

# MEDIA RELEASE



*For immediate release*

4 May 2011

## **In memory of babies who left this life too soon**

On Sunday 15 May 2011, SANDS Victoria will hold its non-denominational annual memorial service in Melbourne. SANDS is a non-profit support organisation comprised of parents who've experienced the loss of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, or shortly after birth. Held at 1.45pm at the Marwal Centre, 9 Marwal Avenue North Balwyn, the service provides an opportunity for those who've experienced such a loss to honour the memory of their baby - and is often attended by friends and family in support.

The service is open to people from all municipalities. Guests are invited to collect a sprig of rosemary in remembrance, light candles, and write a message in memory of their baby on a card to be placed on display. Heartfelt readings from bereaved parents will be shared, candles lit and babies' names read out. Six candles will be lit in honour of babies who have died, each representing part of the journey that grieving parents travel: grief, courage, love, hope and memory - with the sixth candle representing the importance of SANDS' support. A minute's silence will be held for reflection.

SANDS offers peer-to-peer support to parents grieving the loss of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth or shortly after birth. Importantly, all parent-supporters are trained volunteers who have been through similar experiences. Parent supporters provide immediate and ongoing support to bereaved parents, families and friends through phone support, monthly group support meetings and an Older Loss group for women who experienced their loss many years ago. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can assist parents to recognise that the intense grief that follows the death of a baby is normal.

According to Dr Penny Brabin, SANDS psychologist and Adjunct Research Fellow at the School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine at Monash Medical Centre, peer-to-peer bereavement support is important because it provides grief support from those who truly understand. This can help minimise grief-related problems for parents and families later down the track.

"Peer-to-peer support facilitates healthy grief in an understanding environment, making use of the natural human experience as a resource," said Dr Brabin.

"This helps normalise rather than pathologise grief, demonstrating to parents that their grief is normal.

"It's important to ensure that grief is not hidden behind closed doors - and to know that understanding support is available from parents who have been there themselves."

If you need support following a miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death, call a SANDS parent phone-supporter on 13 000 SANDS (13 000 72637) or visit [www.sandsvic.org.au](http://www.sandsvic.org.au)

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