

When excitement turns to devastation

When Sarah and her husband Nick learnt they were expecting a boy, their three daughters, Scout, Ella and Bridie, were very excited. Together, the girls helped decide on a name, counting the days until their little brother Hudson was born.

“Scout would teach him how to paint, Ella how to kick a ball, and Bridie was looking forward to having someone close to her age to spend more time with.”

At 36 weeks, Sarah woke to complete stillness. To ease her worries, the whole family headed off to the hospital for a scan. Together, they would discover the terrible news that Hudson had died.

In moments, a family’s happiness was shattered. Sarah and Nick were now not only trying to comprehend the death of their son, they also had to help their three little girls through their first experience of death.

“It was so quick, so simple, so utterly devastating—we never had a chance to fight for him, he was already gone.”
It was incredibly hard.

“You’re still in shock, yet you have these important decisions to make. I’m so glad that we had guidance from SIDS and Kids. As we look back now, we feel at ease with the decisions we made during a really heartbreaking moment.”

“Scout got to hold her little brother and Ella and Bridie got to touch him. It was important to me that they got to see he was real.”

Sadly, their family is not alone. In Australia, six babies die every day from stillbirth. Up to 30% of stillbirths, like Hudson’s death, are unexplained.

At SIDS and Kids, along with offering our professional bereavement services to many families, we support vital research into stillbirth, SIDS, and safe sleeping practices in the hope of one day delivering answers for families.

With 3,500 sudden or unexplained infant deaths each year, there are many families who urgently need our help.

Couples like Sarah and Nick are really grateful for the help they receive, especially for their kids.

For children like Scout, Ella and Bridie, it is helping them to understand their brother’s death and guide them through the many feelings it brings.

It’s very important.

Shortly after Hudson’s death, Sarah and her daughters began meeting with Denise, a SIDS and Kids counsellor.

Having Denise to help the children understand is a big relief for Sarah. “It’s hard when you’re dealing with your own grief, but you want your kids to be able to feel as though they can talk about their feelings without upsetting you. To have someone like Denise, whom I can call whenever, means so much. I cannot tell you how much it has meant to my family.”

Nick has also benefitted from the group sessions with other parents: “I can’t explain why it gives you so much relief to know that you’re not alone, but it does.”

Through your support, we are able to give more parents and siblings access to our professional bereavement services and grief counselling and make a positive difference to families dealing with the most devastating loss. This professional assistance really helps both the parents and the siblings through the weeks, months and years that follow.

Your generosity has a lasting impact on families like Sarah and Nick’s.

Scout, Ella and Bridie with Hudson



Note for your diary

A feature on the SIDS and Kids calendar each year is the Ritchie Centre Colloquium and the Kaarene Fitzgerald Public Lecture. Over the past few years, we have been privileged to hear some distinguished researchers and leaders in the field of SIDS and infant morbidity and mortality.

Put **Monday 9 November** into your diaries – as yet, details of our speaker and topic are to be announced but we know it will be an interesting and informative evening as always.



Kaarene Fitzgerald

New Community Room for the west

The Royal Perth Golf Club (RPGC) has supported SIDS and Kids in Western Australia with \$25,000 in funding for a new Community Room and teleconference equipment. The RPGC holds an annual charity golf day at which it raises funds to assist local community groups.

The new room will offer the Western Australian community free access to bereavement and education resources such as bereavement and healthy pregnancy and healthy baby literature, a children's corner and training room facilities.

The new teleconference equipment will enable SIDS and Kids to have the capacity to provide education and support to rural and remote communities and hospitals in Western Australia. This will significantly impact the Reducing the Risk of SIDS in Aboriginal Communities program and bereavement support networks where previously the capacity to visit remote communities has been every two years.

SIDS and Kids is immensely grateful to the Royal Perth Golf Club for their generous funds and support.



L to R: Mr Terry Andrews – Royal Perth Golf Club, Natalie Paull – SIDS and Kids WA, Mr Wilf Sonntag – Royal Perth Golf Club.



Way out west...

For our West Australian supporters, you can also be **'in it to win it!'**

Just ask Kira from Trigg who was the lucky winner of \$18,000 in our last WA Raffle.

Tickets are on sale for the next Raffle in early April so for your chance to **'be in it'**, call 08 9474 3544 for more details.

High octane action on the Lake



Speedy Eade over the line

Up Kerang way in early March, the air over Lake Charm was filled with the roar of horse power and the 'sweet' aroma of high octane fuel as high powered outboards fought it out with the inboard boys who came along to join the fun this year.

