice peer support to parents is the cornerstone of Sands' support.

Specifically tailored Sands' training of parent supporters was developed in most states, enabling many to give back wisely, expanded from their own experiences. The need to understand the myriad of complexities of these losses was an essential part of training that adds complexity to the bereavement experience, which Sands parents understand, in contrast to that after child and adult deaths.

“Sands has always been the type of place where nothing turns into 'something' through hard work, plenty of heart and sheer perseverance.”

# The Eighties





# The Eighties

**Year: 1980s**

**State: Queensland**

My first baby, my daughter Leah, was born prematurely in September 1983 and lived for almost three months in neonatal intensive care. At the time I had no idea that we were on the cusp of new ways of thinking about better ways of supporting parents when a baby died. It still amazes me to think that it was during Leah's short life that the very first meeting of S.A.N.D.S. (Qld.) was held on 9th November 1983. Driven by some incredible people - including Judy Clarkson, Father John Chalmers, Dr David Tudehope, Jennie Westlake and Rowena Chapman - S.A.N.D.S. (Qld.) came into being. It was a little later that I connected with S.A.N.D.S. and realised that I was not alone in the grief I was experiencing following the loss of my baby. I discovered the power of peer support, sharing with others who have travelled the road.

In time I became a volunteer supporter, joined the committee, and helped in various ways including typing (on a typewriter!) our monthly newsletter. I've had the honour of parents sharing with me the stories of their precious babies, to see S.A.N.D.S. (Qld.) flourish and evolve, and to contribute enormously to the ongoing quest to ensure all families receive the support they need when a baby dies. The many lasting bonds and friendships formed through S.A.N.D.S. (Qld) are truly immeasurable.

**- Fran Boyle**

**Year: 1981**

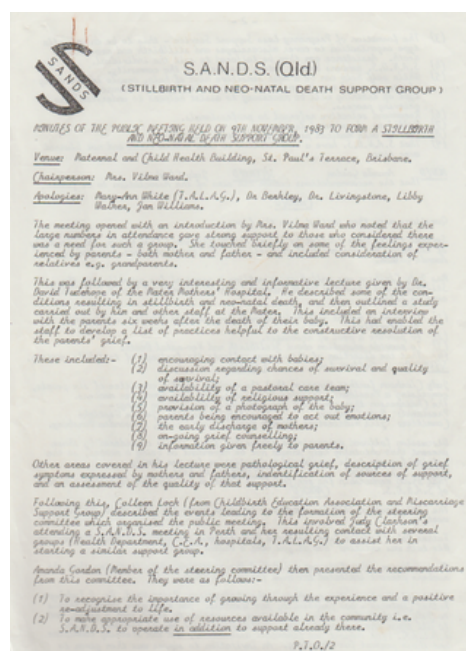
**State: South Australia**

Sands in South Australia came about when a couple, whose baby had died, discovered there was little support available to them in their community.

Founders Dave and Bronnie Boulton met with two other couples who also had a baby die, co-founders Ann and Harold Jones and Kris and Les Dalwood.

An interest meeting was held with 57 people in attendance.

**SANDS (SA) was registered.**



Extract of the Minutes of the first public meeting of the S.A.N.D.S. (Qld), 9th November 1983.

# The Eighties

**Year: 1981**

**State: Victoria**

My involvement in grief and bereavement began following the unexpected stillbirth of our first child, our daughter - Kate Louise at 40 weeks and four days gestation due to prolapse cord, on 13th August 1981 (the 30th Anniversary of my maternal grandmother's death).

There were no support groups in Ballarat – but we will always be indebted for the support provided by a male midwife (Jack Adrianns) who was the father of a son who had been stillborn in the years prior to Kate's birth and our wonderful funeral director (Peter Tobin), who was also grieving his father's death, on the same day of Kate's birth.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to see and hold our daughter but taking photographs and introducing Kate to our extended families wasn't an option we were offered or even thought of!

We did decide on a private burial rather than the "hospital arranged" type on offer and have never regretted our decision.

I felt the strong need to establish a group to provide peer support to other families, which was encouraged by my local Childbirth Education Australia branch and two other members – Maureen Myers and June Jens (who were also bereaved mothers) and the group began in October 1981.

