

Some very important after-thoughts regarding my Submission to the Suicide Inquiry – and also some recent media coverage on suicide.

The Death Certificate of my late daughter, who suicided at The Gap on 15 November 2004, never stated suicide but 'multiple blunt trauma' – could this be the reason why suicide is under-reported? I had also requested that the Coroner hold a Coronial Inquiry as I had hoped to generate media interest on the topic of suicide and at a very difficult time for me I had to make a long and detailed report at a police station in order to give reasons why an Inquiry should be held. It is against my religion for autopsy to be performed and I gave the go-ahead only in the hope that an Inquiry would be held and I was lead to believe that it would be. It wasn't, and no reason was given. However, I think it important to note the absence of suicide as a reason for death. This makes me wonder whether this is an 'unofficial' order from the Government so as to minimise the number of suicides officially, or could there be another reason. I have discussed this with a number of associates all of whom have lost a family member to suicide, and all have had the same sort of description on the Death Certificate.

There has been a fair amount of publicity surrounding the proposed fencing of Northbridge in Sydney, a known suicide 'hotspot'. I wish to include this in my submission because it highlights once again ignorance when it comes to suicide, and in particular public figures who should know better, but at least have a better respect for those that suicide and their families.

A most appalling letter was published in The North Shore Times in August, and unfortunately I cannot access it, but I called the Editor to ask how she could publish such an astonishingly derogatory letter regarding people who suicide. She apologised and promised to be more careful next time!

Letter dated 8.8.09 sent to Editor North Shore Times

While it is always important to question the decision to erect safety barriers on the walls of the bridge spanning LongGully/Tunks Park, it is also important to realize that, as a community, we need to take steps to minimize the tragedy of suicide in places such as this. Unfortunately I don't believe we can ever stop suicide. What we need, as a community, is better mental health services, outside of hospital, and this is something I have personally been involved with for the last 6 or 7 years. We need to keep Cremorne and Chatswood Mental Health Clinics just where they are. They help those that are need of support, especially following a hospital admission.

My daughter suicided at The Gap in 2005 and I have been involved in trying to gain Govt. funding to prevent /minimize suicides from taking place, and I will continue to campaign until our Federal Govt. gives us the money needed to do this, rather than where they have just given funding – sports ovals and a Flea Circus.

Your reader quoted 6 suicides since 1995 and 4 attempted suicides. I wonder where these figures come from because the RTA and the Coroner would not be recommending fences based on those statistics. True figures are impossible to obtain, and I know this, because of the difficulty

I had when trying to get figures for The Gap. But, I do know there were 5 suicides recently, in under a month, and I am trying to get confirmation on a suspected 6th.

Building barriers is the first line of defense, plus a range of other strategies, but fences are strong deterrents.

Dianne Gaddin

Written 18.08.09 to editor North Shore Times

We live in a Democracy and everyone is entitled to an opinion. However when Wayne Davies writes such a totally insensitive letter, trivializing people taking their life, I am beyond understanding where this sort of thinking comes from.

The recently installed safety net at The Golden Gate Bridge has had very positive results, and I would say a net is a better option over a fence, or 'detainee fences' as Davies describes it.

I lost my daughter as a result of suicide, and I have no doubt there are many other families like me, who grieve such a loss, and would be equally angry at reading Davies' letter. Be a man, and show some respect!

Dianne Gaddin

Then in Sydney morning Herald – we have –

Fence called ugly blot on suicide spot

PAUL BIBBY URBAN AFFAIRS

November 20, 2009

TWO councils on the north shore could take legal action to stop a safety fence being built at a notorious suicide spot, because they claim it would ruin the appearance of a bridge.

The deputy NSW coroner recommended 18 months ago that the Long Gully Bridge at Northbridge near North Sydney be fenced, after the death of a 37-year-old man.

The incident - in which the man nearly hit a woman jogging in the park below - was at least the seventh death at the bridge in recent years, which led the coroner, Hugh Dillon, to describe the structure as a "magnet for suicide attempts" and a risk to the community.

The Roads and Traffic Authority plans to start building a two-metre high steel fence along the bridge next month but North Sydney and Willoughby councils are investigating whether they can stop the project in the Land and Environment Court.

They claim the fence will destroy the heritage character of the bridge and have no impact on suicide rates.

