

***Media Interviews with Jessie Broome, president and co-founder of ACOCP available on request.
A beautiful selection of images also available.***

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ACOCP: "On Baby Loss Day – Picture the Babies. Talk and Listen to the Parents."

15 October 2009 – Today, on International Baby Loss Day, The Australian Community of Child Photographers (ACOCP) is urging people to recognise the many families that go through the tragic loss of a child, rather than risk isolating them by neglecting to acknowledge their loss.

International Baby Loss Awareness Day is 15 October. Across the world, memorial services, balloon releases and candle lighting at 7pm take place in honour and as a sign of remembrance for lost children.

Said Jessie Broome, president and co-founder of ACOCP, "The grief that follows the loss of a child is so engulfing but it can also be very isolating. We encourage people to take the time to honour this grief; to realise that by avoiding the subject does not make it go away and by simply acknowledging the child can help the family immensely."

ACOCP is an entirely not-for-profit Australian organisation that gives the gift of photographic memories to families who have had a stillbirth, premature baby, infant in the NICU or child with serious or terminal illnesses. Participating photographers – some of whom have previously experienced their own loss - are on call 24/7 to go to hospitals or homes and are often present during the families' most tragic hours.

Jessie continued, "The wider community finds the loss of a child very difficult. We find it difficult to know what to say or what to do, so often tend to stay away - particularly after

the funeral. The process goes on for a long time and support is needed over the long haul and not just the first weeks.

"Listening is the key. Parents often want to tell you the stories of their children. You don't have to say much. Alternatively, some people find practical measures easier, such as helping out with cooking meals, child care services or housework.

"It's understandable that people feel at a loss of what to say or do – for a long time, death has been a taboo subject in our society. It's not something people discuss, but I think we must."

The Role of Photography in the Grieving Process

Jessie explains the important role the ACOCP plays, "The most heartbreaking thing in the world is losing a child. As a parent, we look forward to watching our child grow, finding out who they are and watching them develop. We fill boxes with drawings and paintings and reports and photos. When you lose a baby, you also lose a lifetime of memories.

"In some situations, when facing the death of a child, parents are encouraged to take time with their little one. They are given a fleeting opportunity to try to create a lifetime of memories within a small space of time. They are encouraged to bond with their child, to hold them, to sing to them. To take their footprints, a lock of their hair and as many photos as possible. This is where the ACOCP comes in. We capture many beautiful, professional-quality, images in the most loving and sensitive way, so that parents has something that they can share with family and friends, something to treasure and remember always."

More Stories

Martine Oglethorpe is an ACOCP members who also lost her baby daughter, Ava at five months:

"Nothing will ever take away the pain of losing a child but having photos is so important not only for comfort but to help keep their memory alive, particularly for other siblings who would otherwise not remember.

"It is hard for people to know what to say but I know for myself that I much prefer people to continue to acknowledge her and include her as part of our family. I have a canvas photo of her beautiful smiling face hanging on our wall and I too was wary of how people would react but mostly they just smile back at her and comment on how gorgeous it is."

Said Mel Bright, ACOCP photographer:

"Recently I was chatting with a mum whose baby had passed away at 12 hours old. I took his portraits after he died. The part of our conversation that struck me the most was that she didn't have clear memories of the time she had with her baby. She ended up having a caesarean, which I believe is often very common in these circumstances. For her, this cloudy time was the only time she got to spend with her son.

"The photographs clearly showing what her baby looked like have been ever so meaningful for her. When I prepared an album for her, I did all the pictures black and white. This meant so much to her as she was able to comfortably share her pictures with family and friends. Just as any proud parent would like to."

About ACOCP

ACOCP is an entirely not-for-profit Australian community organisation giving the gift of photographic memories to children in need and their families. ACOCP works with families who have had a stillbirth, premature baby, infant in the NICU or child with serious or terminal illnesses. Participating photographers are on call 24/7 to go to hospitals or homes all over Australia. The service is entirely free. There is no charge for the photography, prints, beautiful presentation, tasteful packaging or delivery.

For more Information

ACOCP

<http://www.acocp.org.au/>

The Official Site of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day (USA)

<http://www.october15th.com/>

Baby Loss Awareness Campaign (UK)

<http://www.babyloss-awareness.org/>