



RENEW FEST VIGIL FOR GRIEF

COMMUNAL DIARY

some words
from the hearts,
minds and bodies

of three dozen people
of the three hundred who
entered into, participated and gave to

renew fest's thirty-hour vigil for grief
on mothers' day weekend 2019



**Renew Fest's
30HR VIGIL FOR GRIEF**

Saturday midday, 12noon
to Sunday dusk, 6pm

Mother's Day Weekend
11-12 May 2019

Fig Tree Grove
Mullumbimby Showground

welcome to country
Delta Kay

smoking ceremony
Uncle Magpie

ongoing music-scape
HHAARRPP
(Luke Jaaniste)

live musicians

Jolanda Moyle	Sat afternoon
Georgia Shine	Sat night
HHAARRPP	Sun morning
Cave In The Sky	Sun afternoon
(Cye Wood, Purdie Wood)	
Peter Hunt	Sun afternoon
Black Rainbow	Sun evening
(Brandon Casidy, Cye Wood, Luke Jaaniste)	

poets and writers

Ella Rose Goninan	Sat afternoon
Tanith Roberts	Sat night
Thomas Keily	Sat night
Niall Fahy	Sun lunch
Zenith Virago	Sun afternoon
Ella Rose Goninan	Sun morning

vigil welcomers
Ella Rose Goninan
Kat Barker
Rasul Luisa
Charlotte Grace

garden and water bowl shrine
Dharma Maria Mitra

spinning wheel meditation
Joss Moss

prayer tree
Sally Prescott

**gateway portals
(crimson, gold, green, blue)**
Made by Sophie Wilksch & Shedding crew

sheltered reading tables
Ella Rose Goninan

bone altar — at the missing fig tree
Thomas Keily

labyrinth
Jenni-Cargill Strong

invocations for arriving and leaving
Rasul Luisa Bravo

three fires of contemplation

hay bale geometry
Luke Jaaniste

renew fest director
Ella Rose Goninan

vigil curators
Ella Rose Goninan
Luke Jaaniste



*Amid the fig trees.
Amid sound of birds and elegy.
We sorrowed.*

*Mourning our lost.
Our dead.
The wild Earth.
And the parts of ourselves that are not
what we wanted them to be.*

*It felt like a sacred thing.
To be among each other,
in our frailty.*

I wondered...

Whether everyone's heart is broken?

*Does everybody carry within them
a secret grief
that is theirs alone?*

I think so.

*And although there is an ache in that
thought,
it draws us all
closer
together.*

It was an honour to attend and to participate...

Thank you both for creating and evoking such a grace filled space to hold people's sorrow.

I feel like it represents something that's been more or less repressed in the typical northern rivers culture... in my experience, the new age subculture has often been so obdurately oriented towards 'light' and 'positivity' that it has felt at times repressive - a negation of true expression of what it is to be human.

I left with an exquisite sense of communal heartbreak and solidarity.

(Niall)



I have been grieving the destruction of our future world for quite some time, so I was holding some anxiety around visiting the vigil. How would I react? How would I feel? What would it be like sitting there with my daughter, knowing that the world she will inherit is not the world I have grown in and loved?

And then. Then I arrived. As I approached the entrance I could feel all those anxieties slipping away. There was something about being there at that moment, as the sun was getting lower and blue was giving way to orange—I felt deeply held. I felt comfort in the knowledge that all the others in the space were there with me and I was there with them. I felt calm and slow. And I felt grief, but in a way I had only known when my father had passed—the grief that ebbs and flows, but leaves space for life and what comes after. A real grief that is deep in your bones. The grief that never leaves, but reveals a path to something, somewhere.

I spent a lot of time sitting next to a fire with my daughter on my knees. I saw the emptiness and desertedness of the space around and I could feel that in my body. But I could also see life happening—the trees that have been there longer than any of us have, and my daughter who has been here a much shorter time. I know that life will be different soon. I know life will be different for my daughter. But I also know

life will keep living despite the devastation we enact on the Earth.

I left as darkness was approaching, but my path was illuminated by fire and my heart was warmed and my aching held.

