



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## When the SANDS of time won't heal

Non-profit organisation SANDS Victoria (miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death support) has an Older Loss Group that this July marks its fifteenth year helping parents who suffered the loss of a stillborn or newborn baby many years ago.

Around 25 to 50 years ago, if your baby was stillborn or died soon after birth you may have been told to forget him or her and 'go home and have another'. Unlike today, it was not common practice to see or hold the baby, most parents had no knowledge of the baby's resting place, no ritual or permission to grieve and may not have been told their baby's gender.

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

SANDS Victoria's Older Loss Group is unique in that it provides peer support to these families, helping acknowledge their baby's birth and claim their right to grieve. The first of its kind in Australia, the SANDS (Vic) Older Loss Support Group began in 1996 as a result of many older loss parents contacting SANDS at the time. This led to a community meeting and the later formation of the group.

SANDS is comprised of parents who've experienced the loss of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, or shortly after birth and has a near 30-year history of offering peer support to parents grieving such a loss. Importantly, all parent-supporters are trained volunteers who have been through similar experiences.

"Grief must be acknowledged and expressed otherwise it stays with us and can affect our self-esteem, our health and the way we age," said Lynne Vago, one of SANDS' older loss coordinators.

Sharing stories helps validate the person's experience and draws them into a community of support, helping them gain a sense of inner peace. The group offers mutual support, makes no judgements and provides a space to mourn.

"Eventually individuals feel empowered to make their own decisions regarding their lost child and we have had many stories of grief, healing and joy which we have been privileged to share."

The group has helped many members find their babies' resting place and go on to hold commemorations with family and friends. Over the years, commemorations have been arranged at various cemeteries across Melbourne, as well as beautifications such as landscaping and the placement of plaques at communal graves.

SANDS believes it is never too late to grieve and now is an opportune time for senior citizens who experienced this tragedy to take steps to find their baby's resting place.

"We would like to offer support to these parents before it's too late."

If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested in SANDS' Older Loss Support Group, please contact SANDS on 13 000 SANDS (13 000 72637) or visit [www.sandsvic.org.au](http://www.sandsvic.org.au)

Should you need support following a recent miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death, SANDS understands and has parent-supporters who've been through similar experiences ready to listen and provide support.

- ENDS -

**For further information or to arrange an interview contact:**

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