



Images from the Heart

STORIES FROM PHOTOGRAPHERS
AND FAMILIES OF HEARTFELT

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Welcome to Heartfelt

Founded in 2010, Heartfelt had its origins from an organisation that operated from 2007-2009 called ACOCP.

Since then we have grown from a handful of photographers to an international organisation with over 330 photographers and retouchers helping families across Australia and New Zealand on a daily basis.

All of our members are ready at a moments notice to provide the gift of photographic memories to families in their darkest hour.

I joined the ACOCP, then later founded Heartfelt after my wife and I experienced every parent's worst nightmare when our little girl Alexandra was stillborn. In a moment, our hopes and plans were turned on their heads and we embarked on an incredibly emotional rollercoaster ride. Being a photographer, I captured many beautiful images and videos of our little girl that we still hold very dear to this day.

However, we came to realise firsthand the profound difference beautiful images make in grieving and how important it is to be able to share the experience of loss with friends.

I was drawn to make a difference to families in similar situations.

Behind each photo is an intensely personal and precious story. At sometime during the parents' turmoil, someone let them know about Heartfelt and consequently we were invited in and trusted to capture their story. It is our greatest honour to be able to give this gift.

This book is about honouring the families we work with and raising some much needed awareness of our very important service. Every time someone new hears about Heartfelt, it increases the chances of our services being offered to families in the future.

I would like to thank our incredible members across the country who continually demonstrate just how generous and selfless a person can be, as well as our corporate partners who enable us to do what we do.

Thank you.

Gavin Blue
Heartfelt President

Newborn

We never know the love of a parent
until we become parents ourselves.

~ Henry Ward Beecher

Isabella

by Tiffany Beer
Royal Darwin Hospital, NT

This was my first ever Heartfelt session. I was 32 weeks pregnant myself when I got the call that an eight week old girl named Isabella had lost her life to SIDS and the family wanted a Heartfelt session.

Driving in I was feeling nervous and unsure of exactly how I would react. As I introduced myself, Isabella's mother, Jasmine, came up and hugged me and instantly my nerves and fears subsided. She was so grateful I was there and that made me feel so honoured to be able to do this for her.

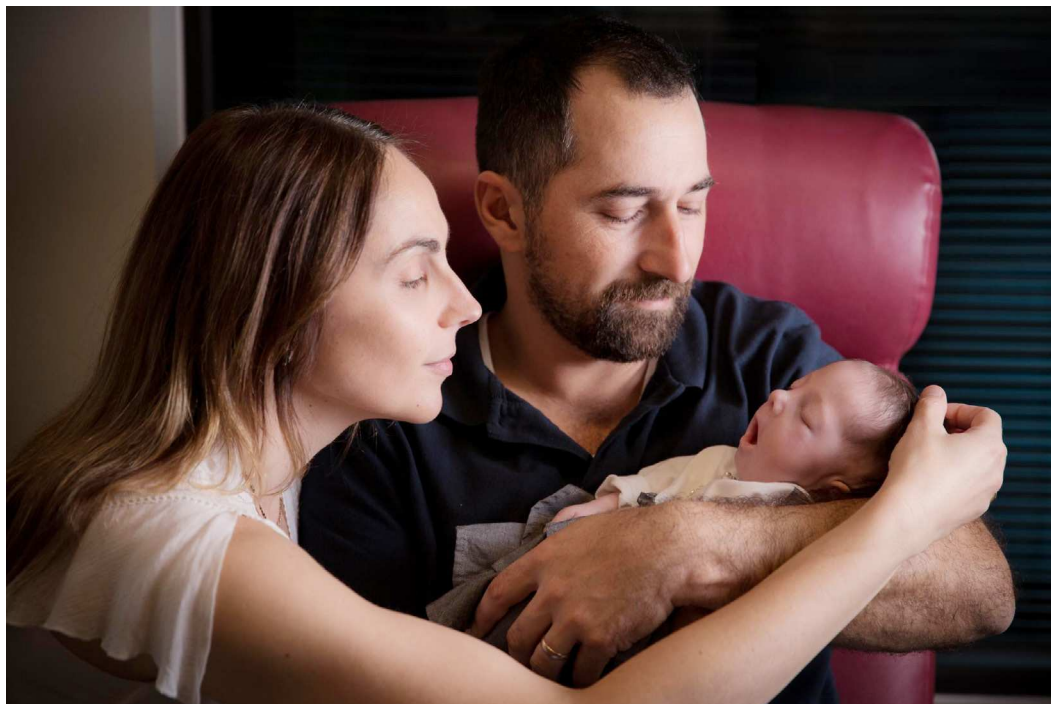
I looked at Isabella and she was just perfect. A beautiful, chubby, precious little girl. She was still attached to breathing machines and monitors as the family graciously planned to donate her organs. Isabella's mum and dad were so in love with her. They laid with her and cuddled her, holding her hand taking in those precious moments with her. I was there to document that.