(Daniel)



I arrived at the Grief Vigil in the dark where I was welcomed by a warm fire and an authentic appreciation for my willingness to love and grieve by the gatekeeper. Connected.

As I walked through the entrance I was mesmerised by the visual and auditory beauty of the space. A living green arrangement as I entered the space was gently lit by candles and a warm fire with hay bails was ready for me to rest by. I let myself melt into the soundscape offering of recorded music, live cello and voice.

The people already there mostly sat in silence, which I deeply appreciated as I dropped into the intention of sitting with grief in a communal setting.

After a long while, I explored the surroundings and was touched by the various creative contemplative spaces available.

I decided to stay the night, found my place and lay out my swag to pass through the vigil darkness into the dawn, with the soundscape setting the auditory living field.

As I watched dawn rise, I rested in the presence of grief. I arose and walked the labyrinth, taking time to stop and greet the sun, to be present with the poetry that was being gently read, allowed my body to express when and how it needed and

made my way to the centre to touch the earth. There the grief came.

When complete, I rose and walked my way out of the centre. I went and made my prayers at the prayer tree. Rolled up my swag, visited the creek, thanked the organisers and left feeling deeply nourished and met by the intention of the beautifully held space.

I had been thinking of wanting to co-create/participate in communal grief gatherings for over a year, so to be able to participate in this gathering in a way that felt so innately grounded and congruent felt both resplendent and transcendent.

Deep thanks to all who helped co-create this courageous event, for honouring and paying respect to the beauty and glory of grief.

(Megan)



I was at the vigil briefly in both the day and the night.

The thing that struck me most was the sense of stillness, stillness that was infused with a kind of contemplative melancholy.

But it was a free sort of melancholy, a choose-your-own adventure melancholy, not an imposed or demanded melancholy. So there was a real softness there. And a fluidity. It wasn't a dense experience, it was very open, and its power seemed to be in it's softness.

Vulnerability. For me, this is what I enjoyed the most. Your grief, or whatever came up, was allowed to be free form, was allowed to be whatever it needed to be. The installations there were suggestions, not demands — and I deeply appreciated that there was nothing being asked of me, no outcome being coerced.

The woman spinning evoked a deep sense of nostalgia for something not known lost — I had the biggest stirring in my body of longing when I saw her spinning. It was a very gentle space, yet deep.

Night time was a far different experience, more casual of course, especially since we were there with Ella around the fire. But I also appreciated this casual space to drop in with friends, to reflect on the day and on our thoughts. And even though it was casual, the air was still infused with the holiness that had been carefully cultivated through out the day — and the slight shifts that happened when stepping both in and out of the threshold space were definite.

Thank you both of you.
So much Love. xxx

(Miriam)

Sending out massive respect, admiration and love to Ella Rose Goninan, Luke Jaaniste and everyone else who made this happen. What a profound and important gift to community.

Modern western society has such a poor relationship to death, grief, suffering and emotional embodiment particularly the 'difficult' ones...

So important to be able to grieve in public space, held so beautifully as it was... I saw at least two people who were there at the end who had experienced profound loss recently and I was moved by this compassionate offering to them and to all.

I walked the labyrinth slowly and I had tears well up in my eyes, feeling the energy of grief, tenderness, feeling into their loss and the cycles of death, loss, life in which we are all a part and i could also feel the reverence for life in it all. A bitter sweet mixture of it all... The human experience. Was a beautiful experience entering the silence and feeling.

(Nicholas)



Renew Vigil for Grief... for this griever...

The fig tree grove that day was a place of calm and acceptance. On arrival I had no clear idea of grief I was carrying or intending to express through being there... in the beginning I was happy.

Great satisfaction I felt, knowing that there was balance and wisdom in my local community... the wisdom to give space for grief, and the heart to hold that space for others, for all, to come as they are and be able to contemplate, to feel, to express, to mourn in a safe space without judgement or expectation...

I entered the grove and sat under a tree... friends all around me, but in silence... what a wonderful, rare state to be in... surrounded by people, yet silent.