"If someone is hell-bent on committing suicide they will simply find somewhere else to go or some other way to do it," said the Mayor of Willoughby, Pat Reilly. "They would be better off using the money on mental health services to deal with the problem.

"Instead, they've come up with this design which is aesthetically very displeasing. The Land and Environment Court is an option to prevent work until there is more community consultation."

But the council's claims fly in the face of a number of academic studies which show that placing fences at suicide spots can be a significant deterrent to those contemplating suicide.

The chairman of Suicide Prevention Australia, Michael Dudley, said research showed suicide was linked to impulsiveness and physical deterrents could make a difference. "Suicide is a moment to moment proposition, particularly where you have young people who may be affected by drugs or alcohol," he said.

"A fence or another deterrent can be enough to make them think about what they're doing or provide precious time for help to arrive. I have sympathy with the concerns of the local community and the councils but saving lives must be the pre-eminent consideration and we support this fence being built."

Records provided to the coroner show police attended the bridge for six suicides, four attempted suicides and four BASE jumps in the period 1995-2007. Other attempts might not have been reported.

The Roads and Traffic Authority accelerated plans to build the fence after another suicide attempt in September, cutting short the community consultation process.

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I subsequently called both Woollahra Council and North Sydney Council to express my dismay at the Mayor's insensitive comments and their opposition to putting up a fence and not offering an alternative suggestion.

I got a response after writing an e-mail to Woollahra Council as follows –

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Friday, November 20, 2009 12:37 PM

Subject: YOUR PROPOSAL TO PREVENT SAFETY FENCES AT NORTHBRIDGE

Importance: High

Reading the Sydney Morning Herald this morning, I am absolutely incensed to read of your plans to prevent the saving of lives at this historic land mark. With respect you need to take a leaf out of Woollahra Council's book – they have fully supported my suggestion to upgrade The Gap, another known hotspot for suicide. While you may not agree with a fence – please don't just say 'NO' but make an alternative suggestion. I don't believe a fence would be the right way to go and have other ideas which I could discuss with you at a later stage. As for your Mayor making such dismissive and insensitive remarks, he needs to be made to apologize. I have lost a daughter to suicide and I am angered by his insensitive comments.

The Government has finally launched an Inquiry into Suicide and we may finally get the truth as to suicide statistic at Northbridge, but no matter, every life is precious.

I look forward to someone contacting me on this matter.

Dianne Gaddin

An almost immediate response from the Council as follows:

Dear Ms Gaddin,

Thank you for your email of 20 November, 2009.

The Council's General Manager has asked me to reply to your email to Council because I have been directly involved in the matter concerning the Suspension Bridge.

Council's position is that there are two key issues:

1. The problem of mental health in the community that leads to people taking their lives; and
2. The failure of the RTA to consult with the local communities about their proposed solution for the Bridge.

The Council has consistently stated that action needed to be taken on both issues.

The article that appeared in the Herald and others arising from other media interviews with the Mayor in recent months have generally lead to the Mayor speaking on both the issues for up to an hour on each occasion. The media however use only the sections that they believe are necessary for their article.

From the outset the Mayor's priority has been to secure a solution that addressed the specific circumstances of the Bridge but also the wider problem of community mental health. He has lead the Council's charge against the State Government on several fronts to argue the case for additional mental health services. He campaigned strongly for the retention of the Chatswood Community Mental Health service in Hercules Street, Chatswood to remain open rather than being relocated to the central institutional complex at the Royal North Shore Hospital. He has, with the support of Willoughby Council, actively lobbied for more expenditure on community mental health and establishment of improved services on the North Shore.

In relation to the Bridge, the Mayor's and the Council's issue has been that the RTA has not allowed for proper community comment on other options besides the metal cage fence proposals now planned to be erected on each side of the bridge.

In the public meetings arranged by Willoughby and North Sydney Councils other options have been raised including glass/perspex panels, a new fence set out from the existing bridge walls and an underslung walkway with panels on the outside. The RTA has not wanted to properly engage with the community on those options which would all seek to achieve the protection along the bridge. We are aware of the discussions held at Woollahra Council about the Gap and we have researched measures used on other bridges around the world. No one solution seems to be best.

We are disappointed in the media coverage of the issue that merely focuses on the fencing and heritage concerns. There is a broader issue that affects us all and that requires State and Federal action with support at the local level.