We moved to Melbourne at the beginning of 1983 and I became actively involved in the establishment of SANDS (Vic), firstly as a Committee member and co-ordinator of the Western Suburbs network of SANDS, which quickly was followed by almost every other role possible, including holding all Executive positions (Treasurer, Secretary and President), being involved in the inaugural SANDS Conference and becoming the inaugural Co-ordinator of SANDS Australia in 1997.

Our lives turned upside-down again in August 2014, when our first grandchild, Rose Victoria Stratton, was stillborn. All of those painful memories came flooding back as we provided support to our daughter and son in law, as they embarked on the journey that we all know too well.

Today I am a very proud mother to our four subsequent children and Nanna to our three living grandchildren – without EVER forgetting our precious daughter and granddaughter.

**- Janette Reynolds**

# The Eighties

**Year: 1984**

**State: South Australia**

Our precious third child Ryan, was stillborn at 21 weeks. We were advised not to see or hold him but to move on, however I couldn't.

Eight months later I was in a deep depression. The only support I knew about was SIDS and so I called them and thanks to the kindness of a lady named Mary Zollo, I was directed to Bronwyn and Dave Bolton who founded SANDS in SA.

Their support was invaluable and when I'd learned to deal with my own grief, I felt the best way to 'give back', was to contribute towards improving support for other parents.

I volunteered as a support worker, management committee member and advisory council member on and off for 30 years during which time we had our last son, and I became a midwife. By following this path, I hope in some small way, it has made sense of the pain my family endured and that I've honoured the memory of our darling boy.

**- Kay**

**Year: 1984**

**State: Victoria**

I was mortified I could not get a birth certificate for my full term stillborn son Liam James who died minutes before birth in 1984, whereas a 23 week baby who died ten minutes after birth was entitled to one. Rosemary Crowther and I traipsed the halls of parliament house obtaining political support (which was never contested!), fortunate that the bill which now allows parents to use the family name of choice (rather than automatically being the father's surname if his name was on the registration) was under review. Sixteen years later, I got my stillborn certificate, when retrospective certification was allowed in Victoria after I wrote a letter on behalf of SANDS (Vic) to the then registrar. This retrospectivity happened earlier in NSW as it was incorporated with the change in certification, so I used this as part of the argument for introduction in Victoria!

**- Dr Penny Brabin, FAPS**

# The Eighties

**Year: 1986**  
**State: Victoria**

SANDS (Vic) piloted the way for 'birth' certificates for stillborn babies in 1986 and other states followed suit leading to collaboration of state Birth, Death and Marriage Registrars and retrospective registration for babies born prior to this time.

Again, while state practices varied so-called 'hospital communal burial' of babies – up to 60 in an adult-sized grave – is now rarely practised and the ashes of miscarried babies are now more often scattered respectfully. Sands has, over the years, provided assistance to many parents to locate babies who were buried in communal graves.

“The publication of the SANDS (Vic) booklet 'Your baby has died' in 1986 with its related insert for hospital staff, "Their baby has died", offered understanding and support to parents and wise advice for their care. National distribution of this booklet, with editing for state differences, was promoted through Sands Australia in the 1990s.”

**Year: 1986**  
**State: Victoria**

I lost my daughter Holly lee at 35 weeks, stillborn, my third child, I had two boys, aged four and two years old. While I was in hospital knowing I was going to give birth to a stillborn baby, the Frankston hospital organised for SANDS to come in the day Holly was delivered.

It helped knowing I was not the only one that had gone through this horrific loss. They came into the delivery room and supported myself and my family.

They were just starting up at the time. They helped me understand my grief.

I also went to some meetings later on to help me with my grief. I have had four more children since that horrible day. So six in total plus Holly. I also have eleven grandchildren and two more on the way, I am blessed. The pain of losing Holly is gone but the memory of holding her for hours is still fresh in my mind. The positive thing that came out of my grief, is I can empathise and understand loss now.

Life is a gift, I have her photo in my room. I always look at it and think - I love you.

**- Louise**

# The Nineties

SANDS WA hosts the third National Conference.

