

International Work Group on Death, Dying & Bereavement

Newsletter

JULY 2024



Esplanade Park, Fremantle

Chair Report



Dear members, dear colleagues,

I think my report will be shorter than in the last newsletter since it was a big edition with a lot of information to share with you. It has been a bit quieter since the Halifax meeting but the board and Chris, as our Secretary Treasurer, has been working hard in the background to make sure that IWGDDB remains a strong and viable organization for its members. So, if I repeat some of the information that you received in the bumper edition in February, my apologies. I hope you find some nuggets of useful information in here.

Administration

Chris, as Secretary/Treasurer and Janet, as Minute Secretary are helping me to keep on track with the administrative side of things. The day-to-day governance has passed back to Chris in Melbourne, and I thank him for managing a smooth transition for the membership. As you would imagine, one or two items are still to be sorted between the US and Australia, but I am hopeful we will have everything organized to report to the members at our next Business meeting in the city of Fremantle next year.

Although this may come up in the report from the Secretary/Treasurer, a number of people have outstanding dues payments, so can I ask you to please keep an eye on your emails in case we need to chase you or perhaps better, check in to the website to see if you have access to all of the features of the site?

Revision to by-laws & policies

It was noted when I was asked to take on the Chair, that we needed to have a deep dive into our current by-laws and policies. We are still diving and finding all sorts of buried 'treasures'. I really want to thank Kathy Gilbert, Rana Limbo and Chris Hall for bringing this to the table and starting to look at what needs to be created, updated, changed or revised. We are developing a strategy to decide what needs to be prioritized and in particular, what needs to be voted on by members and how we can make that happen. Just to reassure members, the changes needed are largely by way of clarifications and adjustments, rather than whole re-writes. Some changes are operational policies which enable good governance of the organization, while others are more strategic and need the views of the members. We will keep you posted as things develop.

Fremantle 2025

Planning is progressing really well for the 34th meeting of the IWGDDB at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Australia from June 22-27, 2025. The city of Fremantle is located about 30 minutes from the state capital of Perth, Western Australia. The team, led by Lauren Breen, is working hard to bring the meeting to fruition. They have

some great ideas. It will be an excellent opportunity to rekindle connections and continue workgroups and/or create new ones so I hope that you will be able to consider joining us there next year. I would also invite you to consider any invited guests that you might like to propose, particularly anyone whom you think could be a potential member candidate. There is an update report in this edition of the newsletter so I hope it will confirm your decision to travel to Australia in 2025.

And beyond...?

Not wishing to steal anyone's thunder but it would be nice if we could indicate at the Perth meeting where the 35th meeting might be! By tradition, the next meeting would be in Europe so if any of our European members would be interested in hosting the meeting, please let us know sooner rather than later so that we can make an announcement in Fremantle.

Some thoughts on future planning

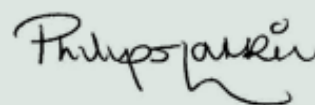
Although we are immensely grateful to Chris and Janet for stepping in to support us in their respective roles, I also need to mention that this is an interim arrangement, and we will need a permanent solution to be agreed in Perth. The board looking at what the best solution would be. We are conscious that the role of the Secretary/Treasurer is essential to the management of the organization but is also a job in itself. Some members have already suggested dividing the role between treasurer and secretary and I have to say the current model we have is working well. We will put a plan to the members but, as always, if you have suggestions, don't hesitate to let us know. The main thing is a clear job description of roles and functions. We will look to the membership to see if someone is willing to commit to this work so that we have a sustainable model moving forward from mid-2025.

Your thoughts are much appreciated.

I would also like to thank everyone who responded to the survey prepared and distributed by our board member, Inge Corless. Inge kindly analyzed the results, and they provided us with a really useful vision of what members think is most important in terms of their membership and being able to attend meetings. It is clear to me from my reading of the results that the IWGDDB offers a warm, collegial and nurturing environment to its members, one where discourse and debate is encouraged and where newer members learn from the wisdom of elders. To be a member of IWGDDB is a privilege and a valued part of members' professional identity. It was also clear that for some members, the ability to attend meetings was challenging in terms of travel and finance. Overall, IWGDDB serves its community well. Of course, the board will be able to look more deeply at the report that Inge provided to help us plan for the future in a way that is responsive to members' needs. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Inge for her work managing this important survey.

