

## Geoff Glassock

NALAG Vice President

Address to the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Dinner

Introducing Professor Beverley Raphael – Founding Member of NALAG (NSW) Inc

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our Guest Speaker Professor Beverley Raphael because in many ways we owe the founding of the National Association for Loss and Grief in 1977 to Beverley.

It is true there were a group of people actively involved in the area of loss and grief and they had formed a national liaison working group to explore them further. This working group surveyed people working in the field to see if there was interest in and support for a group. Most of this activity seemed to emanate from a group of people in Victoria.

The Granville train disaster on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1977 changed the focus on trauma, loss and grief to NSW and this is where more formally Professor Beverley Raphael entered the picture. In the documentary that NALAG was given on the Granville train disaster Professor Raphael is shown working with a group of nurses, doctors, ambulance officers, police, clergy, emergency service workers and others in the caring professions who provided physical and psychological first aid to the people involved in the incident. It was apparent to her and to them that their professional training had not prepared them to manage the physical and emotional impact of large scale disasters. Professor Raphael had had experience in Darwin following Cyclone Tracey so was aware of both the short term and long term effects on the general public and the front line workers in the field. This knowledge and experience and her interest in the area is revealed in her article on *The Management of Pathological Grief* in volume 9 1975 in the Australian and New Zealand Journal on Psychiatry and in 1976 a chapter with David Maddison on *The Care of Bereaved Adults*. This work meant that academically and clinically she had her finger on the pulse and knew what was needed.

The national liaison working group circulated a newsletter and arranged a meeting at Sydney's Concord Rehabilitation Hospital on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1977. Professor Beverley Raphael was elected the first President, Des Tobin a funeral director from Melbourne, secretary, Milton Coleman a Uniting Church minister, treasurer. Reflecting on the beginnings of NALAG in 1988 at a Brisbane AGM Professor Raphael pointed out the unique nature of NALAG saying: "There isn't the same sort of umbrella organisation linking different bereavement groups in this way anywhere in the world".

State branches were soon formed with NSW and Victoria beginning on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1977, Queensland 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1978, South Australia late 1978, Western Australia early 1980s and Tasmania 1989. In the early days of NALAG (NSW) I noted there were 600 plus people who received the newsletter.

The second national conference was held in Melbourne in 1979 when Rev Simon Stephens, founder of Compassionate Friends was the keynote speaker. The third Conference was in South Australia and the fourth national conference was held here in Sydney at The Centre, Randwick. It was the first occasion I was involved with NALAG in convening a conference.

I looked at the list of participants and the speakers – Dame Leonie Kramer then Professor of English at Sydney University officially opened the conference revealing how through her daughter, her interest in the field of loss and grief was awakened, apart from an awareness through her study of literature. The speakers, were Ruth Bright, Annie Cantwell, Melbourne, Peter Chown NSW Health Dept, Barbara Erskine Queensland, Prof Graeme Griffin, Melbourne, Sister Brigid Hirschfeld, Brisbane, Dr Murray Lloyd Sydney, Mal McKissock, Sydney, Prof Gerry Milton Sydney, Prof Beverley Raphael who by this time was Professor of Community Psychiatry at Newcastle University, Maurice Raymond, Sydney, Irene Renzenbrink, Melbourne, David Treloar Melbourne and Barbara Walsh NSW Health Department, Tamworth.

In 1985 Queensland was due to run the conference when for a number of reasons they withdrew so a further conference was held in Sydney

I think the next most significant event for NALAG occurred when Beverley and I were at the Second International conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary in London and put forward a proposal for NALAG to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference in Sydney. I recall following the committee's decision to award Sydney the conference Beverley, Rob Hockley (a former committee member - now deceased) myself and another woman whose name escapes me went to a tea dance at The Savoy. Professor Raphael is pretty good on her feet in a waltz.

Beverley was the scientific convenor of the Conference and was instrumental in bringing a number of international keynote speakers to Australia. Together with the help of an excellent committee we held a superb conference which colleagues from around the world still talk about today. A special memory for many of them was the Bush Dance in the Union building at Sydney University where virtually every person present joined in. One of the reasons why I as National President was passionate to get an international conference in Australia was to show the international community the kind of work that was going on in this country. As Australians we were so inclined to think that was going on overseas was where the action was and my experience was that we were more advanced in the support work we provided. One of the outcomes from the International conference was the participation of a number of New Zealanders who expressed an interest in forming a NALAG type organisation in New Zealand. In 1992 as National President I spent 2 weeks covering the North and South Island speaking to groups about NALAG and running workshops. NALAG New Zealand is a now thriving organisation.

A number of things were happening with NALAG becoming National literally. There were name changes so SALAG became NALAG (SA) and WALAG, NALAG (WA) etc so that there was uniformity of style with the name for each state. A national committee met regularly producing a national newsletter and being responsible for national conferences. However each state remained autonomous. The national structure has now collapsed with most of the state branches closing. NALAG is still going strong in NSW and there is still a NALAG presence in Victoria. Since its formation NALAG (NSW) has had as president: Beverley Raphael, Mal McKissock, Ruth Bright, Geoffrey Glassock, Peter Harrington and the present one is Julie Dunsmore.

This afternoon I was speaking with Dr Louise Rowling (a former NSW committee member) who apologised for not being able to get here tonight. She recalled that as a school counsellor at the time of Granville the first person she met when called upon to deal with some of the aftermath of Granville in the school population was Professor Beverley Raphael. She also said that NALAG had accomplished much in making people aware of issues of loss and grief in these thirty years.

Whatever NALAG has been able to do is because it was established on a sure foundation and the person who made that possible we honour tonight and I invite Beverley to speak to us now.

Ladies and gentlemen, Professor Beverley Raphael.

Raphael B (1975) The management of pathological grief *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 9, 173-180

Raphael B & Maddison D (1976) The care of bereaved adults. In O W Hill (Ed) *Modern trends in psychosomatic medicine* London Butterworth