I captured the raw emotions as well as the love and the details of her beauty. Isabella had four older siblings that doted over her the whole time too. They would all come and touch her and kiss her hand and be as close to her as they could. Going through their images I was in awe of how close and supportive their family was and how they all lent on each other and shared so much love.



Feliz

by Adrienne Gilligan
Royal Children's Hospital, VIC



I responded to a request from the Royal Children's Hospital for a little four week old baby girl called Feliz.

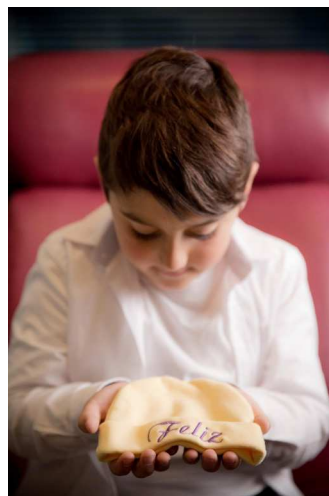
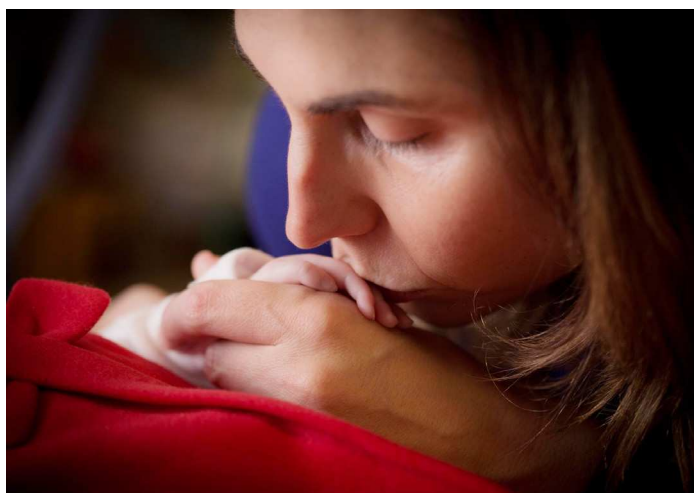
What a beautiful name, I thought, how unusual. I often think deeply about the family as I drive to the session. I wonder how some families find the strength to still have a smile on their faces, when deep inside they are deeply pained with grief and fear.

I met Feliz, her parents Tania and Joe, and Feliz's big brother Cruz. I noticed the room was beautifully decorated with personal items that resembled a nursery. It was homely. Tania, Joe and Cruz stood over the cot where Feliz laid in a sweet red dress that had been perfectly picked just for her. Her big eyes brightly engaged her family.

Tania was motherly and practical. Joe was gentle and loving towards his daughter. What I noticed mostly was the love he showed Tania to give her the space to mother in her own way. Cruz adored his new little sister, effortlessly interacting with her without a true understanding of the situation.

It was an intimate, loving photo session where we were fortunate enough to take Feliz outdoors. I shot video footage of the family singing to Feliz.

Knowing the worth of this special and privileged work we are invited to do, enriches and gives purpose to my life. Thank you Alonso family I will always remember you.



Amelie

by Graeme Barrett
King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, WA

I was first contacted by a friend of the family a couple of months prior to the session as the parents had been advised by their doctor at 26 weeks into the pregnancy that their unborn child had an inoperable heart defect. The most likely outcome was a very short life expectancy if the baby survived the pregnancy and birth.