I could see some others talking, I could tell that their talk wasn't idle or inane chatter... they were talking about their experience of grief in some way, and being listened to or offered reflection... I chose not to speak. Yes, this was nice. I thought, as I sat, that if I didn't have to 'make' conversation all the time I would enjoy going out more... (!) In the beginning I enjoyed the peace.

It wasn't long before the vibration of the trees, the knowing flames of the fire, the haunting violin started to pull at my heartstrings... the {{black:rainbow}} began to gently pry me open... tearing the fabric

of soul into strips of grief and weaving them through me as reminders that I carry the grief of all.

Sadness filled the hollows behind my eyes and my lungs held stillness inside of me as I felt the grief of so many others, on so many different levels of my being... The grief of humanity, the undeniable, unending pain of existence... the many pains of the human experience, as traumatising, as alone, as despairing as it can be.

Through all of this, faces and feelings began to show themselves to me...

Friends I have known that are no more, by their own hand or someone else's... Ancestors that I remember loving as a child... Loves that left a hole... Dematerialised spirits of children I chose not to have.....and the sacrifices of my own heart throughout this life became painfully vivid...

Tears silently flowed. The recognition of this grief within me, a bittersweet full cup. So many people in my life whose grief and pain I felt through my being... our poor human hearts can carry so much... so much love.

{For what is grief if not the heaviness of love you hold but cannot give?}

The wisdom of the fire settled my spirit into a place of rest. Let our grief soar, untamed but not elusive. Death honoured by true reflection. Without fear. Soul-fly through sorrow... my spirit knows this sadness and is joyous and safe in its knowledge. There is no avoiding pain, the heart knows that. What a blessing it is to feel. To feel the fullness of emotions.

{To love so deeply that our hearts feel they would break open our ribs...}

I give my deepest heartfelt respect and gratitude to the wonderful people who visioned this event, who brought it into being, who held this space... and to everyone who offered their service in some way, no matter how small, even just for showing up, to this beautiful, respectful gathering that gave us so much.

I urge all of us to remember to walk with the wisdom we carry in our hearts, in all our interactions. The understanding that the pain of separation from nature can be healed by healing our relationship with the world around us. Let us offer our lives in service of this healing, with respect to nature and our fellow beings.

The trees of Mullumbimby gracefully blow raspberries at the mediocre life on offer to us... we choose to feel... all of it.

{{Galaxy¥Stone}}
(Jennifer)



For all the times I have wanted to fall to my knees in awe of you, but didn't, I apologise.

For all the times I have wanted to fall to my knees and cry for you, but didn't, I apologise.

To love you and to grieve you.

Instead to take one more breath from you, on top of everything else, clutching at some kind of intolerable strength. The kind that doesn't exist.

For this, I apologise also.

It is here, I've remained, slumped out on a sideways soul.

My own sensitivities sickened by something - something that ruptures the cold and cobbled path someplace between heart and mind;

breeding out of us a love for that which grows us. breeding out of us a grief for that, even more so.

A global mental health epidemic entangled within a climate crisis...

If we continue to extend our arms out into the world, reaching so far as that we can no longer see our hands,

should we be surprised then, if it is our very own hands, that turn around to strangle us?

For all of me that was hurting, you were forgotten.

You, so gloriously inarguable.

What saved me has been returning home to love - returning home to grief - the architecture that houses our souls and remembers us in our purest form.

Thank you for remembering me.

May I love you. May you grieve me, for I hope to one day leave you, for I hope that you exceed me.

I'll say this to you until my inevitable end, I'll say it in a voice filled with dust; I'll cry for you, in my purest form.

I feel nourished, I feel nurtured, I feel, deeply renewed.

It was an absolute honour to be there. I have been stringing together some words... there is a deep unmuddling, or remembering, or something occurring somewhere here and some meaning making underway...

I am so deeply grateful to all for your work in creating and holding this space. It has come at a critical time where the colder weather has asked me to slow down I have been moving into some deep reflections and grieving states...I felt immense relief when my heart remembered that it is okay to grieve.

