

Compassionate BUNBURY Toolkit

June 2023

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Wardandi Noongar people, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the City of Bunbury.



growing
ComPaSSion



Department of Health

BUNBURY

is the heart of the South West

where living and dying is everyone's business

This draft Toolkit aims to provide inspiration for how you, or the organisations you are part of, can grow Compassion. Together we will make Bunbury an even more Compassionate city to live, work, play and die in.

Ten key themes were identified as central to growing Compassion in the **Compassionate Bunbury Charter** and form the key action areas addressed in this Toolkit.



Ideas for taking action were offered by people who participated in local workshops and from the work undertaken by other Compassionate Communities around the world.

COMPASSION. We respond with humanity and kindness to each person's pain, distress, anxiety or need. We search for the things we can do, however small, to give comfort and relieve suffering. We find time for those we serve and work alongside. We do not wait to be asked, because we care. (National Health Service, 2010)

Building our capacity to give and receive

Mobilising networks of care

We have a greater sense of being loved, cared for, listened to and supported.

We live in a community where people show kindness, understanding and compassion towards everyone.

We are a resilient community that can sit with our vulnerabilities.

What we would see and experience in our community:

We ask for help.

We are comfortable to offer help.

Practical care and emotional support are available.

TAKING ACTION



Individual

RECEIVE

- If you are affected by illness, dying or loss, accept help when it is offered and remember it is okay to ask for help.
- Mobilise your network of care and support.
- By accepting help, you are helping your community to develop its caring skills.

GIVE

- Compassion comes from the heart and *starts with me*. Offer to help and be of service to each other.
- Say hello and have a chat.
- Ask 'R U OK?'
- Listen and Be KIND.
- Do something to help (eg drop off food, put out the bin, walk the dog or organise a busy bee).
- If you know someone who is on their own, offer to be part of their network.
- Support a caregiver. Offer to sit with the person they care for so they can go out. Help them link in with other services (eg [Carer Gateway](#)).
- Offer a 'back home' of goodies or meals after someone leaves hospital.
- Learn by doing. Become a volunteer with the [Compassionate Connectors Program](#) and become a Compassionate Connector or Caring Helper.

- Volunteer with a community organisation that helps others. [Volunteer South West](#) can help you find a group that is needing help.
- Have a positive approach to ageing and our elderly.
- Sit at the bedside so no one dies alone.

Group / Organisation

- Neighbour check-in program by phone or in person.
- Establish and mobilise networks of care and support for someone who is having a difficult time. This could include accessing formal services such as palliative care, [My Aged Care](#); informal support such as Compassionate Connectors and Caring Helpers. Online options such as Facebook, [Healthy End of Life Program](#) and [Gather my Crew](#) can be used to set up a volunteer roster with family and friends.
- Offer training and resources to upskill people to carry out the compassionate community activities.

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We help as much as we are able and every little bit makes a difference.

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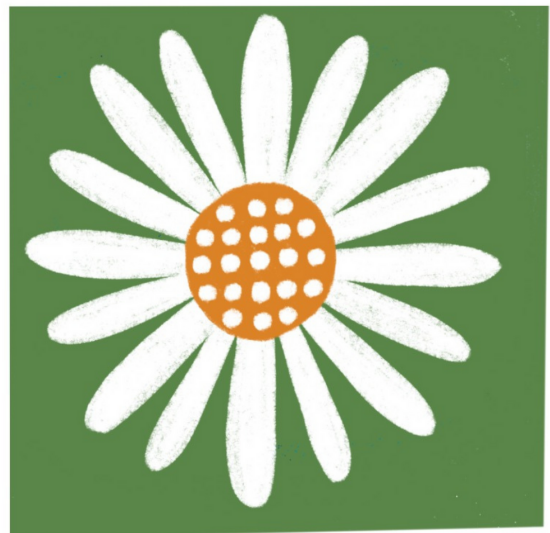
It's about building the networks between the people that are in need and the people that can help.

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Be observant and see what needs doing. Sometimes it is good to just do it.

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Supporting good communication

There is good communication and information sharing in our community.

What we would see and experience in our community:

We are willing and comfortable to talk about caregiving, dying, loss and grieving.

Information is easy to find and easy to understand.

