

PRESENTED BY DR COLLEEN CARLON
& JACQUIE TARRANT

NAVIGATING TRAUMA, GRIEF & STIGMA

Building resilience through education and advocacy
to better understand suicide bereavement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that we meet today on Wardandi Noongar Boodja - land that was, is, and always will be Aboriginal land.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to any First Nations people joining us today.



LIVED EXPERIENCE AS ORIGIN

We acknowledge the lives touched, changed, and forever marked by suicide: those we've lost, those who grieve, and those who walk alongside.

Lived experience is not just part of this story; it is the reason the forum was developed.

BACKGROUND

- Born from personal loss and shared purpose
- A search to understand grief and suicide
- Recognised a critical gap – little information for those left behind
- Two impacts of this gap:
 - Bereaved left unable to make sense of their grief
 - Supporters unsure how to help
- Led to the creation of the Suicide Bereavement Forum, a space to understand, connect, and respond



SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT FORUM

People bereaved by suicide carry a grief that is largely silent.

Beyond the experiences of profound grief, trauma, guilt, shame and blame, people bereaved by suicide can also encounter stigma-related impacts that can make it difficult for them to seek help or for others to know what support to provide.

This forum combines research and lived experience to raise awareness around these impacts and suggests ways to effectively support people bereaved by suicide.

We encourage anybody who has been bereaved by suicide to attend as well as anyone who has or is currently supporting someone bereaved by suicide.

Recommended 18+ event. Anyone 15+ is welcome to attend in the company of a trusted adult.

Friday 18th November 2022
9.30am-3.00pm

Margaret River HEART
47 Walcliffe Road, Margaret River

Register to attend on Eventbrite by visiting suicidebereavement.eventbrite.com.au

PLEASE NOTE.

We acknowledge that attending a forum discussing suicide loss may bring up difficult and distressing emotions for people, especially those personally impacted by suicide. Whilst support will be available throughout the day, we ask that you consider whether this is an appropriate time for you to attend a forum focussed on understanding and responding to suicide loss. If you are uncertain or wish to discuss further, please feel free to contact the presenters, Dr Colleen Carlon on (08) 9780 7658 or Jacque Tarrant on 0429 229 400 or you can email suicideprevention.southwest@sjog.org.au for an information sheet.

Logos: St John of God, ECU, Healthpoint, South West AMS, STANDBY, MINDFUL, Ropes in the Ocean.



PREPARATION & INTENT

SHARED SPACE

Bereaved people and supporters together, side by side in a public setting.

SHARED LEARNING

Honouring the power of knowledge, and of listening and learning through collective lived experience.

FOR THE BEREAVED

To feel less alone, understood, connected, and supported.

FOR SUPPORTERS

To build confidence in understanding, and then how to help and what to say.

OUR AIM

To create a space that validates, educates, and connects everyone in the room.