(LouLou)



*"Thank you for loving",
she says as I arrive
and something small-and very big-
is instantly relieved at the permission
to
"do"
what we do best.*

*The sunlight creates fingers of smoke
between the trees.*

*A friend sits next to me and silently sheds
his tears
I do mine.*

*A gravity gravitates
in the contained space.*

*My heart knows this territory.
A beauty so fathomless,
it is just on the edge of what I can hold.*

*In this place, mobile phones seem
particularly obscene.
I oscillate between wanting to howl and
wanting to fling them into the fire.*

*Instead I switch channels.
Let myself be soothed, pierced, by a
trumpet whose longing gratefully meets
mine.*

*Some thoughts float through my system.
About being so white, about how 'civilized'
and private even our shared grief is.*

*Bring on the wailing women, I internally
smile to myself.*

Press forehead to Earth.

*The rest of the body melts into the
embrace.*

*Thank you for loving.
We whisper.*

(Noa)



A place where the veil between worlds past and present was gracefully lifted as people immersed themselves in no-time...

As soon as I got out of the car, I could feel and sense the vibrations of what was taking place. Luke, Ella and the team of devoted creators had transformed the entire showground area into an altar with sonic and visual reverence. Any of the conversation I had with the friend who drove me there soon dropped away as we were invited into this living space, to meditate on grief and loss.

I was blessed with the honour of playing cello and singing for the vigil. My intention was strong and clear – for each note to be a call, a prayer, to my ancestors. To the ancestors of those who listened, the ancestors of the land, and all life. I played and sung to the trees, down into their roots, up past their highest branches. Calling, praying, asking for forgiveness. Forgiving. I prayed to the stars, to the fire, to each person listening and every one who they have ever come into contact with. With each sound I prayed for all life that supports us. I called to it from the grief-soaked place in my heart that cannot fathom where and why we went so far away from living with grace in relation to the Earth that feeds us. I played to the sound of a man sobbing, of leaves rustling in the wind and fire crackling. I dissolved as I offered my prayer and call, bridging the divide between the living and the dead.

When I got the wrap-up message over an hour later, it felt like I had only been playing for ten minutes. The ethereal soundscape Luke had created put me well and truly into a trance. After slowly packing up, I sat on a haystack by the fire and experienced an expanse I have never felt before. I could feel the whole Earth turning; the grass was my skin, the tree roots my veins, the stars my breath. It was as if I was still vibrating out into the world, but now I could feel it giving back. I stared into the flames and felt connected right back to the ancient ones. There was no time. The soothing sounds of Tom Kiely's voice caressed my heart as he read from Martin Prechtel's "The Smell of Rain on Dust" about the importance of grief. I could not believe the perfection of that moment. I was truly serving the world by allowing my grief to be felt and shared and known and to reflect upon it. Grief and praise. I had such pure joy in my heart in the practice of grief; the sharing of it.

A few days later, back in Melbourne, I had the privilege of meeting with the sobbing man, sobbing whilst I was playing. He was also in Melbourne and we wanted to continue the vigil by meeting and sharing our experiences. He started the conversation by telling a poignant and touching story of his experience of the last moments of his grandfather's life. The love and care that I felt through his story brought me to tears, and they flowed freely and fully as I listened. We sat on a busy

street of Melbourne and I was so attuned to the stillness and silence all around us, so grateful for the immediate intimacy that the grief vigil allowed us to experience and share.

To me, this event served as a healing balm for our death-phobic culture. With ritual, ceremony and remembering. My sound had a higher and larger place to go, a bigger purpose. Life and death are dance partners, and it is time to hear the music.

(Georgia)



Simple amazing...

The gift of the vigil granted an impeccably held space for the invitation to be extended, and received by those drawn to an entry point simply to drop....into deep rest.

A place of surrender and deep nurturing that can only come from the communion from within. A moment to reflect... stop.. listen... A moment to allow the force greater than our human constructs to consciously move through and perhaps naturally unwind and trust enough to let go.

Let go into the all of nothing. Possibly touching the space where our greatest gift prevails. Beyond sorrow, beyond love.. into Stillness..