Held in memory of Archer Eade, who died in 2008, the Victorian Outboard Club runs this annual event as a fundraiser for SIDS and Kids. A lot of hard graft by club member, John Cooper and his lovely sidekick, Kelly, and Sue and Paul Eade, with their fantastic team from the Club and local Kerang businesses who so generously donated auction items and time, made the night before a memorable evening.

Curiosity piqued, one of our staffers, who went along for a first hand view herself, was warmly included in all the fun and it was both humbling and exciting to see how enthusiastic and generous those VOC members – and their inboard rivals – are! They exceeded their own expectations and auctions, raffles and donations totalled over \$20,000 towards the important work we do. Such a wonderful effort!

It was fitting that the signature race of the day, Archer Eade Memorial, was again won by Archer's dad Paul. Speedy Eade, as he is known, gave the spectators a heart-stopper during a previous race when he shot around one turn at 6.98 g (that's g for g-force!). Rumour has it that fighter pilots hit 7 – that Speedy is one pretty nifty bloke.

Next year will no doubt see a whole squad of SIDS and Kids staff cheering on these magnificent men in their mean machines!



Raising the \$\$\$

Lynette completes Rottnest swim for SIDS and Kids



Lynette Hewitt

It takes a very brave woman to tackle the waters between Cottesloe Beach and Rottnest Island at the best of times; it takes a real hero not only to cross once but swim the return leg.

Lynette Hewitt completed her solo swim of nearly 40 km on 7 March to raise awareness and much needed funds for SIDS and Kids in memory of her beautiful nephew Vaalen, who died just shy of his third birthday.

Lynette reached her goal of \$40,000, but if you would still like to contribute to her tally visit <https://rednoseday2015.everydayhero.com/au/lynettehewitt-hotmail-com>.

Raffle Milestone

When Raffle 98 was drawn just before Santa slid down the chimney, Pamela from Brighton was thrilled when she learnt a Coles/Myer Gift Card for \$20,000 was coming her way!

Raffle 99 is being drawn soon so we will be ringing one happy ticket holder with some very good news!

The big question is – who will be the very fortunate person to win our special 100th Raffle to be drawn in June?

To make sure it's you, call 03 9222 2926 to get your tickets!

Be in it to win it!!



A man with a van

Much excitement at Red Nose Goes Green now we have two new vans all decked out with our Red Nose Goes Green signage!

Through the generosity of IVECO's support, our man, Dion, and his new side kick, will be out and about in their spiffy vans collecting unwanted clothing, household goods and bric-a-brac which all goes to help support the work SIDS and Kids does in the community.

A special thank you goes to Susie Fitch Design and Form A Sign for their wonderful input, too.

So, if you see our Red Nose Goes Green van, give us a wave! Even better, if you have something to donate, call on 1300 473 366 or drop off your donations to us at any of the following sites:

Chirnside Park Shopping Centre,
Parkmore Shopping Centre,
Dandenong Plaza and Head Office –
1227 Malvern Rd, Malvern.



Driver Dion shows off his new van

Naptime in Child Care



The SIDS and Kids Infant Safe Sleeping Child Care Kit

Babies spend a lot of their time sleeping.

Recently there have been deaths in child care associated with infants in a sleeping environment. These stories in the media can be confronting for us and they raise concerns. Is my Child Care Centre following the SIDS and Kids recommendations? Do they have policies and practices that reflect these?

Some sleeping arrangements are not safe. Each year SIDS and fatal sleep accidents claim the lives of many babies as a result of unsafe sleeping practices that could have been avoided. Those caring for

other people's children have a responsibility to ensure that children in care are safe at all times.

The SIDS and Kids Infant Safe Sleeping Child Care Kit has been developed to provide information and resources with a regular e-newsletter containing updates, new research and resources, training, relevant safety news, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Ask if your Child Care Centre is aware of Safe Sleeping guidelines – if not, let them know the Child Care Kit can be ordered online from www.sidsandkidsshop.org



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Closing the gap...

This headline has been in the news of late as the Federal Government report on disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians was received on both sides of the political divide with dismay and "profound disappointment".

To quote one politico, there were a couple of "green shoots" in the report and it is heartening to see that the reduction in the under 5 mortality within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, one of SIDS and Kids long term goals, is on target to be halved by 2018.