I was grateful I had the opportunity to capture some precious moments the family will treasure. Amelie passed away a week after birth.

Heidi is a registered nurse and midwife and would have seen many other families experience what she went through. This was their second child and the photos will be significant in sharing with their now three children about their sister who had such a short life.

'Thank you for capturing such precious moments for us of baby Amelie as part of our family. We have been so touched by your organisation, and your willingness to be a part of our journey.' ~ Amelie's mum, Heidi





Devlin

by Gavin Blue
Mercy Hospital for Women, VIC

Late one night, a request came through. "Can anyone get to Mercy ASAP?"

I often take the late night Heartfelt sessions and driving across town through empty streets, I was wondering what the family was going through, knowing their son, Devlin, was given a 5 per cent chance of making it through the night.

Arriving at the hospital, I waited for the parents near the NICU and could hear the erratic noises of machines measuring his vitals. I met mum Olivia and she introduced me to Devlin. We gently worked around the NICU bed to capture photos of Olivia with her son. What struck me was how Olivia showed such grace and love, realistically accepting the medical advice but also hoping for a miracle for Devlin.

Devlin's dad wasn't able to get to the hospital that night and I couldn't bear the thought of him missing photos with Devlin. I offered to return in the morning, where we managed to get the whole family together.

Speaking to Olivia two months later, I found out there had been a miracle. After doctors said Devlin would not survive the night, he defied them. Devlin is now more than two months old, and there's talk of him coming home in a few weeks.



James

by Cheryl Hulley
King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women, WA

A session request came through for a 35 week old baby boy who had been born alive, but was not expected to live very long because of a heart defect, possibly Trisomy 18.

After answering the urgent call, I went to KEMH with a heavy heart. I always feel a bit nervous as I enter a family's grief-filled, intimate space as a stranger, and try to capture the final moments they have with their baby or babies. When I entered the room, Deb was in bed with baby James lying face down on her chest helping him breathe with some oxygen. She had Chris, her husband, Charlie, their little boy, and her parents in the room with her. The nurse explained that James was very ill and could not be moved in any way, so I wasn't able to turn him on his side or place him onto the bed.

I decided to concentrate on capturing special family portraits with baby James. I was particularly struck by James's gorgeous big brother. He was about five years old, but was so gentle and affectionate with baby James, stroking him and offering him his soft toy. He wanted to help in any way he could and was able to syringe the last drops of milk into James's mouth. It was such a privilege to meet and spend time with this amazing family and to help them have memories of their time with their little boy.

Sadly James passed away ten hours later.





Khalid

by Adrienne Gilligan
Northern Hospital, VIC

I met Haja Abou-Eid and baby Khalid at Northern Hospital. Haja's husband was overseas at the time. Haja had great support from her mother.

Khalid was at 50 days old and fighting hard. He had the most wonderful mop of hair, and was engaged and reacted to his mum when she spoke to him.

Haja remained hopeful of a miracle and that things would work out. She held his tiny little body to hers while I photographed the natural love between this mother and her baby. I could tell she was very proud of him and how hard he was fighting.

Update: Sadly Khalid passed away but the photos are loved and enjoyed by the whole family.



Lily

by Angela Ritchie
Oxley Funeral Home, QLD

Less than a week before Christmas and with a heavy heart, I arrived at the Oxley funeral home to meet full term baby Lily and her heartbroken family. It was my first experience in a funeral home and I felt nervous and unsure about what was ahead. I focussed on how I would best help this family honour their little girl.

Big sister Ava had lovingly prepared special drawings and was writing a letter to put with the colourful cards she'd made for Lily. The tiny white coffin was already decorated beautifully. I wondered if anything could be worse than losing a perfect baby girl a week before Christmas.

I had the privilege of watching the family dress Lily in a delicate angel gown and gently hold and kiss her. The love from everyone in the room touched me deeply and it stayed with me for a long time afterwards.

Two years later, I received an unexpected call from Donna, letting me know that they had another sweet princess in their lives and she had arrived safely. I cried happy and relieved tears for them and again, they were never far from my thoughts for a long time afterwards.