DESIGNING FOR SAFETY

as a priority



EMBEDDED SUPPORT



FOLLOW-UP OPTIONS



VISIBLE PATHWAYS



SAFE LANGUAGE



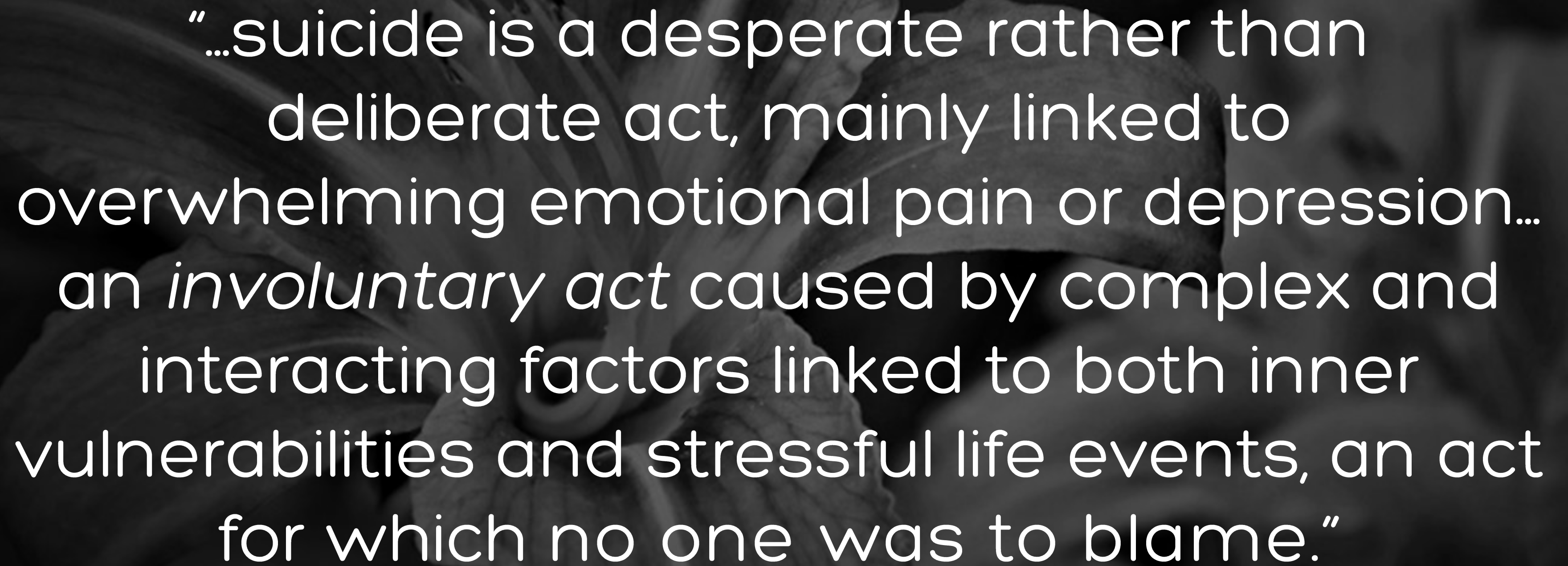
CHOICE, CONSENT &
INTENTIONAL ENVIRONMENT



INTEGRATED LIVED
EXPERIENCE &
DEEP RESPECT

CONTENT & STRUCTURE

Grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understandings of grief with a comparison of the universal elements of sudden loss alongside the more unique features of suicide loss.
Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understandings of trauma in the suicide loss experience, and the contrast and interplay between trauma and grief.
Meaning making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understandings the concept and social processes of meaning making in coping and rebuilding in the wake of suicide loss.
Continuing Bonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding continuing (non-traumatised) bonds as a constructive grief process.
Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of stigma as embedded within social and cultural contexts.• The effects of stigma on social processes of constructive grieving (meaning making & continuing bonds)• The juxtaposition of stigma as a safeguard for suicide.
Destigmatising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mindful use of language• Destigmatised ways of thinking about suicide.
Informal Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledgement and empathy• Neutral and non-judgemental understandings of suicide• Support and connection• Acceptance of complexity and open to diversity in experiences.• Being proactive and the importance of practical support and self-care.



“...suicide is a desperate rather than deliberate act, mainly linked to overwhelming emotional pain or depression... an *involuntary act* caused by complex and interacting factors linked to both inner vulnerabilities and stressful life events, an act for which no one was to blame.”

HAGSTROM, 2020, p.10

THE RESEARCH



- Written reflections - Bunbury Forum 2021.
- Narrative interviews exploring people’s experiences - Margaret River Forum 2022 and Busselton Forum 2023
- Recognised a critical gap – little information for those left behind
- Research collaboration
 - Edith Cowan University
 - St John of God
 - headspace Bunbury
- Edith Cown University Human Research Ethics Committee approved research ethics each year.

WHO ATTENDED THE FORUMS?