SANDS (Vic) - "Your baby has a problem" is published. This is the first time that medical termination was written about.

SANDS NSW - established an office located at St Leonards within the Royal North Shore Hospital

SANDS ACT is formed.

SANDS TAS is incorporated.

SANDS (QLD) - "Saying hello before you say goodbye" is published.

SANDS (Vic) - "After a miscarriage" is published. Hosts the fourth Sands National Conference.

SANDS NSW - After four years of lobbying, birth certificates are available for stillborn babies.

SANDS (QLD) first office is opened in Butterfield St, Herston. The first State government funding is received.

SANDS NSW - A series of brochures and resources for health professionals is launched by Sands' Patron Hazel Hawke. More than 19 SANDS groups operate across the state.

SANDS (Vic) established its website and is the only agency to contribute to the Reproductive Loss Review at the Royal Women's Hospital.

SANDS (QLD) hosted a conference named "Family needs when a baby has died".

Sands Australia receives funding to support its first staff member.

SANDS SA hosts "Living, Loving, Remembering", the 6th National Biennial Conference.

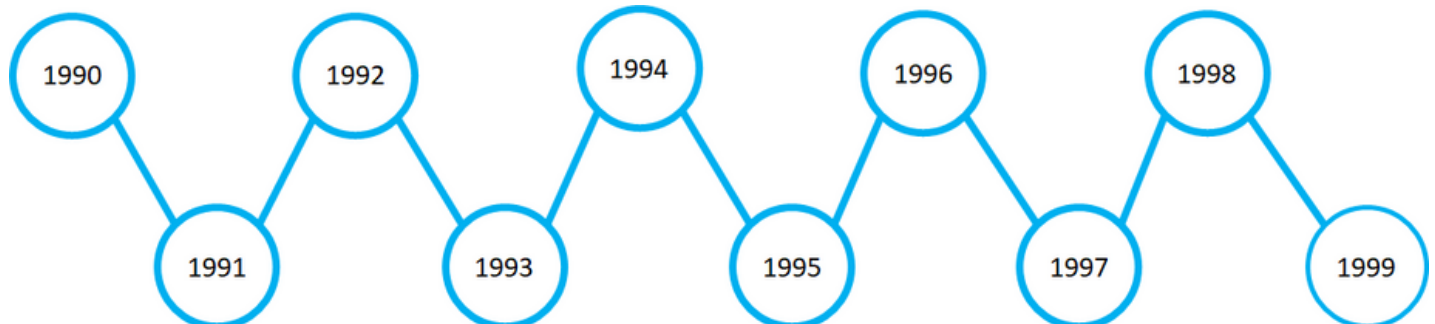
SANDS NSW - The first annual dinner dance where the SANDS Pregnancy and Infant Loss Research Foundation is announced.

Inhouse group leader training begins.

SANDS (QLD) - Hosts a Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Newborn Death Awareness Week.

SANDS (Vic) - Older Loss Support Group is formed.

SANDS (Vic) launches a brochure specifically for grieving fathers.



SANDS NSW receives State funding to coordinate services and to publish two booklets.

SANDS SA "Early pregnancy loss" is published. Training for professionals supported by the production of a video "No words can say".

SANDS NSW receives support from SIDS to assist in some joint projects.

SANDS NSW - The Rural Access Project commences, and is funded by the Dept. of Primary Industries and Energy.

SANDS (Vic) - The Dept. of Social Security invite SANDS to provide input on Maternity Allowance and Bereavement Allowance Payments.

SANDS (Vic) publishes a resource "Making decisions when a baby dies".

The Maternity Allowance for mothers of stillborn babies is available across Australia.

Sands Australia becomes incorporated.

# The Nineties

**Up until the 1980s when a stillbirth or infant death occurred, the hospital did not let the parents see or hold their precious baby. The baby was taken away for a hospital arranged burial, usually in a communal grave and the parents were not told where the grave was situated.**

The Sands' Older Loss Support Group was formed in 1996 as a result of many older loss parents contacting Sands for support and help with locating their babies. The group continues to help families today, providing peer support and helping to research, locate and commemorate babies who died and were buried anonymously.