However, despite reductions in the under 5 mortality, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant mortality (babies less than 12 months of age) does not appear to be on track with 2018 targets.

One project, led by Professor Jeanine Young from the University of the Sunshine Coast and her team of dedicated researchers, is a trial of a safe sleep enabler to reduce the risk of sudden unexpected deaths in infancy in high risk environments.

It is common practice amongst many indigenous cultures around the world to sleep with their baby. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in Australia, co-sleeping with their baby is a normal and valued cultural practice. Co-sleeping has many benefits; however, it is associated with a risk of sudden infant death in certain circumstances.

Despite remarkable reductions since the introduction of SIDS and Kids safe sleeping campaigns some twenty years ago, SIDS still remains the major cause of death for babies aged one month to one year in Australia. Sadly, this continues to be reflected within our Indigenous population, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies three times more likely to die during infancy than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian babies.

Because of the cultural importance for many Indigenous parents that is attributed to sharing sleep with their baby, finding a culturally appropriate strategy that reduces the risks is paramount to closing the gap in infant mortality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Professor Young and her team are focussing on a solution – support for parents and protection for the baby through investigating the benefits of the Pēpi-pod. A baby lying on their back in a Pēpi-pod sleep space, regardless of whether they are placed in, or on, an adult bed, on a couch or away from home, is better protected from environmental hazards whilst remaining in close proximity to their parent. Breaking the 'smoking and bed-sharing' combination is a major benefit of the Pēpi-pod.

"Innovative strategies which allow for the benefits of bed-sharing, respect cultural norms and infant care practices, whilst enabling the infant to sleep in a safe environment are absolutely necessary if a reduction is to be seen in the incidence of SUDI amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Australia", writes Professor Young.

The primary study aim is to determine the acceptability of the Pēpi-pod Program, a portable infant sleep space embedded within safe sleep health promotion, amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland. To date, indications are positive and results from the Pēpi-pod program have demonstrated that the pod has been accepted as a portable sleep space for infants and used appropriately by parents living in metropolitan, regional and rural/remote areas of Queensland. Responses relating to the use, acceptability, convenience and safety of the infant sleep space were encouraging.

Active engagement with government and non-government organisations who have integrated the Program into current service delivery illustrates feasibility and long-term sustainability of the program. Professor Young points out that health services have a responsibility to follow through from simply informing about safe infant sleep practice to enabling safe infant sleep action.

Evaluating innovative and culturally respectful strategies to reduce risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy will better inform the evidence-base used by educators, clinicians, researchers and policy makers in supporting parents to use safe infant sleeping strategies for all Australian parents.



Pēpi-pod

Reducing the Risk of SIDS in Aboriginal Communities

Initiated in 2005 due to the continuing and unacceptably high infant mortality rate attributed to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in Aboriginal Communities, the Reducing the Risk of SIDS in Aboriginal Communities (RROSIAC) program raises awareness of the risk factors associated with SIDS and sleeping accidents. It also provides culturally appropriate resources and education programs to reduce the rate of sudden infant sleep related deaths among Aboriginal babies in Western Australia.

The program is delivered by Aboriginal staff and, working together with Aboriginal communities, encourages the adoption of culturally appropriate safe sleeping practices when caring for babies and young children. Through the use of the RROSIAC Training Resource and distribution of the RROSIAC Safe Sleeping resources, the RROSIAC staff educates community and spreads the safe sleeping message.

Trend data from the Western Australian Maternal and Child data collected over the 15 year period 1992 to 2006 indicated that the Aboriginal infant mortality rate was 8 times greater than non-Aboriginal infants. This unacceptably



high rate of deaths strongly suggested that the health promotion and education messages targeting risk factors at that time were not reaching Aboriginal families, and this provided impetus to the RROSIAC project.

Since its inception RROSIAC has met the challenges of the diverse geographical regions and Aboriginal language groups of Western Australia with recent infant mortality data indicating a 4% decrease in the rate of sudden unexpected death in infancy in Aboriginal babies.

In Victoria, to date two large studies looking at the patterns and trends in Aboriginal child mortality have culminated in reports which offer a number of recommendations aimed at closing the disparities in infant deaths

in the Aboriginal population. Undertaken by Assoc. Prof. Jane Freemantle who was also involved in studies which resulted in the RROSIAC program being implemented in WA, the Victorian studies identified that the risk of death in the first year of life for Aboriginal children remains twice as high as that for non-Aboriginal babies. Of these deaths, the major cause was SIDS. The gap in the risk of death due to SIDS has more than doubled for Victorian Aboriginal infants than non-Aboriginal infants.