I apologise on behalf of Council if it appeared from the press article that the Mayor seemed to be insensitive about suicides. He isn't and we will continue to press for action on mental health whatever the physical solution erected at the Northbridge Suspension bridge.

Regards,

Greg Woodhams
Environmental Services Director
Willoughby City Council

My response to Mr. Woodhams

Dear Mr. Woodhams,

Firstly, may I sincerely thank you for your comprehensive and sensitive and most important respectful attitude in replying to my concerns. I certainly had the absolute opposite from Cr. Caffery, who was not only rude and totally and unresponsive to anything that I had to say. I would like to say, in passing, that as I have lost a daughter to suicide just 4 years ago, I personally have absolutely nothing to gain. My concern and interest is for others. I have crossed swords with the RTA regarding their treatment of my late daughter, so I do know that they think they are a law unto themselves. As for the Mayor, I have attended more meetings than I can remember and he always had the best interests of the mental health aspect when it came to Chatswood, but I do have it on good authority, that the manner in which the Council finally gave in, was not as it should've but I shall not comment further in this regard – for this is not the issue at heart.

Until just a few months ago I lived in Neutral Bay and would often go to Tungs Park with my doggies, so I know the area well. I also do not believe that an ugly fence is the way to go, for Northbridge is unique and needs to be preserved for future generations exactly as is. Do the RTA just have the right to go ahead without any community consultation? Although I might add that I am not sure whether community wishes are ever really respected e.g. Callan Park and Rozelle Psychiatric hospitals – we have won back Callan Park after years and years of 'fighting', and we are about to lose Cremorne, despite public protests for so many years.

I am so grateful that there is some sanity when it comes to this issue and I know newspapers do have their own agenda at times. Suicide is everyone's business and there are a number of hotspots where steps must be taken to address this. Now Cr. Caffery was most indignant saying that we cannot fence every high rise etc, and that 'these people' will find another place to carry out their intention if we block access – and she says she has been informed so by many authorities on the subject. I beg to differ, because I have the full backing of Salvation Army, SPERANZA, SANE, Lifeline, Jewish House, FairGo etc, plus The Black Dog. There is clear evidence to show that blocking access to a known hotspot definitely takes the number of suicides to virtually nil, and there is no increase in suicide elsewhere.

I shall gladly make my suggestion, which Cr. Caffery refused to even hear from me, should you be interested.

I thank you once again, most sincerely, and hope that something will be done to prevent suicides asap, but in a manner that won't offend many in the community. There is an Inquiry into Suicide at the moment and it will be most interesting to read the report when it comes out in April next year.

Regards, Dianne Gaddin

Now with regards North Sydney Council I got no call back from the Council after calling them so I called again and asked to speak to the Mayor's secretary and I was not happy with her response and asked to speak with the Mayor herself. She called me back later in the afternoon and from the moment she said her first word I knew I was going to have a hard time. She was rude, aggressive, totally insensitive to whatever I had to say regarding the importance of preventing suicide. She was self-opiniated and rigid in her views, quoting 'expert opinion' she had who were all against a fence, as 'these people' will find somewhere else to go and that we can't become a nanny state like America and put fences on every high building and everywhere else 'these people' want to suicide. She asked me why I was so interested in suicide and I told her that my daughter had suicided at the Gap. Her response just blew me away – 'and so now that makes you an expert on suicide' – I merely responded that I am no expert but I have used my tragic experience to try and prevent other families experiencing the tragedy that my family had. I then said that I felt this conversation was getting me nowhere fast and I am going to put down the phone which I did. I was in a terrible state after putting down the phone because nobody had ever spoken to me in such a manner. I have spoken with hundreds of people, from the former leader of opposition, to members of Parliament and other important people, Prof. Gordon Parker, Salvation Army, Sane Australia, and many more and nobody ever spoke with me in such an aggressive and abusive manner, so I sent a letter – this I sent 3 times, each time getting an automated acknowledgement – so on 3rd December I called to say I still had not had a response and was told that it could take anything from 7 – 10 working days.

This is the letter I sent to the Council after speaking with Cr. Genia Mc Caffery –

The article hereunder appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald last Friday –

Fence called ugly blot on suicide spot

PAUL BIBBY URBAN AFFAIRS

November 20, 2009

TWO councils on the north shore could take legal action to stop a safety fence being built at a notorious suicide spot, because they claim it would ruin the appearance of a bridge.