And finally...

As always, my sincere thanks to members of the Board for their continuing engagement and support to me personally as Chair. A particular note of thanks to the Vice-Chair, Rana Limbo who keeps me in the right direction! My thanks as ever to Irene Renzenbrink who works so hard to make sure we connect with the members regularly. Please remember that this is your newsletter and if you have items or issues that you want to share or discuss, all content is welcomed by Irene for future editions. As it is now summer in Europe, I send greetings from a warm and sunny Switzerland to you and your families across the world.



Phil Larkin
Board Chair
IWGDDB

Secretary / Treasurer Report

A report from your old/new Secretary/Treasurer

In January of this year, I rejoined the Board following the resignation of Jim Monahan. I want to thank Jim for his work as Secretary/Treasurer and for his contribution to the work of the IWG, particularly in relation to our Halifax meeting. I also want to thank Janet McCord, who has joined the Board as the Minute Secretary.

The Board is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of our policies and procedures to identify those that need to be updated and created. New policies under development include a standardised budget planning and reporting process for meeting Planning Committees, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board and the Planning Committee, an updated Conflict of Interest policy, a schedule of Financial Delegations and finally, Terms of Reference for the Colin Murray Parkes Scholarship and a Nominations Committee.

The Board is also exploring some potential changes to the by-laws, which will need to be considered and approved by the membership. These include greater clarity around the four classes of members (Full, Life, Retired and Associate), more precise statements around Director terms of office and the election cycle, revisions to how the Board should manage casual Director vacancies when they arise, Director attendance rules and Director Conflict of Interest.

Who are our members?

Currently, the IWG has a total of 160 Members. This includes 92 Full Members, 36 Retired Members, 23 Associate Members and nine Life Members (recipients of the Herman Feifel Award).

Our membership is drawn from 22 countries, with 51% of members from North America. The largest five memberships by country are the United States (60), Canada (22), Australia (14), Great Britain (13) and Japan (8).

**Do you know
a leader in
dealing with
issues of death,
dying and
bereavement
in their home
country who
would make a
great member
of the IWG?**

With our next meeting in Fremantle, Western Australia, in June 2025, now is the time to consider inviting a Guest to attend.

Why do we have an Invited Guest category?

1. According to the IWG by-laws, this is the first of two steps in becoming a member of IWG (the second step is attending a meeting as a “membership candidate”).
2. Invited guests are given the opportunity to experience an IWG meeting and decide if they want to pursue membership. Not all Invited Guests are expected to proceed to the membership process.
3. The “guest” category also allows professionals with expertise in death, dying, and bereavement, especially those in the host country, to attend our meetings regardless of whether they ultimately pursue membership.

Ideally, you would also be attending the Fremantle, Western Australia meeting; however, this is not required.

For further information on Invited Guests, including what you need to do, read our Invited Guest/Membership Candidates FAQ available at

<https://www.iwgddb.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Membership-FAQ.pdf>

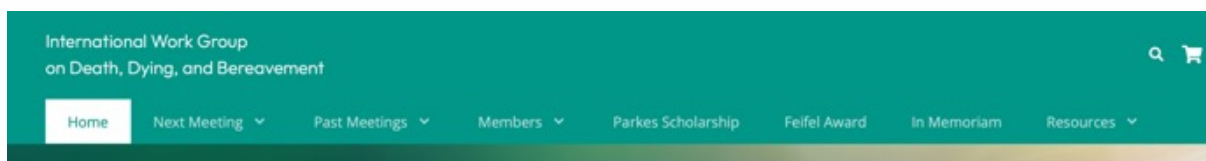
Or email info@iwgddb.com

Are your Membership dues up to date?

The IWG membership year runs from 1 October to 30 September.

Following a recent audit of dues, I identified that 18 members (19%) and 14 retired members (38%) still have unpaid dues.

I would encourage you to login to the IWG website (www.iwgddb.com) and ensure that you can view all the following menu items:



Only members who are fully paid up can see all these options. Non-financial members are also not included in the online **Membership Directory**, which you can find under the **Members** menu item.

