



Media Release

Australia's leading grief and bereavement counselling service launches telehealth virtual counselling

15 August 2019

As technology plays an increasingly vital role in the delivery of health services for all Australians, the [Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement](http://www.grief.org.au) is leveraging technology to better meet peoples' needs through a national online telehealth bereavement counselling service.

The service, offering clients access to a specialist bereavement counsellor in a virtual setting via computer, iPhone or smart phone, or tablet, is the first of its kind in Australia.

The Centre's Chief Executive Officer, Christopher Hall, said that while telehealth services have been operational in Australia for some time, this is the first time a designated specialist bereavement counselling service has been made available to all Australians right across the country.

"Access to bereavement services can be challenging for people because of distance or disability, or even a reluctance to make others in their world aware that they're seeking support," Mr Hall said.

"This initiative is about equity – no matter where someone is located, they can get personalised access to high-quality support from qualified bereavement specialists."

"Telehealth is therefore convenient for regional and remote parts of the country, but there are also many people who, just as a matter of preference, prefer the privacy of their own home or room to access the services of a bereavement counsellor."

Mr Hall said that the national telehealth service gives people control over the setting and context of their own counselling.

"We see a significant change in peoples' quality of life when they can work through their grief effectively, so we're always looking for new ways to help them do that."

"This is not a substitute for real counselling – this *is* real counselling, in real time, with qualified experts."

Funded by the Victorian Government, the Centre's telehealth service will be free of charge for Victorian residents, and will incur a small fee for anyone outside of Victoria.

"We want to reduce the barriers of geography, but also the barriers of cost," Mr Hall said.

The telehealth counselling service can be accessed through (03) 9265 2100 or info@grief.org.au.

About the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB) is the largest provider of grief and bereavement education in Australia. The independent, not for profit organisation opened in

January 1996, and received operational funding through the Palliative Care Program of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to build the capacity of individuals, organisations and communities in order to enhance well-being following adverse life events.

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