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"If someone is hell-bent on committing suicide they will simply find somewhere else to go or some other way to do it," said the Mayor of Willoughby, Pat Reilly. "They would be better off using the money on mental health services to deal with the problem.

"Instead, they've come up with this design which is aesthetically very displeasing. The Land and Environment Court is an option to prevent work until there is more community consultation."

But the council's claims fly in the face of a number of academic studies which show that placing fences at suicide spots can be a significant deterrent to those contemplating suicide.

The chairman of Suicide Prevention Australia, Michael Dudley, said research showed suicide was linked to impulsiveness and physical deterrents could make a difference. "Suicide is a moment to moment proposition, particularly where you have young people who may be affected by drugs or alcohol," he said.

"A fence or another deterrent can be enough to make them think about what they're doing or provide precious time for help to arrive. I have sympathy with the concerns of the local community and the councils but saving lives must be the pre-eminent consideration and we support this fence being built."

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The Roads and Traffic Authority accelerated plans to build the fence after another suicide attempt in September, cutting short the community consultation process.

I was very upset to read this article and most especially the comments made by the Mayor of Willoughby – so I contacted both Willoughby and North Sydney Councils to ask why they are adamant and opposing the fence. I got a very informative and polite letter from Willoughby Council, but nothing from North Sydney so I called again and asked to speak with Cr. Mc Caffery – she called me on Monday afternoon. While I intended merely to question why the Council was opposed and whether they had a better suggestion, but from the very first word and tone of voice from Cr. Caffery, I knew this was not going to be an easy discussion. I was right, because Cr. Caffery was rude, aggressive and totally self-opiniated in her views. While this is a Democracy and everyone is entitled to their views, I think someone in her position should've been open

to discuss the issue in the same manner in which I addressed her. I am writing this letter as I was in such a state after I put down the phone on her, for when she asked me how come I am so interested in suicide and I replied by saying that I had lost a daughter to suicide – it was the way she replied to me that was so offensive. “So that makes you an authority on suicide!” I counted to 10 before replying, and answered her by saying that I was not an expert but had used my experience to work with Woollahra Council to upgrade The Gap where my daughter took her life.” This could’ve been a normal conversation, but whatever I said she ‘knew better’ and was adamant in her views telling me that this can’t be a police state like America and we can’t go putting fences everywhere someone chooses to suicide – another offensive and unnecessary comment. I then said that this conversation was just going nowhere fast and I was putting down the phone, which I did.

I have dealt with the Woollahra Council for over 3 years now, and only had respect and co-operation. I have dealt with many Politicians, from the Prime Minister, to the leader of opposition, all who have treated me with the utmost respect. I have the support of SPERANZA, Salvation Army, The Black Dog, Sane Australia, Woollahra Council, just to name a few. Nobody has ever spoken to me that way Cr. Mc Caffery did, and I was in a terrible state after putting the phone down to her.

I look forward to hearing from someone who can speak with me, respectfully, and I think Cr. Mc Caffery should be told that her manner of speaking with me is totally unacceptable, no matter she is the Mayor. I actually voted for her when I lived in Neutral Bay!

Dianne Gaddin

...to rise in January.
The skilled vacancies index climbed 0.8 per cent to 107.5, although vacancies were down 4.6 per cent for the year.

reports that linked the meeting with the Australian Government's proposal to change media policy.
A spokesman for Mr Murdoch

ing at a softening of its previous hard line against change, which has made impossible an alteration in the law before now.

met during the Prime Minister's last trip to the United States in September last year, when they had dinner.

Ashes tell the story of a mother's long despair

Mark Robinson
Health Writer

Dianne Gaddin walked into the ruins of her daughter's Malabar flat yesterday and wept quietly.

It was a scene of devastation: the walls and ceiling blackened and burnt from a fire the night before and the floor strewn with rubbish and broken furniture.

In the main bedroom of the Housing Department unit, all that remained was the charred wire bed frame and a wardrobe that had caved in under the heat.

Picking through the remains, Mrs Gaddin said it was a fire she had feared would happen.

Shortly before it started she had spent a frantic few hours with her mentally ill daughter, Tracy, desperately trying to calm her. Tracy had smashed all the furniture and screamed at her neighbours, prompting at least two police visits.

In the end, with the 32-year-old threatening suicide and abusing her, Mrs Gaddin went to Maroubra police.