If you cannot see these menus, then go to the top of the page and select –

Purchase Your Membership



A forthcoming increase to Membership Dues

The current rate of US\$100 for full and US\$50 for retired members has been the membership fee for over a decade. Considering a cumulative inflation rate over the past ten years of 35%, the fee should be closer to US\$135 to address inflation alone. The Board decided at its last meeting to increase the rate for membership to \$US150 pa for full members and \$US75 for retired members. This change will be effective from 1 October 2024.

Change in IWG email addresses

Rather than using personal email addresses to conduct IWG business, we have established two new email addresses. These addresses are tied to the website and will provide the benefits of administrative continuity when new officers are appointed. They will also provide a historical record of correspondence. The website and membership application forms have been updated to reflect these new addresses.

info@iwgddb.com - for any inquiries related to the IWG. This is monitored by the Secretary/Treasurer.

membership@iwgddb.com - for inquiries related to membership applications and the submission of membership application forms. This is monitored by the Membership Chair.

Do you know where they are?

Our only link to members is via email. The following members have had repeated email bounces. If you know a more current address for these members, please send an email to info@iwgddb.com

António Barbosa

[abarbosa@netcabo.pt]

Bud Hammes

[bhammes@respectingchoices.org]

Melinda Bridgman

[m.bridgman@snet.net]

Eliezer Witztum

[elyiit@actcom.co.il]

Mary Ann Morgan

[mamorgan@sympatico.ca]

David Head

[david@davidhead.plus.com]

With my best wishes,



Christopher Hall
Secretary/Treasurer
IWGDDB



News of Members

IWG Member and Grief Australia CEO Honoured in King's Birthday Honours List



On June 10th, the Governor-General of Australia announced that Christopher Hall was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2024 King's Birthday Honours List.

The Australian Honours system recognises the outstanding service and contributions of Australians. It gives the nation a chance to celebrate and acknowledge those who work tirelessly to improve local communities and to make Australia a better place.

The award citation was "For significant service to psychology, particularly to grief and bereavement."

In responding to this announcement, Chris said "To my family, friends, colleagues both here and abroad, and supporters of the work of Grief Australia thank you for your support.

The award underscores the importance of our work in supporting individuals through some of the most challenging moments of their lives and moving closer to being a country where grieving people are understood, respected, and supported."

Stephen Connor

Dear Friends and Colleagues: We are expecting our third grandchild in July, a boy this time after two lovely girls. One of life's greatest pleasures. Connie is presiding over our beautiful 2-acre garden and volunteering for the local board of Candlelighter's charity for children with cancer and I am carrying on as exec for the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance. WHPCA has lost much of its funding, but we are still working in Bangladesh, Kenya, Greece, Ukraine, Ethiopia, and most recently in Uzbekistan on palliative care development projects. This year is the 10th anniversary of passage of the World Health Assembly resolution on palliative care and we organized a very good side event in Geneva week before last to note this milestone. Still a very long way to go to realize the aims of that resolution. Need for palliative care is growing much faster than development of services.

Hope you are all well and thriving.

Warm regards,

Stephen



Stephen Connor

It's summer and fortunately for me my wife and partner Connie is a master gardener! So one of life's secrets is to surround yourself with beauty....



Paul Rosenblatt

Paul Rosenblatt has been writing IWG-relevant short stories for online literary magazines. Here are links to three of his stories:

Rosenblatt, P. C. (2020, Winter). The eavesdropper. Shark Reef, Issue 35. <http://sharkreef.org/fiction/the-eavesdropper/> A story about a family in which a child has died.

Rosenblatt, P. C. (2022). Purchased grief. October Hill Magazine, vol. 6, # 2, Summer. <https://www.octoberhillmagazine.com/archives>. Download the Summer, 2022 issue. The story is on pp. 13-16. A story about friend death and the issues a student may struggle with after pretending to have experienced a friend's death.

Rosenblatt, P. C. (2024, April 15). Jake. Please See Me, issue 14. https://pleaseseeme.com/issue-14-acceptance/jake_psm14_fiction-paul-rosenblatt/ Life and death in an eldercare facility.