“Without the chance to say goodbye or create memories to provide a tangible focus for their grief, many parents suffered continuing distress the way in which their baby’s death was managed and how their grief was effectively disallowed”.

**Joan Noonan**



# The Nineties

## Year: 1990s

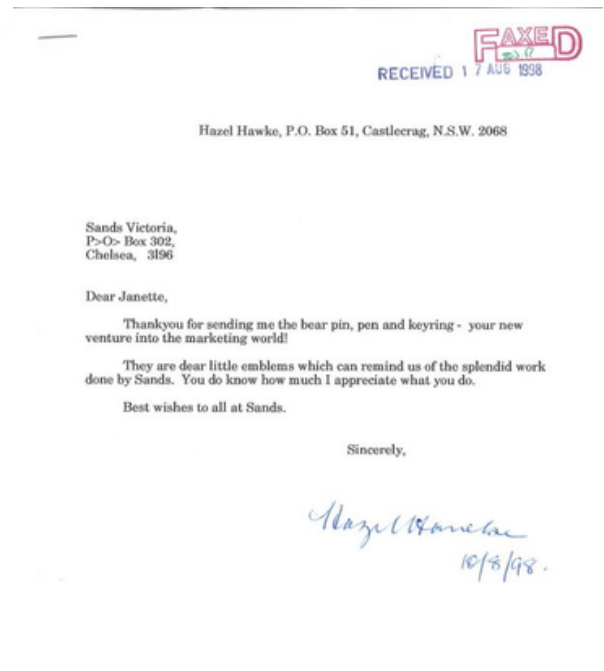
Once we received ongoing funding, I was privileged to be able to be on interview panels to employ staff. It was so important that we chose the right person for Sands.

Once Sands had staff on board we were able to look at and develop national brochures for Sands which would be available to every bereaved parent when their baby died. We were able to look at the area of which we were set up in the beginning – supporting bereaved parents. Bold chat was set up, email services were addressed and of course the facebook page which is a great tool for communicating with followers. Our website had an overhaul and a blog made available for followers to share their own story with Sands.

I wish Sands all the best as it moves forward to new beginnings. The ground roots were set way back in the 1980's by many parents who got together to talk about their baby that died with others who would understand and listen and allow us to say our precious babies names!! Ben will always be with me in my heart. Sands has allowed me to keep his memory alive and make his short life meaningful to me.

### Pauline Allman

Extract from Pauline's reflections as a Sands National Council member



Above: Sands held special significance for the late Hazel Hawke, AO and former Patron of Sands. Her son, Robert James, was only four days old in 1963 when he died.



# The 2000s

Sands Australia:  
Incorporation of the Sands  
Australia Research Fund  
(SARF).

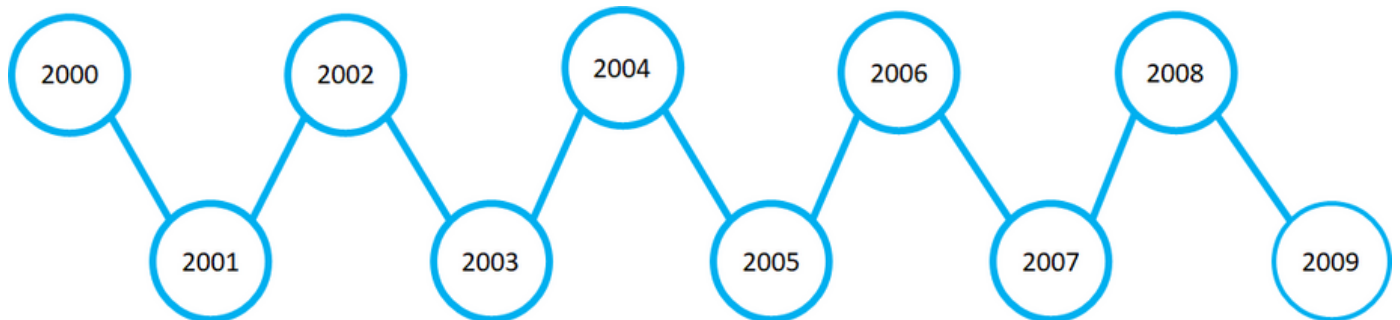
SANDS (Vic) - Registry of  
Births, Deaths and  
Marriages agrees to issue  
certificates for stillborn  
babies prior to 1986.