"I tried to tell them that something terrible was going to hap-



Black day . . . Dianne Gaddin in her daughter's burnt-out flat. Photo: Jon Reid

pen. I knew it would," Mrs Gaddin said.

But by the time she spoke to police, the unit was already on fire, forcing the evacuation of 35 other residents. After the fire was controlled, Tracy was taken to Prince of Wales Hospital where she was admitted to the psychiatric unit, police said.

A police spokeswoman said yesterday that Tracy would remain in hospital for at least a week. No charges had yet been laid over the fire.

But that is little consolation to Mrs Gaddin and her family. In a story that will be depressingly familiar to others with a family member who is mentally ill, they have tried for at least two years to get her successfully treated.

Tracy has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and a borderline personality disorder, and her behaviour has grown increasingly erratic over the past two years.

She had been in and out of psychiatric units, at one point

staying in Prince of Wales and St George for five months.

But Mrs Gaddin said she had lost count of the number of times her daughter had been turned away from hospitals across the city, despite a series of manic episodes and deterioration of her physical condition through malnutrition.

"We have tried everything but we have always feared that it would not be until she killed someone or harmed someone that something would be done," she said.

"The politicians and the public need to know what kind of hell it is trying to get proper treatment for someone that you love who is obviously desperately ill."

The acting director of mental health services for the South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service, Russell Firmin, said doctors and staff had made every effort to help Tracy, who had been a regular client.

The National Association of Practising Psychiatrists said Tracy's case highlighted the lack of long-term beds for mentally ill people.

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The Cremorne shutdown announcement sparked community anger in the Cremorne, North Sydney and Mosman communities in the middle of this year when patient's families argued it would be hard to travel elsewhere if their child had a turn.

One of those objectors is Neutral Bay councillor Dianne Gaddin, whose daughter, Tracy, has a bi-polar disorder. Ms Gaddin, of Neutral Bay, said last week that she was horrified to learn of the amalgamation plans. "I will stop at nothing. It's absurd. I will keep fighting no matter what," she said, adding she planned to form her own support group, or "shake up" a pre-existing one.

Ms Gaddin said the Cremorne Mental Health Centre is crucial to her family and her son's well being and safety as carers can get to her home in 15 minutes.

North Shore MP Jillian Skinner agreed that accessibility is a major issue.

"How are patients expected to get on a train and travel out of the area to seek desperately needed assistance?" the MP told a committee recently.

But Dr O'Connor said Emergency Department services would be available for acute episodes.

Alan Rosen, also opposes the plan.

In the letter, Prof Rosen, who is also the medical director of the Cremorne Mental Health Service, says the plan to move the entire Lower North Shore Community Mental Health Service into a generic community health precinct is "planned ostensibly because NSW Department of

"Suicides have already doubled over the past eight years as a result of a reduction of mental health services,"

Health and NSAHS do not wish to spend the \$4 million required to refurbish or rebuild the Chatswood site to a reasonable standard, nor will they consider retraining the Cremorne site".

He also suggests that any capital resources presently dedicated to mental health will be re-absorbed into the general hospital redevelopment funds.

"Our community mental health centres should not be relocated to hospital sites,"



Tracey Haddin (foreground) is worried about the future of the Cremorne Mental Health Centre as are (background L to R) North Shore MP Jillian Skinner, Mosman Cr Simon Menzies, and Dianne Gaddin. Photo: Britta Campion

the principles of good service delivery".

"The option of locating the staff to the RNSH would be roughly the same cost as rebuilding the Chatswood centre," he said.

A spokesperson for the Northern Sydney Area Health Service said he was not prepared to comment on the specific

planned to move the "Cremorne service and Chatswood service on-site at the Royal North Shore Hospital ultimately to be contained in a purpose-built arrangement on Herbert Street St Leonards".

This plan is still preliminary, he added. The NSAHS has agreed to first consult

My name is Tracy ... and I need help

Danya Levy

"MY name is Tracy ... and I am a survivor of mental illness," Tracy Gaddin wrote after being released from a five-week stay in a psychiatric ward.

It's 4am and the 32-year-old, who suffers from a bipolar disorder and borderline personality, was relating how much better she felt after "a terrible relapse" in her condition.

That was two years ago. Last week, Tracy had another relapse. And she set fire to her Malabar apartment after smashing all the furniture and attacking two people who came in to check on her.