All the best,

Paul

Mary Ellen Macdonald

Mary Ellen recently gave a TEDx talk on grief, in an event that revolved around the theme of 'Peace' which took place in a historical location – where the original Pugwash Charter was written and signed during the Cold War see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pugwash_Conferences_on_Science_and_World_Affairs.

Mary Ellen's talk riffed on the idea of peace, using the motif of 'Rest in Peace' as an entry point to think about grief.

You can view *Grief, memory, and caring for the dead* here - <https://youtu.be/ZBuLO8OsQ3M?si=NZ9uXtkLgjHmJ7lB>



IWG Meeting Update



Thank you to everyone who completed the member survey Christopher Hall provided to you around March this year.

We've looked through the member survey responses and have taken on board the feedback. For instance, we are doing our best to keep costs reasonable. We are aware of health concerns and our hotel has windows that open, allowing you/your room to access fresh air. We are looking into tour and travel ideas and Irene shared some of these later in the newsletter.

All the feedback will be used to ensure the 34th Meeting of the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement is a success!

We hope to have the online registration for the meeting open on July 1 or soon after. Please visit <https://www.iwgddb.com/> and select Next Meeting from the menu for more information.

We're busy preparing and we can't wait to see you!

Your 2025 IWG Meeting planning committee,

**Lauren Breen, June Allan, Meg Chin,
Christopher Hall, Bianca Lavorgna,
Elizabeth Lobb, Dianne McKissock, Mal
McKissock, Danny Nugus and Irene
Renzenbrink**

The Indian Pacific

Do you want to arrive in Perth in style?

A journey aboard the iconic Indian Pacific will whisk you between Sydney, Adelaide and Perth in comfort and style. Named for the two oceans the train encounters on its journey, the Indian Pacific travels between Sydney and Perth on a spectacular 4,352km (2,704 mile) crossing.



For more information go to: <https://www.journeybeyondrail.com.au/indian-pacific/>

21 Facts about Australia you didn't know!

1. The Australian Alps get more snow than the Swiss Alps.
2. 90% of Australians live on the coast.
3. Tasmania has the cleanest air in the world.
4. The Great Barrier Reef is the largest ecosystem in the world. It is made up of nearly 3,000 individual reefs and can be seen from space.
5. Australia has over 60 separate wine regions.
6. Fraser Island in the state of Queensland is the largest sand island in the world.
7. The Indian Pacific train (which runs between Sydney and Perth) has the longest straight section of train track in the world.
8. The Great Ocean Road is the world's largest war memorial.
9. 80% of Australian animals are unique to Australia.
10. Australia has the world's longest golf course measuring more than 1,350 kms long.
11. Australia is home to 21 of the world's 25 most venomous snakes.
12. It would take around 29 years to visit one new Aussie beach every day – there are 10,685 of them!
13. Australia is the 6th largest country in the world.
14. 91% of the country is covered by native vegetation.
15. 33% of Australians were born in another country.
16. Australia is the only continent in the world without an active volcano.
17. Australia is home to the longest fence in the world, the Dingo Fence. Originally built to keep dingos away from fertile land, the fence is now 5,614 km long.
18. The Australian dollar is considered to be the most advanced currency in the world – its waterproof, made of polymer and notoriously hard to counterfeit.
19. Australia is the only continent covered by a single country.
20. The world's oldest fossil was discovered in Australia – 3.4 billion years old.
21. Australia is home to more than 1,500 species of spiders

The Colin Murray Parkes Scholarship

Advancing knowledge in the field of thanatology in clinical practice and/or in the community



Dear friends,

The Colin M. Parkes Scholarship is a new IWG initiative that seeks to support researchers in our field. As we age, our pioneers die, and sometimes, we include lasting or semi-lasting rituals in our memory. Thus, a long time ago, the coffee-ice cream was included in our remembrance ceremony in memory of Herman Feifel, a pioneer psychologist and one of the founders of the dying, death and bereavement movement.

While Colin was still alive, we first explored with him and then initiated the creation of a scholarship in his name to perpetuate his spirit and love for research and clinical practice in palliative and bereavement care.