Into the depth of our ultimate existence.

Our presence here is so welcome. We have come. Ahhh to rest in this eternal beauty.

Yes... Peace...
AHO !!

(Dharma)

Beautiful setting..in Nature, among trees swaying their canopies to the music words and wisdom, their stage a beautiful backdrop of a twinkling starry night sky.

The reverence displayed by living souls, drifting and wafting like the smoke from the fires...

The sense of Community interlinking us all as we experience and walk towards our own Endings, in this lifetime. A slight knowing smile needing no words of embrace, as we sit at the feet of all that is Divine.

Words, stories, chords and mystery flying and drifting between trees and sparks.

Delicious woodsmoke and crackling bark, like a funeral pyre enticing my thoughts to reflect on ancient customs.

And the labyrinth, taking me into myself with prayers for healing in this World. And out again with a secret smile of fidelity.

No need for words or food, only spiritual comfort and nourishment for a fractured soul.

Thankyou.

(Linda)

Met by a collective hum of gentle sanctity on entering Sunday's Vigil I was immediately moved to emotion.

Resting on tree roots in the soft sun, sinking into the ground and a space overlooked in our culture... an intentional and collective moment to grieve, was such a deep gift.

It was an opportunity for things to mulch, biodegrade, and nourish the forest floor of my being.

The attention to detail was exquisite. Three fires in alignment, the gentle clicking of a spinning wheel, a carefully crafted labyrinth sat with petals at the core, a welcome into silence, all ushered us into inner space, cradled by a circle of trees.

The incentive to offer this into communal space is so insightful, so skilful, and so generous. Thank you Ella and Luke, for the beauty and sorrow in your hearts, and turning this into an offering.

(Lila)



Kookaburra Kookaburra

*Kookaburra
laughter!
powerful, patient, emotive one
your presence constant as I continue this
heart compass path
descending into silence to
greet the wounds of loss
mine, of my mother, her mother, and
the great Mother Lover Earth*

*by my side my new found sister Grace
from corner to corner together we walk
with a flame in our hands to give rise
to sweet sap
with a flame in our hearts offering prayers
"so that the old worthies come down to
table"*

*Kookaburra Kookaburra Kookaburra
laughter!
flanked in affirmation the Vigil's welcome to
Country
a nod we are walking in a life-feeding
direction*

As despair and apathy ride on the heels of humanity birthed from disconnection, I feel deeply grateful and blessed to be part of spaces consecrated to remembering our interconnectedness through the communal experience of grief.

Renew's Vigil for Grief, steeped in silence and beauty, allowed for the depth and resilience of our humanness to roam freely, nourishing me for time to come.

(Rasul)



When I arrived at the Vigil in the morning there was hardly anyone there, and my dear friend and I had come with our two young children.

The first thing that touched me was the space of silence that was held with such love and presence by Ella and Luke, the environment was so held that even the children acknowledged their reverence for it.

I sat by the fire with myself, enquiring what was needing to be witnessed in the grief I was holding.

The first thing that rose was in relation to the ancestors of this sacred country. I cried deeply for their pain, loss, separation and incredibly potent grief that continually rocks my boat, and grounds me to the core in humility. I didn't ask for their forgiveness, I asked for them to allow me to share my deep respect, gratitude and love for their immense beauty, for a culture that in my etheric memories I will never forget. As I dropped deeper and deeper with this they all appeared to me, in concentric circles surrounding the centre of the sacred space. Hundreds of them, standing still, gazing in, in vigil for the grief of their people, and covered in markings of white ochre. All day they stood, and they weren't the only ones.

So many ancestors of our world weaving their presence into the space as the

unique 3D connections landed in amongst the figs. So much honour for the gentle power.

Gratitude is on fire, in a warm glowing way, and I know it travels through my heart as well as from it.

Thank you for holding a sacred space so authentic it brought home what's really alive in our community. I felt SO nourished. Truly, thank you.

(Bel)



Walking into the Vigil the signs inviting me to observe silence, to go deep and feel the earth, immediately brought me to a quiet space inside myself.