"Judaism and Jewish prayer gives me so much strength and comfort," says her mother, Dianne, as she struggles through her daughter's letter. "Kind, gentle Tracy. She's a very special lady."

Tracy was admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital after the fire, but there is no long-term accommodation there or at any other hospital, Mrs Gaddin told the *Australian Jewish News*.

"She's been to hospital 18 times in the past 10 days. She's been hospitalised so many times, I've lost track. In the past few days she's been shunted from hospital to hospital, and she's turned away each time.

"To kick someone out of hospital — you wouldn't do it to a dog. It's lack of respect."

Tracy was "very anxious" on the night of the fire and had threatened to kill herself, Mrs Gaddin said. "She was trashing the apartment."

Police were twice called to the apartment following the assaults on two residents who had gone to check on her. She was arrested and charged twice, and each time was returned by police to her flat, and left alone.

"Imagine how she must have felt," Mrs Gaddin said. "I had a feeling something terrible was going to happen. I drove to Maroubra Police and said there's going to be a catastrophe. As I was telling my story, the apartment was set alight."

The fire destroyed the main bedroom and all her possessions. Firefighters evacuated all 35 residents from the apartment block. "She lost everything," Mrs Gaddin said.

The health system needs to provide more long-term accommodation for the mentally ill, she said. "It seems only when my daughter kills someone or commits a major crime will she be put in long-term care."

Mrs Gaddin has approached government officials in a bid to help her daughter. "I've rung the Premier of New South Wales, the Minister of Health and the director of Mental Health Services. I've utilised every last resort. I'm at my wits' end."

An attempt by Mrs Gaddin to form a Jewish support group for families of people suffering from mental illness, through an advertisement in the *Australian Jewish News*, elicited a response from 12 people, which Mrs Gaddin found disappointing.

Jewish families are missing out on valuable community support by keeping the issue behind closed doors, she believes.



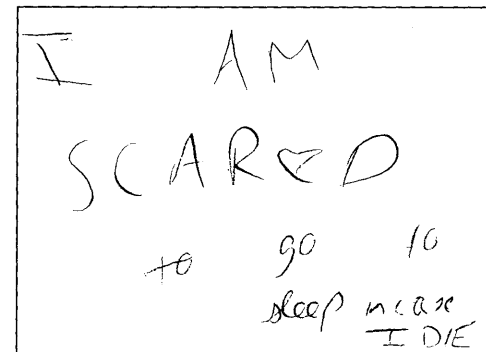
Tracy Gaddin's mother, Dianne Gaddin ... "It seems only when my daughter kills someone will she be put in long-term care."

continuity of care. The system is falling apart."

The NSW Centre for Mental Health was investigating a lack of long-term accommodation for sufferers of mental illness, Sydney psychiatrist Dr Yvonne White said.

A proposal was currently before the government and due to be released shortly for public comment. "It's certainly something people are aware of, and they are trying to do something about it."

A desperate note by Tracy Gaddin ...
"I am scared to go to sleep in case I die".



You have the will

TRIBUTE
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
TRACY GADDIN

Dearest Dianne and family,

We are all travellers on the same journey: The journey of life. I, as a fellow-traveller in this journey, humbly offer you some heartfelt thoughts, in support of your grief, as we say goodbye and farewell to Tracy. Like any other component of life, grief is a journey. It has its own agenda, for which there is neither rehearsal nor preparation. Just as for the concert of life no one has a programme, so for grief and mourning, there is no easy recipe. The process of grieving has no set time frame, and no measurable degree of completion. And for each of us our grief is a very personal, often lonely journey, reflecting the unique relationship each of us enjoyed with Tracy. The tremendous support from family and friends goes a long way to soften the blow. But community grief doesn't tap into the special bond each of us had with Tracy. For that bit we have to go it alone. That's why your personal grief has its own programme, and is a process that will take its own course, with its own intensity and its own time frame. Grief is neither consistent nor predictable. It may be triggered by some seemingly unrelated incident in any context and at any time.

LOVE is the most overwhelmingly powerful emotion that will help us get through these tender times. Dianne and family, as we think of Tracy with love, I would like to share with you three emotions, all felt deeply in the heart, and all within the realm of love. They are SORROW, GRATITUDE AND PEACE.