Debbie Kerslake, who represented the IWG at his funeral, said that Colin was a curious, serious researcher, advancing the field through strong and novel initiatives. To name a few, he was asked to lead an intervention after the Aberfan catastrophe in 1966 in which many adults and children died, and he initiated, with the support of the Queen of England, a royal instalment for an Emergency Workgroup to be called upon

in response to disasters. This emergency workgroup regularly provides training for rescuers and professionals involved in designing and implementing interventions post-disaster. Colin himself led several psychosocial interventions, such as the 9/11 disaster (for UK citizens), with a group of volunteers. When asked by Ruthmarijke, “What did you do?” he responded, “As a first step, we needed to re-install culture, so we held a tea ceremony while responding to other needs at hand and provided victims with a loaded sim card, so that they could call home.” He also visited on several occasions the Hibakushas (the victims of the atomic bomb in Japan), and he led an intervention in Rwanda, justifying his involvement, “for the sake of the children, it is our task to generate a future for them...” Colin admitted that while he was driving home from Aberfan, while he was walking around Ground Zero in New York, and at other disaster sites, he was crying at the same time as he was motivated by strength, courage, and deep humanity to find answers to tragedy, disaster, or attacks. Besides Colin’s extensive research on bereavement

with various populations, his lecturing across the world, and his involvement in the training of professionals who work in palliative and bereavement care, he was always open to fruitful collaborations with his IWG colleagues, leading work groups that produced highly needed documents in the field. He was an extremely active pioneer in our field to the end of his life and enjoyed every opportunity for collaboration. As noted in the more recent IWG News, Colin believed that “in every moment of every day of our lives, we permanently change the world for better or worse. It follows that although the “I” dies, the effect of each life does not. Indeed, viewed in that way, we all live on forever. We live on in the consequences of our lives.” Colin made enormous contributions to the challenges of his time; the challenges of our world today demand new initiatives. We cannot copy or walk in his shoes, but we can take on the torch he lit and move our field forward.

Scholarship Application

The Colin M. Parkes Scholarship does not support a large research project but can contribute to a piece of a larger project, fund a small project that will lead to the development of a larger one, or fund a small self-contained project. Colin was active in the fields of disaster, violence, palliative care and bereavement.

Those interested, please fill out the attached Scholarship Application Form and submit it to the Colin M. Parkes Scholarship Committee via info@iwgddb.com.

Scholarship Donation

Donations can still be made. Read the Newsletter of February 2024, or go to the IWG website (<https://www.iwgddb.com>) and select “Parkes Scholarship”. Select the “Donate to the Colin Murray Parkes Scholarship Fund” button and select from the drop-down menu to make your donation. After filling in your Credit Card Number, wait for a short while and your receipt will appear!

In the future, the opportunity to contribute to the Scholarship will be made available when members renew their membership dues.

We look very much forward to the proposals!

Betty (betty_davies@yahoo.com),
Danai (dpap@nurs.uoa.gr) and
Ruthmarijke (rmsm1@posteo.net)

Colin M. Parkes Scholarship Application Form

Name

Professional Background

Work affiliation

Email

Country

Date

Title of Research Project:

Goal of the Project:

Research design:

Sample:

Method of data collection:

Method of data analysis:

Is this a research project already under way?

Yes

No

Does this research project have another source of funding?

Yes

No

Has this project secured permission from an Ethics Committee?

Yes

No

If No, from which Ethics Committee will the project obtain permission?

Comments:

What IWG means to me



My first meeting as an IWG member was Tucson in 2004. Before I go into what IWG means to me and why I keep coming to meetings, I'd like to provide a bit of backstory for context.