Sands Australia lobbies Peter  
Costello seeking changes to  
the Census regarding the  
question of how many babies a  
woman has had.

SANDS provides input in the  
development of the first  
Stillbirth and Neonatal  
Guidelines which are  
introduced Australia-wide by  
PSANZ Perinatal Mortality  
Special Interest Group

SANDS (Vic) release the  
Book "Our babies have died:  
Stories of miscarriage,  
stillbirth and neonatal  
death".

Sands Australia meet with  
the Federal Department of  
Health to begin discussions  
on funding a national 1300  
phone support service.



SANDS NSW merge with  
SIDS and Kids NSW and  
leave the SANDS family.

SANDS WA merge with  
SIDS and Kids WA and leave  
the SANDS family.

SANDS (QLD) - on a rainy  
day on the 4th December,  
the team moved into Sands  
House at New Farm.

SANDS (Vic) celebrates  
its 20th birthday  
including a launch of the  
20th Anniversary version  
of "Your baby has died".

October 15th, Pregnancy  
and Infant Loss  
Remembrance Day is  
acknowledged by all  
states.

Sands Australia begins  
lobbying for  
International Pregnancy  
and Infant Loss  
Remembrance Day to be  
recognised by the federal  
and state governments.

Sands Australia: The  
first work is  
undertaken to  
standardise  
bereavement training  
for health  
professionals.

Sands Australia receives  
Deductible Gift  
Recipient (DGR) status.

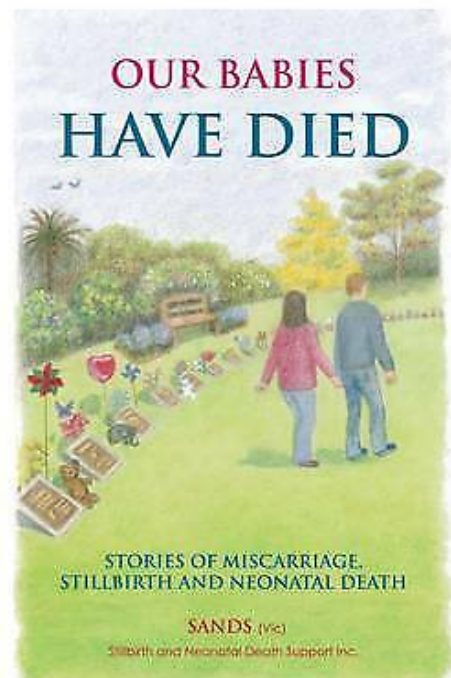


# The 2000s

## Year: 2003

On December 3rd 2003 I lost my son, Aiken. I was given some material by the hospital and a lady from SANDS was one of the first people I spoke to once I could gather my thoughts and emotions. Nearly 18 years on and I am still involved with this amazing organisation which provides support and the ability for me to remember my son. xxx

- Kristy



In 2008, SANDS (Vic) release the Book "Our Babies Have Died: Stories of Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Neonatal Death".

# The 2000s

**Year: 2006**

**State: Queensland**

On March 22 2006, our fourth baby and third daughter Scarlett Perrignon was born sleeping into our world. A grief so profound that in those early days, my husband and I both thought that it could not be real and our beautiful baby would just wake up somehow. I was in my last trimester, and everything was fine until it wasn't. On Monday, after taking our two older children to school, I told a school friend and nurse that I didn't think the baby moved that morning and made an appointment for the next day. I felt fine, and I did not think anything of it as I later recalled thinking I had felt the baby move. The next day at the doctors, I was informed that the Doppler may not be accurate and told to see the obstetrician, who confirmed the worst. Our baby had no heartbeat. We went home and grabbed a bag. Mum drove to the hospital, and we met my husband there - no words. Our baby Scarlett was born very early on March 22nd - no live baby, no sound - no sound.