I sat at the wishing tree and went into a strong meditation where I felt the tree, my ancestors at my back, and the soundscape supporting me in my grief.

After a while I lay down and went into a trance listening first to Zenith's poems and then to Purdie and Cye's ethereal "long song".

The sense of emptiness and yet wholeness has remained with me and I am so grateful and wondering how it would be if we had a permanent place as we all have so much grief and grieving to do. I love that something that is often so private was able to be expressed publicly.

Thankyou for holding such exquisite space. I would love to be a part of something if you choose to do again.
(Vashti)

Thank you for the beauty of what you created with the grief vigil. It was something really special.

I felt immediate permission to drop into my grief and to be present in my heart as soon as I stepped into the space. Such an important thing that you guys created.

Ella did such an awesome job of creating a sense of sacredness. I heard feedback that Ella's welcome really helped to drop people into a reverent state of silence...

I hope you are inspired to do it again I would be honoured to take part in it if you do. Much love xx

(Purdie)

A highly potent experience being there that day, and I was in great admiration for the space that you created and opened up so humbly and generously...

For me, it was actually too exquisitely beautiful to bear.

The music harnessed a tender otherworldly beauty to nurture the way of our grief.

Thank you Luke and Ella for the heart opening space; I felt a deep appreciation for what it offered to all who were able to pass through.

(Anonymous)

Grieving the pain in my heart and in the land. Feeling grateful for love and connection. The 30 hour grief vigil under the Fig Trees In Mullum was such a gentle, nurturing and spacious place to feel held, be given the permission to grieve and release and have deep exchanges without too many words. The soundscape was so soothing. I am beyond grateful and feeling empty and full and ready to get to work. Deep thank you to all who organised and contributed.

(Tess)

It was truly a treasure to be part of everything on the weekend...

The careful curation of the space allowed attendees to feel safe and held to drop-into their grief space. ..

The public experience of us each expressing and experiencing our grief felt primordial somehow, like a re-membering to something was once so common and necessary. The soundscape held the container as much as the heart-felt attendants and minimalist decor. Overall, the Vigil felt like a collective cry and hug, something comforting and sustaining.

(Erin)



deep.
sounded sublime,
and was a good release.
i felt the grief

(Jason)

The space you created was just brilliant
and we were saying that we were hopeful
it would be a regular thing.

(Juli)

My brief experience with Ella at the
entrance where she tied a ribbon on my
wrist... It was pretty profound... like she
opened up my grief doorways with her
presence, intent and gaze. I guess i saw a
little of where she'd been on that journey.
Got a little glimpse... It opened me right
up...

(Dan)

just want to say a big thank you for
creating such a deep soundscape and
setting last night.. it was exactly what I
needed...

(Michael)

you gauged the bio-electric world
vibrations very well, the spirit of place you
developed over the whole grieving
weekend was very apt...

(Saul)

Really powerful... A space to feel grief for
our earth. A beautiful space with deep
intention haunting music. The energy was
palpable.

(Shanti)

Thanks for a beautiful heartfelt event. It
was spacious yet intimate... a fine
balance. I was happy being able to make
a spontaneous offering... when it just felt
like the time and place to [be] dancing in
the cusp of light to dark...

(Ana)

My deepest gratitude for the sacred space
of silent contemplation on grief that you
and Ella created.

It was what my soul was yearning for in
the beauty and sadness of this human
existence. It is rare to experience a space
dedicated to and honouring of grief...

(Kerrie)

A most beautiful experience this weekend.
Thanks Ella and team.

(Linda)

Feeling very deeply grateful for the giving
and receiving in my time with you all today.
Blessed. I thank our mother Earth for all
she has given, all that has been taken
away and for all that is left behind.

(Lee Lee)

Grief is a love letter Thank you so much
for creating a space for our grief. Deeply
beautiful.

(Lee)

I am deeply touched by the space you
created. Thankyou for honouring the
energy at this time for the planet.

(Cindy)

This beautiful all encompassing love
energy... goes far.

(Violet)