First of all, I never intended to study loss and grief. My doctorate is in a multidisciplinary field called Family Studies and, during my doctoral studies, I concentrated on traumatic stress within the family. After discussing my interests with my major professor, I settled on doing a qualitative interview study of marital couple dynamics in a highly stressful situation that both experienced simultaneously. I thought "home invasion." When I attempted to find any related literature on couples, all of the studies I found, and there wasn't much and all of it looked at the couples' response to the loss of a child. My response was "nope!" I had young children at the time and wasn't sure if I could "go there" with the people I would interview. But then a friend of mine lost her baby in a pre-term birth at 23 gestational weeks and what I saw there, especially for her husband, bore absolutely no resemblance to what I saw depicted in the studies I'd read. I also thought back to deaths in my own family and the response of the men and they didn't

grieve "the right way" either. It turned out that what was depicted in the studies I found as "father's grief" was actually what the wives described to the researcher about their husband. The men were never consulted. I found I needed them to be consulted, I needed to be one of the people who did, and thus, I needed to acquaint myself with the work of people who studied families who had experienced a loss. That is where I became acquainted with the work of Paul Rosenblatt which helped me to find my footing as I began my study of grief in the family. Before Paul and I met, unbeknownst

When I think of the overall impact of participating in IWG meetings, I think of the ability to connect with people who are leaders in some way and who have expertise in some area that I might not have considered

to him, he introduced me to a number of IWG members through his reference lists and I daisy-chained through their reference lists to "meet" even more.

Fast-forward to my participation in IWG meetings, it has been a delight to engage



with individuals who have caused me to stretch intellectually and I hope, since then, I've done the same for others. I will always be especially grateful that Phyllis Silverman shared an interest in knitting and that we were able to “talk knitting” while she shared her wisdom and insights with me. Throughout my membership in IWG, I have had the opportunity to meet and get

“as a unity of interacting personalities” to say that I love our IWG family get-togethers and all of the diverse interacting personalities it contains

to know many individuals who led before me, those who are my contemporaries, and others who I hope are finding my encouragement and mentorship helpful. I value those relationships immensely.

When I think of the overall impact of participating in IWG meetings, I think of the ability to connect with people who are leaders in some way and who have expertise in some area that I might not have considered if I had not been in IWG. I like to consider interesting questions from multiple perspectives. In IWG, we have multiple disciplines that are represented among our members. We have people who represent social and behavioral sciences, physical and life sciences, and arts and humanities. We also have practitioners and people who represent business and other professions who bring a pragmatic perspective that balances my more theoretical viewpoint. As an international organization, we have the cultural perspective that are found in each of these broad fields as they are applied within each member's home society. With each meeting I attend, I feel like I have come home enriched from the exposure to new and different ideas.

I could go on, but I think I'll finish by saying that IWG is to me a family. I'll use the words of sociologist Ernest Burgess, one of my first professional heroes, who described the family “as a unity of interacting personalities” to say that I love our IWG family get-togethers and all of the diverse interacting personalities it contains. I look forward to continue to attend and participate in them for many years to come.

Kathy Gilbert
gilbertk@iu.edu

Fire and Ash: Autumn

**The oaks have done it again
shaking their grey frames free
from the weight of gold.
A twelfth season of frost has come
to ice the grass
and fringe again in lace
the fallen leaves in Glenlyon's gutters.**

**These autumn afternoons
as kindling catches and soot
dislodges**

**I recall how hope billowed
then grew thin as smoke
drifting over the avenue.**

**The oaks will green again,
shading the road by the fire station
where twelve springs ago
the red coffin passed
the yellow guard of honour.**

Fire and Ash: Autumn is a poem by Margret Lockwood from *Draining the Dark*, an anthology dedicated to her husband Daryl Jones who died in 2008 at the age of 65. Daryl died of a brain tumour five months after the tumour was diagnosed. He and Margret lived on a large acreage and were

supported by a local palliative care service in Glenlyon, a small town an hour's drive from Melbourne, Victoria.

Both Margret and Daryl were members of the Volunteer Fire Brigade for their area and after Daryl's death, Margret continued to drive the tanker with water that was used to fight bushfires so prevalent in summer time. Margret is a former literature teacher and her anthology is described as a "compelling collection of encounters with natural disaster and the private catastrophe of grief, immersion in the life of the forest and the life of family and the complexities of memory".

After leaving their home the funeral procession with Daryl in his red coffin proceeded down the main street of Glenlyon along the avenue of oaks and elms with local volunteer fire brigade members in their protective yellow suits forming a guard of honour. This is a very touching and quintessentially Australian funeral ritual. Margret kindly allowed me to include her poem in this IWG Newsletter. We did some art making and writing together during her time of bereavement.

Irene Renzenbrink