During the first few weeks, there was only numbness - somehow we organised her funeral - just the five of us, James and I, with Belle, Bill and Little Lizzie, who was just three at the time. We wanted to do things right for Scarlett from the moment she was born.

I called SANDS and cried and cried and cried. I spoke to beautiful Anna, who had lost her baby daughter Caitlin to stillbirth also.

We met at a SANDS coffee morning- my little Lizzie and my mum came with me. They were my rocks during that time along with my sister Sharon and many friends. I went along to many coffee mornings and for a while initiated the Scarlett kisses project with Anna and distributed little picture frames to local hospitals to support other bereaved families with their loss. This continued and I became a phone support listener for almost 9 years only stopping in 2016.

Scarlett would have been 15 now if she was born living. In November 2008 James and I were blessed again with our beautiful healing baby Georgie who is now 12 and full of fun and fabulousness. Scarlett's umbilical cord was simply twisted, not even around her neck, just a simple twist, no way of knowing and almost instant - our lovely obstetrician reminds me that it was not our/my fault and nothing we could have done, some days I still need to remind myself of this fact.

Life is so precious and fickle, embrace every day.

Scarlett is never forgotten in our family and always cherished. xxx love transcends earth  
xx

**- Jen Perrignon**

# 2010 & beyond

Sands Australia receives major federal funding.

A single 1300 line is established across the country, providing peer support 24/7.

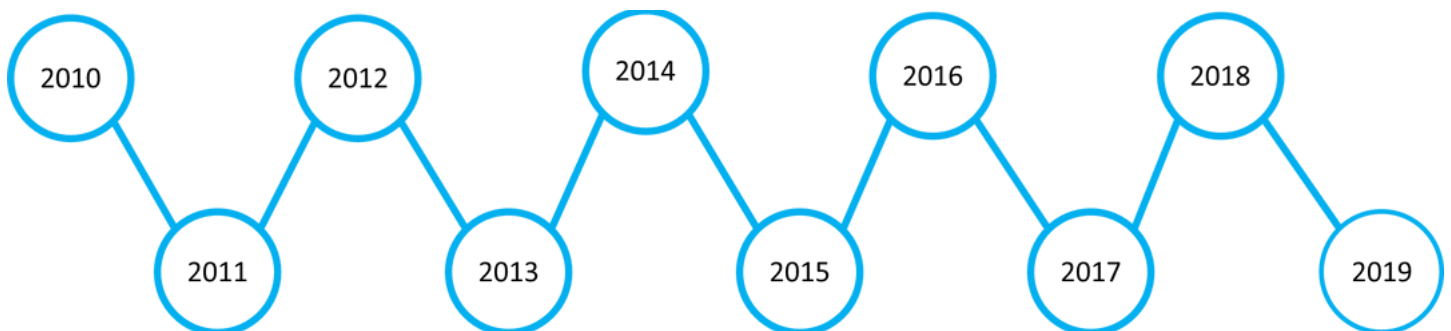
Mobile phones are distributed to all 1300 volunteers.

Sands Australia appoints its first Chief Executive Officer.

Sands WA recommences and again becomes incorporated.

Sands state based organisations vote to unify.

A new Chair is appointed who comes from outside of the organisation to support unification.



The current Sands logo is created, moving the organisation from SANDS to Sands.

The Sands websites are upgraded and relaunched.

The e-learning platform is developed offering a training package for health professionals that can be accessed at any time.

A new set of brochures are launched nationally.

Sands Australia moves to new offices in Box Hill.

The inaugural Sands Strategy 2015-2020 is launched.

Sands (QLD) launches the "Save Sands" campaign following notification from the Department of Health that funding will not continue. After significant lobbying and fundraising, government funding is reinstated.

Sands and Red Nose sign an agreement to join forces with the aim to support more bereaved families across Australia.

Delays in finalising the arrangements occur as a result of Covid-19 in 2020 but the agreement is enacted in November 2020.

# 2010 & beyond

**Year: 2015**

**State: Queensland**

Back in 2015 my wife found Sands QLD. I was unsure how I felt about revisiting the loss of our son back in 1974. However, I have found comfort in attending the volunteering days at Sands House.

