

# Expressions

**W**elcome to our Autumn edition of Expressions.

If you are a bereaved parent reading this newsletter for the first time, please be assured that you are not alone and we are here to provide support at any time.

Thank you to all those who have attended our support groups over the last few months. We are privileged to hear your baby's stories and to provide a space for shared support.

Christmas and New Year seem such a long time ago, and the sun is setting on our fantastic summer. It is hard to believe that the official start of autumn is just around the corner.

Autumn is the season of remembrance containing both Anzac Day and Mother's Day.

We appreciate that as a bereaved parent Mother's Day can come with its challenges. Sadly, you may be a bereaved mum or no longer have your mum around.

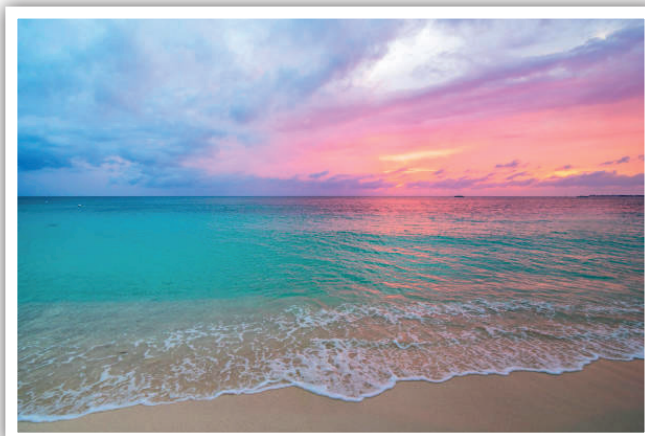
All of us will no doubt have someone in mind for who this day will be just a little harder to get through because they are missing an important child or mum in their life. Reach out and let them know they are being thought of.

The greatest gift you can give to a bereaved mum on Mother's Day is remembrance.

***Your Sands Auckland Committee  
Tania, Sara, Linda and Andy***

#### Note to our readers:

Many of the writings featured in our newsletter are the personal narrative of our readers. These, in their entirety or part, may not be printed elsewhere without permission. The nature of these 'stories' is very personal and has not been edited, therefore the views expressed may not necessarily be those of Sands Auckland. Where possible we have acknowledged the original source of all material/information used in Expressions.



## DATES TO NOTE

### Support Group Meetings

1st Thursday of each month  
4th March  
1st April  
6th May  
3rd June  
7.15pm – 8.45pm  
YMCA Mt Albert,  
773 New North Road,  
Mt Albert  
In the Garlick Room  
(to the left of  
reception desk)  
Parents & Whanau  
(adults only)

## YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your poems, reflections and personal stories for inclusion in our newsletter. The deadline for our next edition is 21st May 2021.

Please forward your submissions to: [info@sandsauckland.org.nz](mailto:info@sandsauckland.org.nz)

## CONTACT US:

[www.sandsauckland.org.nz](http://www.sandsauckland.org.nz)  
[info@sandsauckland.org.nz](mailto:info@sandsauckland.org.nz)

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0508 SANDSA (72 63 72)

Online Summer School, Dec 2020/Jan 2021

Over the summer Vicki Culling presented an online summer school for midwifery students nationwide. This was a series of 4 x 1 hour (free) online webinars where students learnt about baby loss. In each session there was Sands representation, and it was beneficial on so many levels. It was a great opportunity to be able to share experience and knowledge from a bereaved parent's perspective, for midwives to learn from bereaved parents, and for us as Sands to raise awareness. This was a new and exciting avenue to be a part of and a great success given the feedback Vicki received, and we look forward to the possibility of more in the future.

## PMMRC Results

The PMMRC have just released the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Perinatal and Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

Since 2007, the PMMRC has reported on the deaths of babies and mothers in Aotearoa New Zealand. The PMMRC is appointed by the Health Quality & Safety Commission.

## The PMMRC:

- reviews the deaths of babies born from 20 weeks of pregnancy up until 28 days after birth
- reviews the deaths of all mothers who die at any stage during pregnancy, or in the six weeks after childbirth
- looks at information about the pregnancy and birth, and findings of medical tests to try and understand why a baby or mother died.

This incredibly important work is needed to support and improve how the maternity system works and the way things are done.

The report highlights that urgent action is needed to address ongoing inequity in the maternity sector in Aotearoa. Babies of Maori, Pacific and Indian mothers are still more likely than babies of New Zealand European mothers to die in pregnancy or within the first 28 days. There was an overall reduction of babies dying in pregnancy and in the first week following birth in Aotearoa New Zealand between 2007 and 2018. However, the report describes the lack of progress for some groups as 'unacceptable'.

Disappointingly around half of the recommendations made by the PMMRC over the past 13 years have yet to be implemented fully. Recommendations include investing in maternal and infant mental health and creating an appropriate and equitable national perinatal bereavement pathway. Sands NZ are committed to demanding DHB's and government departments ensure the safety of pregnant women and babies by implementing the PMMRC recommendations. Our pepi and mothers who have died, and whose information has been used to formulate these reports, deserve to be honoured by improving our maternity care.

# Key findings for the maternal sector from the PMMR's 14th annual report

***Nga kaitianga matua e pa mā te kōwhiri whakahaunga i te piroonga 3-tau 14 o te PMMRC***

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## Our Vision

Te mahi kahi puta noa i te pinohia kua roa rawa ai a matua, e whārua ngā mātāmua e ā rātau pūgā, whānau hoki mā te tīngi matahi, whānau rangai e tāua te tīra.

Working together across the system towards zero preventable deaths or harm for all mothers and babies, families and whānau.