As Heartfelt volunteers, we never expect to hear from families after our sessions, but on the rare occasion we do, it's a beautiful thing.





Maddie

by Gavin Blue
Royal Women's Hospital, VIC

When a request is made for a Heartfelt session, my heart lurches when I find out the baby has a similar condition to that of our daughter Alexandra, who was stillborn in 2006.

Catherine contacted Heartfelt in November 2009 when she found out her daughter Maddie was expected to be born with life threatening complications. Our daughter Alexandra had the same condition.

Catherine was looking for positive things she could do for Maddie. She said getting in touch with Heartfelt offered her family some respite from the stress of medical appointments, and allowed them to focus on Maddie, rather than her condition. I told Catherine I would be there for the family to take photos when Maddie was born.

Maddie arrived on 18th of February, 2010.



'Maddie fought for her life and passed away after eight precious hours. Our time with her was extended and made even more special by Gavin's arrival in the hospital the next day to capture Maddie with our family. Gavin's beautiful, respectful way of acknowledging Maddie and working with our family not only gave us very precious photographs but also precious memories of being together. The involvement of Gavin and Heartfelt changed our journey with Maddie profoundly and has somehow made the unbearable, bearable.'

~ Maddie's mum, Catherine

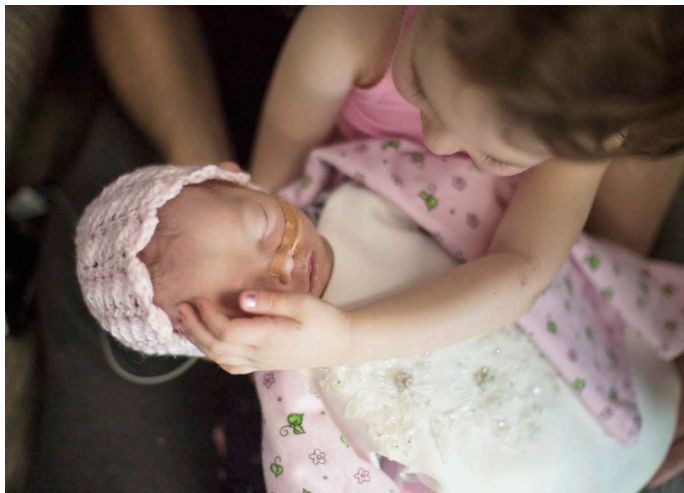
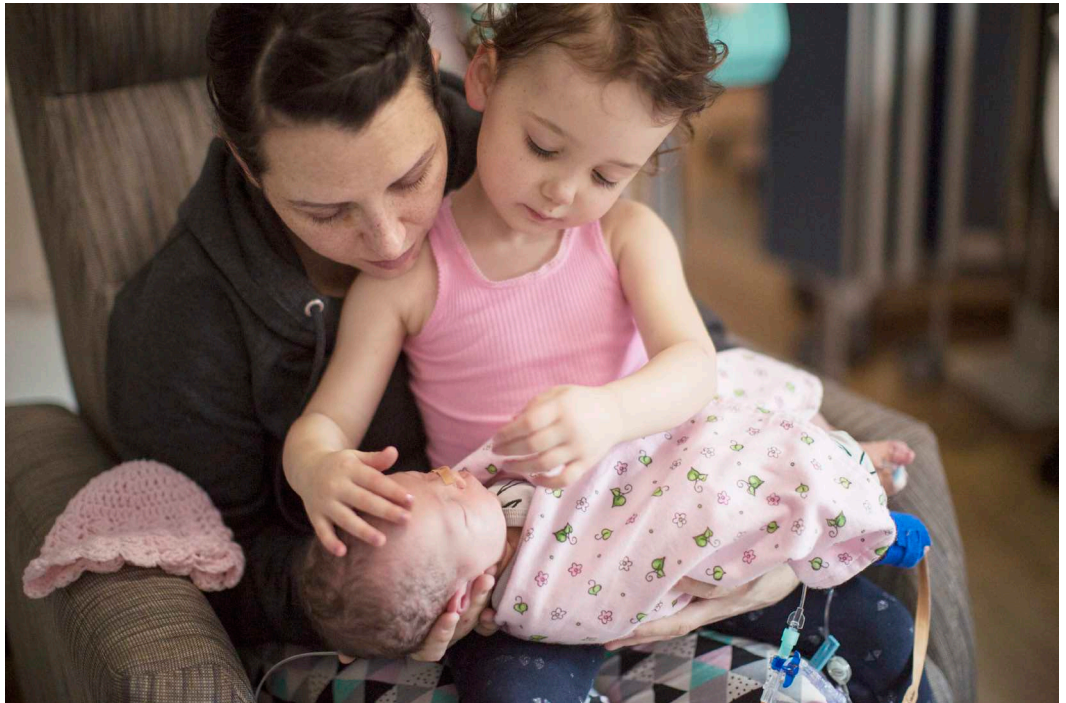
May