I feel I am honouring Christopher in a very meaningful way by being a part of Sands QLD. I feel I am amongst friends who understand the grief in losing a baby and that is very comforting to me.

I feel I can contribute to easing the pain and suffering to our newly bereaved parents by helping put together hospital care packs and other little comforts and information to help them navigate through their traumatised experience and also let them know they are not on their own on their journey, however sad it is.

Garry

**Year: 2016-2018**

**State: Western Australia**

So many wonderful memories from when I first joined Sands in 2016. I attended training at the DHL offices at Perth Airport with a group of ten women. For most of us it was the first time we had been in a room with other bereaved mothers and we were able to share our stories and support each other whilst learning how to support others. One woman shared that her baby boy would have been in his thirties now and it was the first time she had spoken about him since he passed away. Very special.

# 2010 & beyond

**Year: 2017**

**State: South Australia**

I discovered Sands and was quick to jump on board to help support others as I hadn't been. I lost my Lily in November 2009 and had NO knowledge of Sands until 2017. From there, I came to one support group, and never left, volunteering my time and experience until Covid shut us down for face to face support groups. I am forever grateful to Sands for helping me help others. And while the time isn't right for me to be able to commit more, I hold a special place in my heart for Sands, right beside my Lily.

**- Amy**

**Year: 2018**

**State: Queensland and Victoria**

I moved to Mackay and there was a call out for someone to coordinate the Walk to Remember in 2018, otherwise the event might not be able to go ahead. Having volunteered to help with bits and pieces of another organisation's annual walk, I volunteered to take on the role in memory of my firstborn, Skye, born sleeping back in 2012.

It was such a bittersweet moment on the day of the walk, knowing all I had done to put on such a beautiful day for my fellow bereaved parents, but I was really proud to say that I did it! We have since moved back to Melbourne and I have volunteered a number of times (pre-Covid) and it's the least I can do to help others walking the same path, and also help myself in my own journey of grief.



*Friendship Event (QLD) 2019, Pictured below Kate, Caylie (long-time friend of Sands), Sebastien & Ashleigh, Judy (who established Sands QLD in 1983), Liz (former Sands State Manager QLD), Janelle (Sands volunteer 10+ years), Nicole (Chair of the Community Advisory Committee), Sam (who is also on the committee and who facilitates a support group), Kerry (who facilitates the group with Sam) and her husband Anthony.*



# 2010 & beyond

## Year: 2018

### State: South Australia

I am Frieda's mother, she was born in 2018 in Adelaide at 24 weeks.

We left hospital swiftly as I thought recovering faster would make things better sooner. How ignorant was I?

Months later we moved to Brisbane in 2019 and one night, unable to sleep I was googling at 3am searching for answers- why South Australia Births, Deaths and Marriages never issued a birth certificate? I became irritable and anxious. Why didn't I demand one at hospital?

When googling my keys words, it triggered Sands, I stumbled onto the purple website and became curious. How come I never knew about this wonderful platform?

I saw a 24 hour hotline. I snuck into the lounge room and apprehensively dialled. On the other end returned a soft voice. At 3am on the phone, two women, of the same club, spoke gently with each other; I was only three months into my journey, the other years on. Open ears and tears rolling, I was lifted by this women's strength and words. I told her my story. She knew, as she too had felt that same pain, but through this pain she brought kinship and told me this was her way of returning her favour. One day I aspire to be her, to return my strength, I'm not there yet, but I'm on my way.

I owe this lady, to whose face I'll never know, but remember her as "Ruby's mum". She formed part of the Sands I know and respect and am thankful to have been a part of and proudly march under the jacaranda trees in New Farm.

## Year: 2019

### State: Victoria

I remember walking into a room of strangers, a mere week after the neonatal death of our sons Lincoln & Theodore. I couldn't speak, it was too raw, I could only listen to the words of those around me. I found great comfort in hearing their words. I've since been able to share our story and immerse myself in the events, fundraisers and Sands support, in honour of our babies. Thank you Sands for creating a safe space for bereaved families.