SORROW is the sadness at having to say goodbye. We have lost a daughter, a good friend, a gentle soul, a thoughtful woman of tenderness and kind words, of refined sensitivity. In a large crowd Tracy might have chosen to appear unobtrusive, and yet I perceived her as gently supportive and reassuring, whenever and wherever needed. I saw her as altruistic, often to the extent of denying herself. The love and respect Tracy earned by being the person she was, is also reflected in the presence of so many friends, who attended and offered their support at her funeral and prayers.

The pain of separation is the inevitable price of days and years of precious love. Tears are the tender tribute of yearning affection for someone who has passed away but cannot be forgotten. When cherished ties are broken, and fond hopes and dreams shattered, only faith and confidence can lighten the heaviness of the heart. At times, the pain of separation seems more than we can bear, but if we dwell too long on our sorrow we will make our grief bitter, and this will hurt us and those around us. And in truth, grief is a great teacher, if it sends us back to serve and bless the living. We learn how to comfort those who, like

ourselves have been touched by sorrow. We learn when to keep silence in their presence, and when a word will assure them of our love and concern.

The second emotion close to my heart that I want to share with you is *GRATITUDE*. Gratitude might seem a strange emotion to express right now. Yet gratitude is the embodiment of thanks: Thanks for the gift of memory; for it is the gift of memory that binds generation to generation. And with our thoughts on Tracy, all sorts of memories, little personal memories, will appear before our eyes: A smile on her face, a kind remark or deed, a hug, her warmth, compassion, friendship and love, all given generously and unconditionally. May the memory of Tracy continue to be an inspiration to all who knew and loved her.

The sharp, stunning blow of sudden loss is relieved through time, as soft and fond memories begin to take shape out of the bewildered haze of bereavement. Let our memories be full. They will make us strong, if from them we can gain the inspiration to ennoble our own lives. What greater tribute can we pay to Tracy, and what greater good can come to us than to activate her memories into living deeds of worth? Within the circle of daily association, as Tracy struggled silently, we might have failed to discern her worth and her loveliness. But let there be no blame, let there be no judgement. In the remembrance of Tracy's virtues and affections, the best and purest part of her nature lies eternally enshrined. May we cherish our memories of Tracy as an inspiration to us.

Something precious has been taken from us, and it seems natural to think of this as something we have lost, rather than something we have had. We think of the emptiness we are left with and forget the fulness there was before. We praise God for our treasures while we have them and cease to praise Him when they're gone. But surely God never gives. He only lends. Surely life itself is but a loan? Instead of murmuring because He takes away our treasures, like Tracy, perhaps we need to be grateful to Him for letting us know Tracy, and to count the past happy days not as loss, but as gain.

Death is not the end; the earthly body vanishes, the immortal spirit lives on with God. In our hearts also, our loved ones never die. Their love and memory abide as a lasting inspiration, moving us to noble deeds and blessing us evermore. May Tracy's influence continue to be a joy and source of strength and comfort to you. May she inspire you to a more useful and love-filled life, to higher hopes and greater contentment of spirit.

The third emotion I want to share with you, Dianne and family, firmly embodied within, and under the enormous wingspan of love, is PEACE; peace in the heart and peace in the mind. The road for Tracy has been rough, the struggle long, often lonely and painful. Dianne, you as her loving mother, have felt her pain deeply, and all the while you continued to love her. You stayed with her through thick and thin, good times and bad, fun times and sad, with unselfish, unfailing loyalty, support,

love and compassion. You have stood by Tracy, with unconditional positive regard, which is the highest embodiment of love. You never judged, you never blamed. The more she suffered, the more you showed support and love; love for your daughter, your friend.

Now the storm has passed, and Tracy rests. The struggle and suffering have ended. May calm and peace return. Early or late, all of us must answer the summons to return to the Reservoir of Being. One by one the children of earth, passing along the road of life, disappear from our view. We know that each of us must walk the same path to the doorway of the grave. We strain our eyes to see what lies beyond the gate, but all is darkness to our mortal sight. Like the stars by day, our beloved deceased are not seen by mortal eyes. Yet they shine on forever. Theirs is eternal peace. May God have you, Tracy, in His keeping, and may He grant you eternal peace. And may God, the Source of peace, send peace to all who mourn, and comfort all who are bereaved. Tracy, you are gone, but your love is still here with us. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your love; you have ours. Goodbye, Tracy, Farewell, Shalom. This is Ralph, your fellow-traveller in the journey of life, and who cares about you. 😊