

**Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form**

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| **Title** | Grieving the loss of pets online: How we use online media to grieve the loss of animal companion |
| **Chief Investigators** | Larissa Hjorth and Daniel Palmer |

**1. Introduction**

# You are invited to take part in this research project, which is called *Grieving the loss of pets online: How we use online media to grieve the loss of animal companion.*

You have been invited to participate as part of a general call to the social media network calling for participants who have lost pets and shared their grief online. You have been invited because you contacted the researcher, Larissa, via email.

This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research is **voluntary**. If you don’t wish to take part, you don’t have to. If you begin participating, you can also withdraw up to three months after the interview.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you just need to contact the researcher, Larissa, via email to confirm your interest. You can access the Participant Information and Consent Form on the DCP page.

**2. What is the purpose of this research?**

The aim of this research is to understand the role of sharing online feelings of grief around the loss of an animal can help people to process grief. It seeks to provide details into meanings as part of this cultural practice.

**3. What does participation in this research involve?**

If you decide to take part in this project, you can email the researcher, Larissa (larissa.hjorth@rmit.edu.au) to organise a quick phone chat to discuss the project and consent. The research involves a participant-led interview in which you guide the direction of the conversation about sharing of grief online for loss of a pet. We will begin with an image of the pet and then you lead the conversation in ways that make you feel safe and supported. This project seeks to give visibility to grief around pet loss as an important ritual in society.

**4. Other relevant information about the research project**

We are aiming to talk to 20 responses in this project.

**5. Do I have to take part in this research project?**

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project up to three months after the interview.

If you do decide to take part, you can confirm by sending a picture of your pet and a few words about what you’d like to talk about to Larissa’s email (larissa.hjorth@rmit.edu.au). Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the researchers.

**6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Possible benefits of the study include the opportunity to reflect upon your experiences with grief and how sharing the experiences online affected your bereavement. Sometimes talking about experiences can help provide understanding and coming to terms with the loss. While we hope that your involvement in the study and its findings will enhance our knowledge and understanding of bereavement around loss of animals, we cannot guarantee that you will receive any benefits from this project.

**7. What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

Discussing grief and the death of someone close to you may be distressing. Should you suffer any psychological distress or complications as a result of this research project, we encourage you to seek help. We will assist you in this process by mentioning online, face-to-face and telephone services offered by the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, Beyond Blue, GriefLine and Lifeline. Should you become distressed at any point, even after your study participation is completed, we strongly encourage you to seek help by contacting any of the support services listed on the resource sheet.

**8. What if I withdraw from this research project?**

You can withdraw your image at any time before it goes to publication. The researcher will endeavour to make posts anonymous unless the participant states that they want to be named for whatever reason.

**9. Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research project is being conducted by Larissa Hjorth at RMIT University.

**10. What happens when the research project ends?**

The findings from the research will be used to inform resources around understanding the important role of animals in our lives and how we might have a better understanding of the experiences and thus how we might support them in more sustainable ways. The research may also be published as reports, creative outputs or in academic journals, as books chapters or as a book, news media articles, and/or presented at conferences. This may take 12 months or more. It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In a publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your express permission.

**11. What will happen to information about me?**

By signing the consent form, you consent to the researcher collecting and using information from you for the research project and future related research. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. The images will be kept on a secure RMIT server for seven years, then being destroyed. After data has been de-identified, only the researcher will have access to the data.

In accordance with relevant Australian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to request access to the information about you that is collected and stored by the research team. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please inform the research team member named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) specifically allowed by law, (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. Any information obtained for the purpose of this research project that can identify you will be treated as confidential and securely stored.

**12. Who has reviewed the research project?**

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This research project has been approved by the RMIT University HREC. This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

**13. Further information and who to contact**

 **Research contact person**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Larissa Hjorth |
| Position | Chief investigator / Senior supervisor |
| Telephone | 0430311063 |
| Email | larissa.hjorth@rmit.edu.au |

**14. Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

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| Reviewing HREC name | RMIT University |
| HREC Secretary | Peter Burke  |
| Telephone | 03 9925 2251 |
| Email | human.ethics@rmit.edu.au |
| Mailing address | Research Ethics Co-ordinatorResearch Integrity Governance and Systems RMIT UniversityGPO Box 2476MELBOURNE VIC 3001  |



**Consent Form**

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| **Title**  | Grieving the loss of pets online: How we use online media to grieve the loss of animal companion |
| **Chief Investigator/Senior Supervisor** | Professor Larissa Hjorth |

**Acknowledgement by Participant**

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research described in the project.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw up to three months after the interview.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

My confirmation to participate has been noted in my contacting of the researcher Larissa.

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|  |
|  | Name of Participant\* (please print) |  |  |
|  |  |
|  | Signature |  |  Date |  |  |
|  |

**Declaration by Researcher\***

I have given an explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

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|  |
|  | Name of Researcher\* (please print) |  |  |
|  |  |
|  | Signature |  |  Date |  |  |
|  |

\* An appropriately qualified member of the research team must provide the explanation of, and information concerning, the research project.

Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.