A number of valuable recommendations have arisen from these six year studies including the development of a collaborative working group to reduce SIDS, fatal sleep accidents and other preventable deaths in Aboriginal infants.

SIDS and Kids looks forward to working closely with key stakeholders including VACCHO and the Department of Health Victoria on a raft of strategies including policy, resources and education aimed at reducing the risk of sudden and unexpected deaths in Aboriginal infants.

Red Nose Day Memorial Service 2015

Wednesday 24th June, 2015

Call SIDS and Kids Lilyfield Office on 8585 8700 for further information

Red Nose Day Remembering Service 2015

Friday 26th June, 2015

St Michael's Uniting Church, Cnr Collins and Russell Streets, MELBOURNE

Call SIDS and Kids Malvern Office on 8888 1600 for further information

If I could save time in a bottle ...

(in the words of Jim Croce), ... *the first thing that I'd like to do is to save every day 'til eternity passes away just to spend them with you ...*

That most precious of commodities, *Time*, was the theme for Hope Bereavement Care's Annual Remembering Service in December. This theme, the focus for our Children's Memory Mornings, was carried through the year with photos from these mornings on display. Upon arrival families had the opportunity to help their children create their own cuckoo-style clock in keeping with the Service's theme.

The evening showed how themes of time can comfort and strengthen bereaved parents in the midst of a life that they didn't expect. Those attending seemed most impacted by the personal stories that were shared and moved by the opportunity to light a candle in memory of their baby/child who has died.

A wonderful way to end the year.



Cuckoo clock

On the wings of a dove



Doves

In Sydney, over 200 family and friends did not let the heavy rain deter them from remembering their beloved children in early December at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta.

Led by Father Robert Bossini, St Patrick's Dean, the service's theme centred on Love, Hope and Peace. This was beautifully represented by the mementos of pure white doves lovingly made by staff and others.

With Christmas close at hand, it was fitting that carols sang by the members of the Cathedral Choir filled the Cathedral with glorious harmonies. Friends of the SIDS and Kids Lilyfield – Alison McDonald, Susan Clarke and Neil Cohen – gave readings and at evening's end, all gathered for refreshments in the Cathedral Hall.

When the night is long

Things can often seem darkest in the quiet of the night and SIDS and Kids is always only a call away to comfort bereaved parents during those long, lonely hours.

Our 24 Hour Support Line has trained staff and volunteers on call to provide support and February saw a new batch of Parent Supporters undertake this training in our Malvern office.

Having Parent Supporters, who are themselves bereaved parents, makes a real difference to those on the other end of the phone – and we are so grateful to these remarkable volunteers for what they do so selflessly.



After Hours Training

Moving on out, moving on in

After our Treasured Babies' Program Centre was damaged by flooding last year, the Centre moved premises to another shop in the Shopping Centre in Mooroolbark.

One of our great strengths is the dedication of our volunteers – no better demonstrated than coming together to make our new Centre fully operational. From our volunteer Centre Coordinator and TBP committee to volunteers from Rotary Croydon and the Croydon Men's shed plus many others, the move highlighted how people working together can achieve great things.

At the end of last year, we held our first sewing day – what a great success! This email received a few days later underlines the intangible value that, not only volunteering, but giving families a choice in ways they can honour their precious children, provides to the families, the organisation and the community.

"I just wanted to say how wonderfully healing Saturday's sewing workshop was. To be surrounded by lovely people for such a special purpose made my heart sing..."

After my son died I was so desperate to dedicate some time making something to honour him and knew this process would be healing.

I think many bereaved parents would really benefit from making these clothes. They don't need to be able to sew, they can cut, iron, make the tiny teddies and just sit within a room of other parents that have had a similar experience of loss and through this, feel less alone."

Another day is coming soon so if you are a keen sewer, please contact Lisa Gelbart on 03 8888 1608 for more details.



Stitch by stitch

Calling all volunteers – come join in the fun of Red Nose Day

We would love as many as possible to join us on Red Nose Day in the CBD – Melbourne, Sydney and Perth – to sell our fabulous Red Nose Day merchandise!

We meet at 7am and brighten up the winter morning for those rushing to work – nothing like a red nose to blow those commuter blues away!

If you would like to be a Red Nose Day Footsquad member, please contact Jenny Clarke at jenny.clarke@sidsandkidseastcoast.org



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