

Seasons for Growth receives a 'High' rating for impact.



Seasons for Growth provides children and young people the skills and knowledge to adapt to change following loss or grief experiences.

THIS RESEARCH RECEIVED A 'HIGH' RATING FOR IMPACT IN THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL'S ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2018-2019 NATIONAL REPORT.

www.scu.edu.au/research/our-research/engagement-and-impact/support-for-children-experiencing-loss-or-grief/

Overview of Impact

LOSS AT ANY TIME IN LIFE CAN BE CHALLENGING. Southern Cross University developed the *Seasons for Growth* program to support children and young people following death, separation, divorce and other loss experiences. *Seasons for Growth* was adapted to support refugee children, young people in suicide 'hotspots' and children involved in natural disasters. The program has also been adapted for adults experiencing loss, Indigenous people, prisoners, and parents of children in the program.

Since 1996, 260,000 children, young people and adults in five countries have taken part in *Seasons for Growth*. The program has given participants a new start, a chance to transform their experiences of change and loss and to move forward with confidence and hope.

Beneficiaries

- Children & young people
- Parents experiencing bereavement, separation or divorce
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Survivors of natural disasters (floods/bushfires/earthquakes)
- Refugees
- Prisons/prisoners
- Government departments/authorities (e.g. Education/Family and Community Services/Local councils)
- Government and non-government schools
- Community organisations (e.g. family relationship centres/disability organisations/out-of-home care/aged care)
- Foundations and NGOs (e.g., headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation)



Details of the Impact



EXPERIENCES OF LOSS AND GRIEF FEATURE IN THE LIVES OF MANY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. Almost one in four Australians aged 18-24 experience divorce or separation of their parents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010) and 6% experience the death of a parent during childhood (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

PROFESSOR ANNE GRAHAM, Director of the Centre for Children and Young People (ccyp) at Southern Cross University, authored *Seasons for Growth* (is an evidence-based, small-group, psychosocial education program providing children and young people (6-18 years) with knowledge and skills to adapt to significant changes following death, separation, divorce and other loss experiences. Launched in 1996, it is the only such program developed in Australia that is nationally and internationally available.

SEASONS FOR GROWTH IS STRUCTURED AROUND THE METAPHOR OF SEASONAL CHANGE, Worden's task theory and contemporary evidence about what children need to know and do to adapt to loss. The program emphasises agency: accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to the new situation and emotionally relocating the person or thing. It promotes resilience and self-esteem, normalises grief, builds peer support and fosters positive coping strategies.

SEASONS FOR GROWTH (3RD EDITION) CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WAS LAUNCHED IN 2015. This edition synthesised and integrated the findings of much of CCYP's research from the preceding decade, including contemporary interdisciplinary understandings of childhood (emphasising children's agency as well as vulnerability), children's rights, grief theory, understandings of wellbeing (subjective wellbeing grounded in children's conceptualisations) and Honneth's recognition theory.

SUICIDE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR 15-24 YEAR OLDS IN AUSTRALIA (24% of male and 15% of female deaths, respectively). In 2015 headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation requested a trial of *Seasons for Growth* as a suicide post-vention in schools. CCYP researchers modified the program, and having conducted a successful trial, trained 72 companions and rolled it out into communities across Australia identified as youth suicide hotspots.

BETWEEN 2011 AND 2016 81,993 PEOPLE (91% of them children or young people) participated in *Seasons for Growth* in its various

adaptations in Australia, New Zealand and Scotland. Since its development in 1996, the program has delivered significant social benefits to over 260,000 children, young people and adults in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, England and Republic of Ireland.

UPTAKE IN SCOTLAND HAS BEEN SPECTACULAR. The Scottish Government funded a National Coordinator for the program from 2008 resulting in training of 2,204 companions and participation of 24,210 children and young people in the period from 2011-16. *Seasons for Growth* won a City of Edinburgh Council Children & Families Award in 2011. There is solid evidence that it has made a very positive contribution to the social and emotional well-being of Scottish children and young people.

SEASONS FOR GROWTH ALSO PROVIDES THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WITH AN EVIDENCE-BASED, credible program to support children and young people facing loss. While schools were previously the major sites for *Seasons for Growth* in Australia, 27% of programs are now run through community agencies. In 2005 Professor Graham gifted the intellectual property in the *Seasons for Growth* program to the newly-established non-profit organisation Good Grief Ltd, which was established to administer *Seasons for Growth* programs across Australia and coordinate mandatory training. From 2011-2016, Good Grief trained 3,098 companions who delivered the suite of *Seasons for Growth* programs and seminars to 50,280 people (85% of them children or young people).

IN 2009 ACCESS ECONOMICS REPORTED THAT NEARLY A QUARTER OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA AGED 12-25 HAD SOME MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTY. The direct financial cost of this mental illness was estimated at \$10.6 billion. Proven intervention programs such as *Seasons for Growth*, which raises self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem, and lowers depression and anxiety, provide economic benefit to Australia by lowering health costs. However, any economic benefits that may flow from *Seasons for Growth* are overshadowed by the social benefits that have accrued from this program in its many forms. *Seasons for Growth* has given thousands of children, young people and adults a new start, a chance to transform their experiences of change and loss and move forward with confidence and hope.

NOTE: report summary only. The full report is located at <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/EI/NationalReport/2018/>