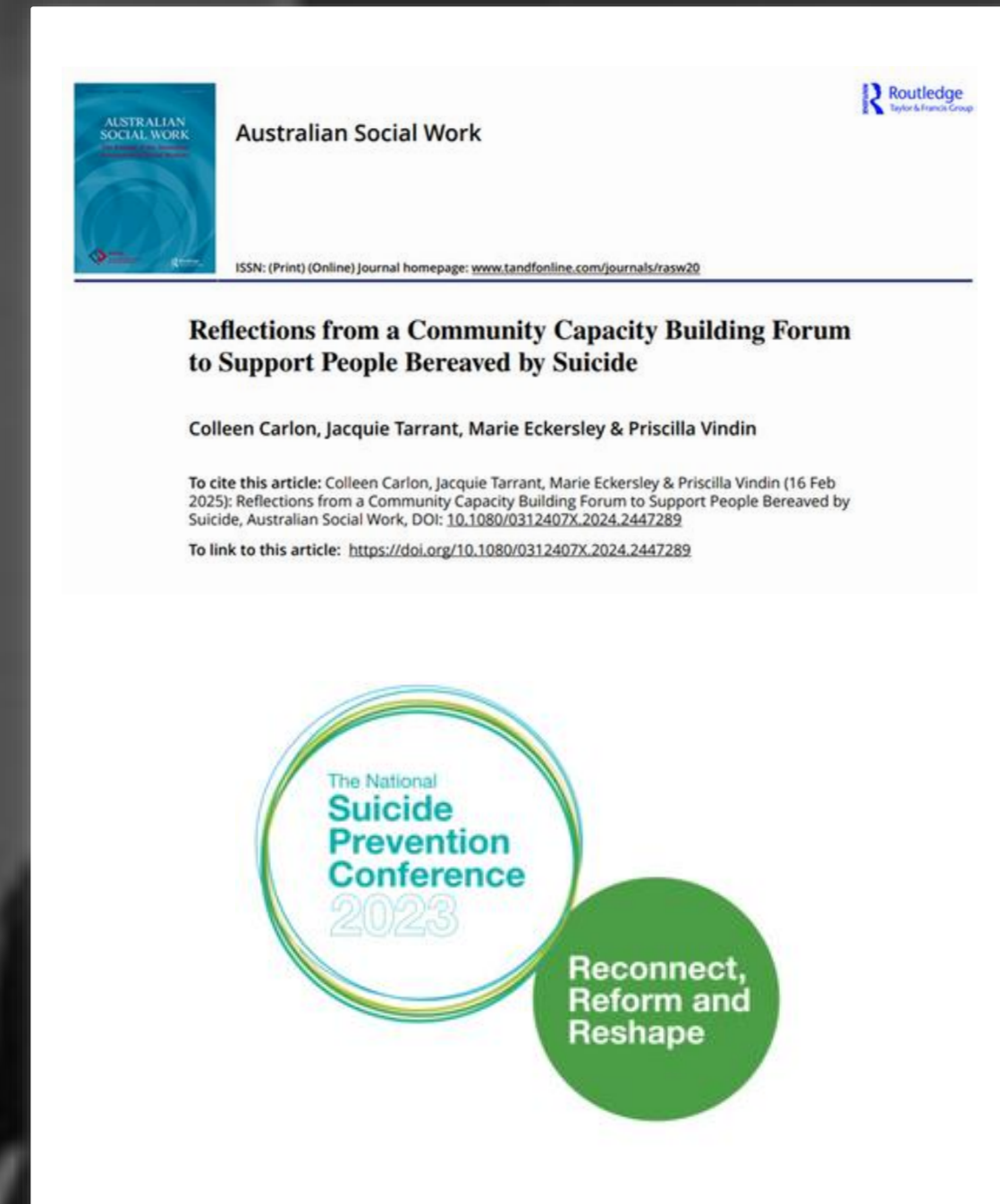
- People bereaved by suicide
- People wanting to strengthen their capacity to proactively and effectively support people bereaved by suicide (*informal support*)
 - People employed in health and social care services wanting to strengthen their capacity to effectively support people bereaved by suicide (*formal support*)

2021 PARTICIPANTS WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

- Seven people
- Two males, and five females
- Age range from 20-64 years
- One person identified as Aboriginal
- One person spoke a language other than English at home

WRITTEN REFLECTIONS THEMES

1. valuable information,
2. empathy through understanding suicide loss,
3. understanding suicide stigma,
4. intrinsic desire to support self and others, and
5. the value of shared experiences.



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

“a shared community responsibility” (Mirick et al., 2024, p. 9)

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**THANK
YOU.**