by Hillary Wardhaugh
Canberra Centenary Hospital for Women and
Children, ACT

It always moves me when there are other children in the sessions I photograph, especially little ones who have no idea what is really going on. Such innocence. I come away from the sessions feeling very moved. It was heartbreaking and beautiful to see such tenderness given to May by her big sister, whilst she was at the same time 'just being a toddler'.

There was lots of family present at this session. Lots of love and tears when treating a baby palliatively. May, with her parents Chris and Lauren, shared some lovely moments and it was obvious that at the time the future didn't look bright for May. I am proud they have a beautiful record of a difficult time in Chris and Lauren's life.

May has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, and she is a very happy and bright kid. Her future looks to be completely different to what Chris and Lauren thought they were facing back in July last year.



Babies and Children

The love and sacredness of family.
There's nothing else like it.

~ Vicki Reese

Amahli

By Helen Roberts
Family home, SA

I had photographed Ashleigh and Ian's wedding, it was such a happy, loving day.

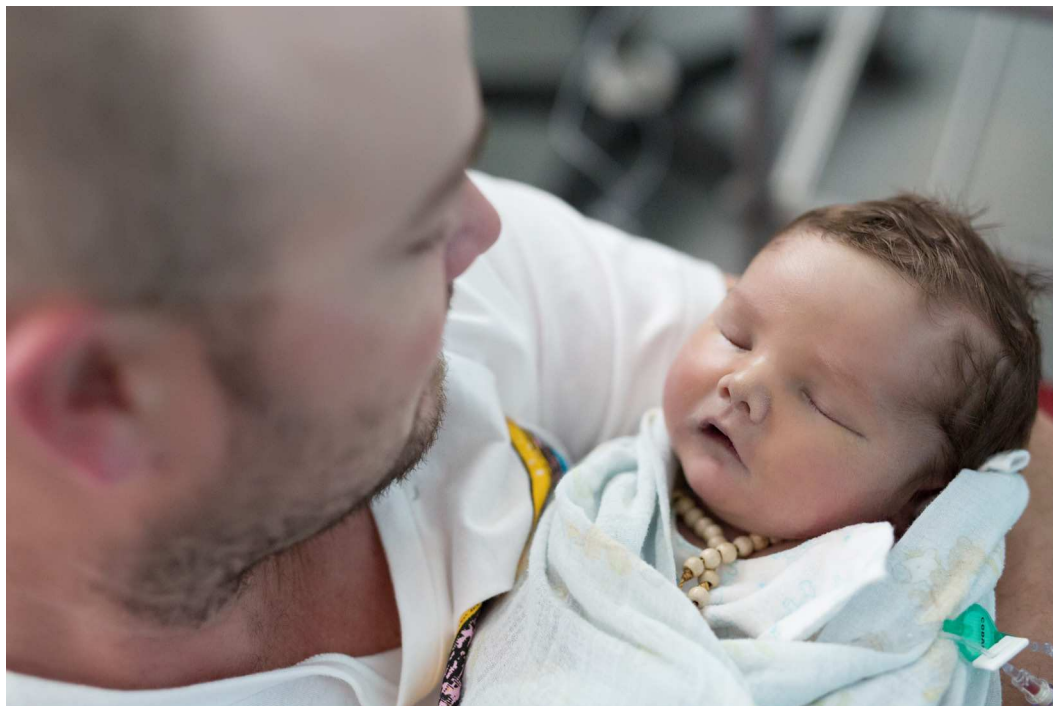
A few years later I had a Heartfelt call for their family. Little Amahli had been born with some abnormalities that made her life difficult and possibly would shorten it. I, of course, would come and provide Heartfelt photographs for them.