TAKING ACTION

Individual

- Be willing to have respectful discussions in person and online.
- Talk openly about your future care wishes and complete your Advance Care Plan, Will and Emotional Will.
- Make a Bucket List to help you to continue to live fully.
- Talk to your family and friends, including children, about dying and death as openly and honestly as you can.

Group / Organisation

- People know what care and support is available in their community.
- Provide opportunities for people to develop their knowledge and skills around death and grief (death literacy). Go along to the local [Death Cafe](#), or hold [one of your own](#) or support [Dying to Know Day](#) (August 8) in your local community.
- Provide information sessions focusing on planning ahead (legal documents, funeral and burial options). [Palliative Care WA](#) offers Advance Care Planning workshops.
- Hold a film night and discussion.
- Hold a [Death over Dinner](#) gathering.
- Facilitate a panel discussion (face-to-face or online). One option might be to hold a [You Can't Ask That](#) panel where people can ask the questions they have always wanted to ask. Another might be to facilitate a 'Let's Listen, Let's Ask, Let's Talk, Let's Share' discussion.
- Set up a [Before I Die](#) wall.
- Organise a Death Festival.
- Provide information in plain language and in a number of ways such as newspapers, TV, social media, posters and website.

Local Government

- A nominated City of Bunbury staff member is available to signpost local services and support.
- Maintain a community directory of local services.

Respecting people's wishes

We adopt a person/family/community centred approach to illness, caring, death and grief.

What we would see and experience in our community:

An individual's wishes, choices and beliefs are respected and guide the journey ahead, including where and how they die.

We honour cultural diversity.

TAKING ACTION

Individual / Group / Organisation

- The person who is living with a terminal illness is recognised as the expert on their own life. Their wishes, choices and beliefs are respected and guide the journey ahead including how and where they die.
- We respect how someone's cultural background may inform what is important to them.
- Community-led end of life options are available and actively supported.
- Lived experience informs education.
- We allow space for differing expression and ways of dealing with death and grief.
- Visibility through open conversations will assist in reducing stigma around dying and grieving.

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Everyone has their own way of dealing with death and illness. It is important to respect people for who they are and the decisions they make at any time.

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Fostering belonging and connectedness

We look out for each other.

What we would see and experience in our community:

We reach out to connect and build community.

We support accessibility and inclusion.

We stand with others as they grieve.

TAKING ACTION

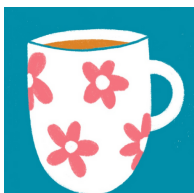
Individual / Group / Organisation

- Reach out to each other and build your social network. Get to know your neighbours. Go for a walk and say hello to the humans and dogs you meet along the way.
- Make a call to someone you haven't spoken to for a while. Make time to share a meal or a cuppa.
- Create spaces to connect on your street such as a conversation bench, kerb garden or street library.
- Disconnect from technology and RECONNECT in person (eg hold a street party, help out at a community garden, join a Chatty Café).
- Identify other community groups and organisations you can work with.
- Our existing social networks matter most when dealing with grief. Show up, listen and show you care. Be willing to stand beside the gaping hole that has opened up in their life, without flinching or turning away. Your steadiness of presence is the absolute best thing you can give.

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We have never been more globally connected yet locally disconnected.

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Providing opportunities to remember

People feel supported to grieve and remember.

What we would see and experience in our community:

Space and time is provided for people to grieve, talk and remember.

TAKING ACTION

Individual

- Hold your own ritual of remembrance for someone you have loved or cared for who has died.

Group / Organisation

- When someone in your work community (or someone they care for) dies acknowledge this by taking time to come together and remember the gifts they brought to your community. You may wish to plant a tree in acknowledgement.
- Hold annual memorial events *To Absent Friends*.

Local Government

- Create a memorial walk at a public venue.
- Hold memorial events in addition to *Anzac* and *Remembrance* Days such as holding a *Festival of Lights* which allows individuals to light a lantern for those who have died.



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There is a shared community space, perhaps a wishing tree or tree of remembrance in Queens Gardens near the Bunbury Garden Labyrinth, where communities can come together for ceremonies and gatherings.

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Nurturing creativity

Creativity is encouraged.

What we would see and experience in our community:

Art and creative processes are used to connect and process emotions.