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## Perinatal death prevention

**Safely, by 2024 reduce perinatal deaths by 50%**

from 20 weeks of pregnancy until 27 days of age

The PMMR continues to ask for breast and/or feed to be supplemented with **Iwiti ahi**, as this has been shown to reduce the number of neonatal blood defects (a type of congenital anomaly).

## Congenital abnormalities are the leading cause of deaths in babies.

District health boards (DHBs) and primary care providers to provide active navigational support for women to feed and register their child to avoid maternity care with minimal delay!

Routine early antenatal care should meet clinical and cultural needs and should include attention to modifiable risk factors such as supporting whānau to become smokefree and screening for other health conditions such as diabetes, sexually transmitted infections and urinary tract infections.

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## After-death care

Around 30% of precious babies who died had a full post-mortem (autopsy) examination afterwards, which is the investigation that provides the fullest possible information for whānau/family about why their baby died.

No women who chose a full post-mortem examination reported her decision. 10% of her decided later regretted the loss of opportunity to understand more about their baby's death?

**30% completed full mortuary exam**

Reasons why they would benefit
Understand what happened
Communicate with a religious centre
Cool

promptly when appropriate

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## Neonatal encephalopathy

Around three-quarters of babies with neonatal encephalopathy are coded to help reduce brain damage. To be most effective, coding should be based on **diagnoses of birth** – this only opened for 80% of babies who received coding.

## Maternal death

The PMMR recommends that a Maternal and Infant Mental Health Network is funded by the Ministry of Health and includes those areas of priority:

- a stock take of current mental health services available across Aotearoa New Zealand for present and recently pregnant women to identify both the strengths of services and gaps or inequity in current services and skills in the workforce
- a national pathway for accessing maternal mental health services, including:
  - culturally safe services, including access to kaupapa Māori mental health and maternity services and the provision of appropriate screening care for wāhine/women who are or have been in the mental health system
  - communication and coordination,

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## Tragically, on average nearly 10 women die each year either during pregnancy, or soon after the baby is born. Post-mortem helps us to understand how we can improve care in the future.

Researcher, University of Auckland, says: "The importance of understanding our past to improve our future."

Dr. Sarah-Jane Gray, Director of Research, says: "We need to understand our past to improve our future."

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**New Zealand Government**

Sands Auckland is a charitable entity -  
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Thank you to all who support our group...

COGS Auckland City,  
Go Digital, Good Bitches  
Baking and the kind  
individuals who have  
made donations & held  
fundraisers.

We survive on grants and donations and greatly appreciate any gesture of support. If you would like to make a donation please send your cheque to us at Sands Auckland Central Inc. or visit our website for internet banking details.

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# Sands

## Sharing Our Story

Hi there, I'm Sam. Mum to our beautiful daughter Honor Nolene, who was Stillborn at 34 weeks on September 11th 2019 and to baby River, who we lost to a First Trimester Miscarriage during the Level 4 lockdown on April 10th 2020.

With the support of Sands Auckland Central, we have since been navigating our way through what is our reality and our grief journey.

The day we found out our daughter had died my husband and I instantly knew that we would forever speak Honor's name. In fact, the day she was born, while cuddled up in our arms, we made a promise to our girl right then and there that we would never shy away from sharing her story, even as hard as it may be to sometimes do, as a way to help make change, educate and raise awareness. It was hard enough trying to explain what stillbirth meant to those around us and so when we lost our second little love, it made it even harder for those around us to comprehend what had happened and so without even a second thought, we knew we had to be open about this too. Miscarriage is no one day event. We weren't just "only" eight weeks pregnant, we were already eight weeks pregnant. This baby was our new hope after loss, this was our baby. Deserving of a name and not another label. This was our baby, River. We have spoken their names and their journeys ever since.

From this, I was presented an opportunity and was invited by Sands Auckland to come and stand before a number of medical professionals from varying hospital departments as part of a Women's Health study day, and share what has been our journey that is baby loss, with an emphasis on Miscarriage care. When asked, I felt as though I didn't even need to think twice about it and I just jumped at the chance to do this not only for our family, but for other families of loss too.

Having never done this before, I did go in feeling nervous, with sweaty palms and shaky hands only to find that when it was actually my turn to speak that all suddenly went away. I instead found my voice, and I just spoke. I spoke proudly of our River and where possible, of our Honor too for after all, how can I possibly be afraid of our journey? It's ours. The facts in it, are our truth.

As I shared what has been our experience and journey over this past year, I saw their compassion, their body language and their understanding. I saw those in the room empathise right along with me,

I saw them process what I was openly sharing with them and I saw them reflect on my spoken words. I heard them ask; How can they help make a difference? How do they be the change? and I heard them ask; What are the things that can be done differently to help the next family that they may come across? I felt respected. I felt validated. I felt heard.

On this day, I was able to speak to several medical professionals for once not as a patient, but rather as an educator and as someone who also recognises that it's not only the families of loss who have to journey, but that they as medical professionals do too. It was great to have open conversation where genuine questions could be asked in a safe space from both sides, to

help educate and make a very much needed change when it comes to supporting and recognising families of loss.

I felt empowered, to this day I still do, that I have been able to be a voice within the space that is baby loss. This is why our family speak so openly about our journey. Our babies don't have a voice to speak what was their life, but we do, and I know that Mama has done them both proud. And so, our journey continues.

**Samantha Chacko**



*Mother's Day is a day of  
appreciation and respect  
I can think of no mother's  
who deserve it more, than  
those that had to  
give a child back*

*- Erma Bombeck -*