I visited Ian and Ashleigh at home with their son Xavier and Amahli. I was welcomed to their home and once again welcomed into an important time in their lives. Amahli's future was uncertain but Ian, Ashleigh and Xavier would love her for as long as they could.

I was honoured to photograph their family and provide some precious memories at this time in their lives. Amahli had some little smiles, and the most beautiful long eye lashes. Xavier, who has the same long lashes, had some fun with his sister. And Ashleigh and Ian showed their love for her.

Amahli died peacefully with the people she loved at home a few months later.





Charlie

by Amelia McKee
Westmead Children's Hospital, NSW

Every Heartfelt session for me is an honour. Helping parents in their time of need warms my heart.

Charlie had such a rough start to life and wasn't expected to make it. He was rushed to the NICU by helicopter, which his dad proudly told me. Treatment was being withdrawn the next day after I met him.

When I returned for a second session the next day, this little fighter was still with us. It was so wonderful seeing his beautiful face without all the tubes. The love and adoration that poured out of his parents and extended family left me deeply moved.

Upon discovering he was still fighting on a month later, I can't describe how that made me feel. Seeing the photos his dad sent me of him at the park, on outings with family and having cuddles with his big sister was a huge joy.

This little man will always have a special place in my heart.



Clementine

by Deb Saunders
At the beach, SA

Clementine was really quite sick at the time of the session. She was a gorgeous four year old who absolutely loved everything pink. She had been through surgery and chemotherapy for the treatment of a brain tumour, and still it came back. She was now in palliative care.

We went to the local beach, as it was where the family spent a lot of their time. I could see it was really challenging for Clementine to move about much, and we had to keep it short. I really wanted to try and capture her cheeky personality in the photos.

My favourite photo is of Clementine and her Mum in the sand dunes, having a cuddle together. I can see how close they are in this image, and it means so much to me that Sue has this photo to remember this time.

Almost three months after this session, Clementine passed away, just a few weeks short of her fifth birthday. Sue asked me to come and take some photos of Clem's send off. It was a very pink affair. Clementine had played a big part in the choices of things for the funeral, and she had a hot pink coffin. There were pink balloons, and we all wore something pink as she wanted there to be lots of her favourite colour.

Clementine's cousin sang a beautiful song for her that she had written. The guests put stickers on her coffin instead of flowers, and then wheeled her coffin outside for a huge pink balloon release, symbolising setting her free. I was truly honoured to be there to capture her service for her family to look back on, and there will always be a place in my heart for this amazing little girl.



Huon

By Christian Jeldres
The Royal Children's Hospital, VIC

Huon's parents are absolutely beautiful people who were so caring, loving and so broken with their loss of this beautiful little boy.

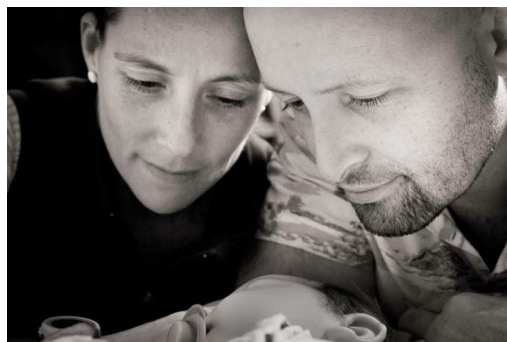
His big sister, who wasn't at the session, had put a sticker on his hand. Whilst setting up, Huon's mum Jacinda said that she'd take the sticker off, but I suggested that it might be nice to have his sister's sticker with him, especially in this session.

Huon's parents told me that he wasn't meant to leave the RCH due to his medical condition, let alone make it to 6 months.

He had left the RCH, lived at home for about four months with his family, and then came back to RCH, which was when we met for his session.

This was one of the first sessions that I needed to step outside of the room to compose myself, the love was so strong for this little boy.

This session will stay with me for a long time.



