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Life after assisted dying: caring for the living left behind

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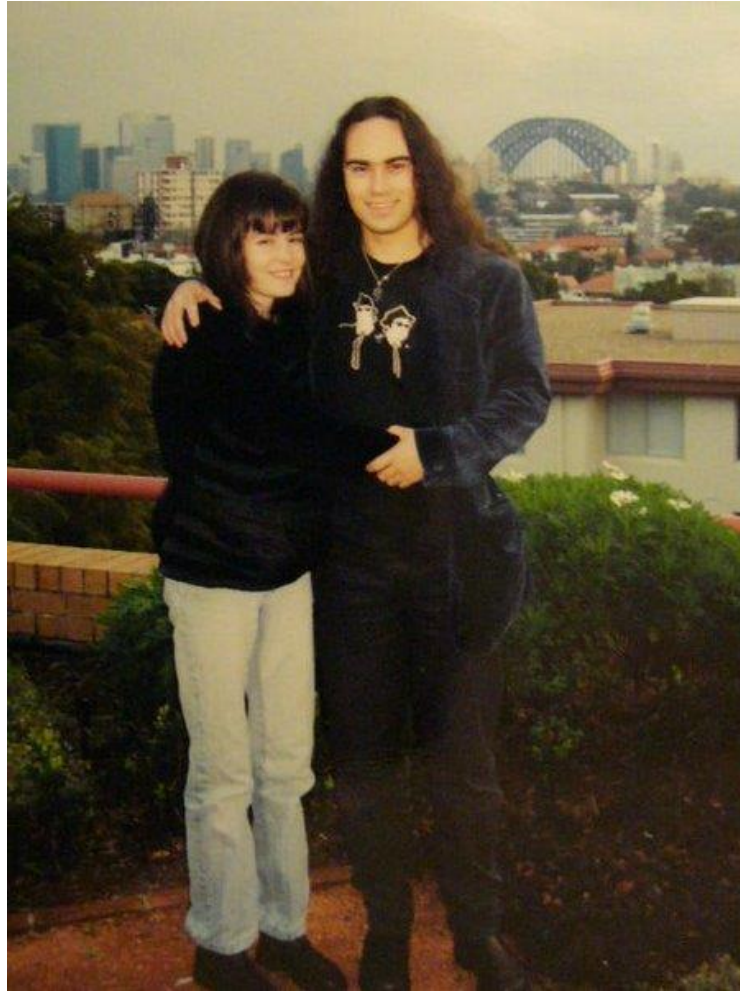
A few things – mainly apologies

- 1. Apologies to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders present – and others who have cultural beliefs against this - there will be images of people who are now dead in this talk.
- 2. This is not a very philosophical talk – except insofar as there are a few reflections on the role of place, community and time in a process of grieving and loss.
- 3. I might be emotional – sorry about that if it makes you uncomfortable.
- 4. This is a talk I've put off for over 20 years – because what I will describe was illegal at the time.
- 5. While I am presenting an issue with assisted dying – this talk comes from a place of supporting and improving rather than criticizing.

Kerry Anne Stapleton



Kerry Anne Stapleton Hunter



Troy Stapleton





Loss

“One day you are going to lose everything you have. Nothing will prepare you for that day. Not faith...not religion...nothing. When someone you love dies, you will know emptiness...you will know what it is to be completely and utterly alone. You will never forget and never ever forgive. The lonely do not usually speak as completely and intimately as James O'Barr does here in this book - so, if anything, at least take this lesson from "The Crow": think about what you have to lose.”

John Bergin Foreword to The Crow graphic novel

Rejection

- Harder – because the people who supported through my loss – who shared it with me, were the last people I could feel comfortable talking about this with.

Self Judgment

- Worse still – I felt bad about feeling rejected, at how churlish I was being.

Moral luck

I was very lucky to meet someone who liked me, and was both willing to put up with me feeling sad and not willing to let me hide my feelings about that, and their care eventually helped me put myself back together.

But that was merely good luck – I could easily have gone on and ended up in a much worse place in terms of my mental health.

What can we do?

- 1. Counselling & consoling

Particularly make this free and easy to access as part of our assisted dying programs.

- 2. Normalisation

Both of needing help & of assisted dying – it was much harder for me to talk about when this was describing a criminal act. And it is easier for me to talk about now that I've been convinced that I'm not a selfish jerk for feeling rejection.