TAKING ACTION

Individual / Group

- Create and support artistic events that get people talking about death, dying, loss and bereavement. You can even make it fun - potluck of last meals, karaoke sharing your funeral playlist, 'This is Your Life' trivia, picnic in the cemetery and death themed movie night.
- Use arts-based processes to bring to life the stories of people living with a terminal illness. Stories of their lives and legacy are woven into artworks, poems, illustrations and songs and are given back to their family/friends.
- Be inspired by the Coffin Clubs around the world and decorate your own coffin or make an ashes urn/box.
- Make your own shroud (cloth to wrap a body). You could even use pieces of clothing significant to you.
- Remember someone by holding a 'Loose Ends' gathering where collectively you finish one of their unfinished projects.

Local Government

- Museums and art galleries hold exhibitions and events focusing on ageing, dying, death, loss and care.

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We draw on our artists to create public art showing Bunbury as a big-hearted city.

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Leaders championing care and compassion

We take the lead in being kind and caring.

What we would see and experience in our community:

Our community and organisational leaders are kind and caring.

We can all take the lead in being kind and caring to others.

We advocate for others who need support.

TAKING ACTION

Individual

- Leadership is about compassion, inclusion, care and respect.
- Everyone can be a leader.
- Be willing to be bold and be the change you want to see.

Groups / Organisations

- Develop organisational policy which is supportive of carers, those living with a terminal illness and those who are grieving.
- Support affordable funerals.
- Reach out to your broader community and support compassionate acts.
- Participate in leadership forums and make a pledge to take action.

“ Let’s lead by sharing
what we’ve learnt
and listening with
our hearts. ”



Creating caring organisations

Growing more compassion in our businesses, schools, workplaces, clubs, community groups and institutions.

What we would see and experience in our community:

We take practical steps towards becoming Compassionate workplaces, schools, community groups and institutions.

TAKING ACTION

Individual / Group / Organisation

- Acknowledge a Compassionate Workplace is a key part of an organisation's social responsibility.
- Develop policies to better support your employees and colleagues when it comes to issues of working while living with a serious illness, being a caregiver or whilst grieving.
- Provide training for local champions (eg Connector / Caring Helper training).
- Identify someone in your workplace or club who is a good listener and is comfortable with having conversations about death so that anyone affected by loss or bereavement feels they have someone to talk to.
- Establish workplace grief initiatives.
- Foster conversations and connection.
- Make a pledge. It could be a financial, human resource or a process commitment.



Artwork by Elli Moody

Acknowledging compassionate acts

Compassion is celebrated.

What we would see and experience in our community:

There is open recognition of compassionate acts.

Serious illness, caregiving, dying and grieving are acknowledged as part of daily life.

TAKING ACTION

Individual / Group / Organisation

- Recognise and reward compassionate acts.
- Share your personal story about the compassionate help and support you have experienced, tell friends and on social media – it might help others.
- Share compassionate stories widely (local newspaper, social media, conversations) to showcase how illness, death and grief is ‘everybody’s business’.

Local Government

- Offer Compassionate Community citizen awards.



“We amplify the community story we tell ourselves...that Bunbury is a BIG HEARTED City. It is a friendly place to live and a place where our last chapter will be a good chapter.”

“We see our elders, older people, people who are terminally unwell out in the community riding around Bunbury giving them the opportunity to see the ocean, smell some fresh air and be a part of the community.”

**BIG HEARTED
BUNBURY**



“We would hear more stories on TV, in the papers and social media about how compassionate, kind and caring our community is.”



Let's grow compassion together

Having talked to lots of people we already know that while many feel Bunbury already is a **Big Hearted City** there is room for us to **grow compassion** even further.

We are inviting everyone in Bunbury to make a pledge that will support Bunbury to be a Compassionate City - one that recognises death and dying is everyone's business and everyone's responsibility.

You can make a pledge as an individual, family, group of friends, workplace or community organisation. We suggest you make it something practical and achievable. You can draw on this Toolkit to get some ideas.

It might be recommitting to something you are already doing or it might be something that builds your ability to support yourself or others.

With your permission we will publicly acknowledge compassionate acts on social media **#GrowingCompassion #BigHeartedBunbury**

To make a pledge go to <https://comcomnetworksw.com/what-is-your-pledge/>

THANK YOU