- Mel



# 2010 & beyond

**Year: 2019**

**State: ACT/NSW Rural**

I lost my daughter Evie to stillbirth, her heart simply stopped beating with no other explanation found. We lived rurally and got transferred to Canberra, ACT to give birth to my little girl. The whole experience was traumatic beyond words, my heart, our hearts was broken.

Fast forward three months and I was in a terrible place which lead to a place of attempting my own life, it was deep blackness. My friend who had been through a stillbirth put me onto Sands, first the page of experiences, where I was recommended by fellow bereaved mums to access Red Nose Counselling. I did this and the counsellor honestly saved my life with her calmness, communication and perseverance... sometimes I found it hard to pick up the phone but she would simply try again.. I loved her dedication for that! I then accessed the Sands 'Pregnancy After Loss' page when we began to try again. This was so valuable being able to share with mums who knew pregnancy wasn't an anxiety-free journey.

We have our rainbow son now which has been a massive healing aspect on our lives and a direction forwards. I am eternally grateful Sands was there to support this process through the different stages of grief, and the continuing times of grief, joy and remembrance.

**- Kate**



# 2010 & beyond



## Year 2020

With the continuing uncertainty around Covid-19 restrictions we offered Walks to Remember both virtually and in person that catered for local restrictions and circumstances around the country.

We facilitated the second Victorian Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Service in a virtual format due to Covid-19 restrictions in Victoria bringing together over 260 families on the night. The virtual format allowed for families from interstate and regional locations to join the service for the first time on October 15. 'Our Love Lives On' was the theme decided by the planning group of bereaved parents. A separate working group of community members developed a list of Sands Memorial Flowers that were introduced to the community for the first time at the service.

We continued to offer support groups and programs in virtual formats alongside in-person programs (when restrictions permitted) furthering our reach and offering another way for families to access our services. An uptick in participation numbers and new engagement in online support groups, Ways to be Ok forums and our monthly book club was recorded.

Sands worked with Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria to produce a special memorial certificate by which Victorian parents can remember their babies lost before 20 weeks gestation.

The early pregnancy loss commemorative certificate provides parents with recognition of their baby's life, helping them to actualise their loss and acknowledge the grief of their little life lost.

Sands' Western Australian State Coordinator, Till Heike designed the beautiful certificate artwork, using watercolours on birchwood and featuring a pair of helmeted honeyeaters, Victoria's state bird, perching amongst the state flower and other native plants.

## Year: 2020 National

Launched by Sands in 2020, the Hospital to Home pilot program was established in response to grief-stricken parents telling us how devastated they felt returning empty-handed to a home set up for a baby.

Hospital to Home has since provided vital bereavement support to many bereaved families across Australia helping them move through the myriad of difficult tasks associated with the loss of their baby.

The program continues to be offered to families today.



# Financial Statements

**Thank you to Seward Dawson for preparing the Special purpose financial statements for the period ending 29th November 2020 to meet the reporting requirements of the needs of the members.**

As a registered charity with the ACNC our financial statements will be disclosed in the 2020 Annual Information Statement, which was lodged with the ACNC.

Rachel Green - Chair

Nick Xerakias - Deputy Chair

Wayne Faulkner

Lyndy Bowden

Fozia Capela

Kathryn Lieschke

## Board of Directors

# Acknowledgements

**Our grateful thanks to the many volunteers and staff who have worked tirelessly over the the past 40+ years. Your heartfelt contributions led to a national organisation serving bereaved parents right across Australia.**

On the 29th November 2020, Sands - Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Newborn Death Support Limited merged with Red Nose Limited to form one organisation.

With arms linked we continue to work to deliver high quality bereavement care and raise awareness across the country of the heartbreaking impact of miscarriage, stillbirth and newborn death.

Both Sands and Red Nose were founded by bereaved parents who wanted to ensure families received support following the death of a baby.

Sharing a long history, similar values, and a shared vision for the future, we recognise that together we can continue to be there for families, to provide opportunities to remember and honour their baby, connect with other bereaved families and give hope for the future.



*Reuniting at the 2020 Sands Walk to Remember at New Farm QLD, these families first met in 1997 at a Sands support group in Ipswich.*



*Heart Strings is a new membership program from Red Nose and Sands – made with love specially for bereaved families.*