Jacob

by Karen Anderson
Sydney Children's Hospital, NSW

The fairy garden at Sydney Children's hospital is a beautiful place to take photographs. Jacob, although very sick, was able to be brought out with his siblings for a family photograph. Jacob's brother and sister were very loving and gentle with Jacob, and enjoyed having their photo taken with their brother.

The nurses were so wonderful in arranging to have Jacob brought outside with certain medical equipment. They all stayed whilst we took lots of photos with Jacob's family and extended family.

Being a Heartfelt photographer allows me to gift these memories to families even under such sad circumstances. It was such an honour to meet Jacob and I truly hope his family can find comfort in these beautiful images.





James

by Marion Cullen
Ronald McDonald House, SA

I had the privilege of meeting and photographing six month old James, along with his devoted parents, Lina and David, and his two adoring brothers, Michael and Christopher.

The affection between the brothers was obvious right from the start, and we quickly built up a fun rapport together. Little James, when he joined us, was such a trooper, smiling and interacting with his brothers and parents throughout the relatively long session. His beautiful, expressive eyes, although tired, still had a gorgeous sparkle and shine.

During the session the family shared James's story with me. They had come down to Adelaide from the Northern Territory for treatment for James when, at just three months of age, he had been diagnosed with an aggressive tumour. James had spent the last three months having intensive treatments but, sadly, Lina and David had, just shortly before our session, been informed that all treatment options for James were exhausted. Having received this devastating news they immediately made the decision to take James home.

When a family shares their child's story with you, there's a sense of connectedness that happens, and an awareness and understanding is built quite quickly. It is always an intensely emotional experience that leaves a lasting impression. Being able to take photos of James with his family was very special for me, I felt very privileged to gift them some precious memories of their time with him.

Leslie

by Kym Thomson
Westmead Children's Hospital, NSW

This session was one of the hardest I have done. Little Leslie looked perfect. He was five months old and surrounded by the love of his whole family in the room.

He was in his bed and each of his six siblings came and said goodbye. You could see how much Leslie would be missed.

Rebecca, Leslie's mother held it all together, and made sure each of her children were okay, giving them cuddles and helping them grieve and say goodbye.

'Les was born at term with undiagnosed congenital heart disease, on his biggest brother's birthday!'

Being a mum again for the seventh time I found him to be very sleepy and his fingers and toes were blueish and cold. An early scan showed his heart rate was different but we thought it was the position he was laying in at the time. His blood sugar was low and he needed an infusion. I asked for an ECG as I just had that gut feeling. Within minutes I found our whole world in a spin, with helicopters and everything.

Les ended up having four open heart surgeries, six weeks apart and more surgeries later. He suffered cardiac arrest and tragically passed away, shocking us all, including his specialists.

He was such a beautiful little fighter, always happy and smiling even when he was unwell. Thank you again for the gift you gave us.'

~ Leslie's mum Rebecca



Liam

by Gavin Blue
Very Special Kids, VIC



I live close to Very Special Kids, Victoria's only children's hospice, and answered an urgent request for Heartfelt services for Liam. He was 15 months old and had an undiagnosed condition.

Danielle, Liam's mum, had been told he only had a few days to live. She was very emotional and unsure whether she wanted to have photos taken as all she could think about was losing her little boy.

She chose to have Heartfelt capture photos of Liam.

Liam's condition meant he had very poor muscle control, which the doctors said was why Liam rarely smiled. We took some beautiful photos of Liam, cuddles and holding hands. We were taking photos of Liam on the bed, and as Danielle whispered to him, her breath tickled his cheek and Liam smiled.

This is the only photo Danielle and Anthony have of Liam smiling.

Danielle has said many times she had no idea the photos were going to become the most precious gift she ever received.

It is such an honour to provide this service.

Mason

by Nicole Akhurst
Sandon Point, NSW

Meeting the Windeyer family was a session that will always remain incredibly close to my heart. Being able to document this moment in time was such a blessing and honour. Only months before, Mason had been diagnosed with a rare terminal brain disease at the age of six.

Mason was delightful. He was playful, cheeky, always laughed at his dad's jokes and enjoyed sharing his love for sharks and dinosaurs. He played with his family at the rock pools as they sailed paper sailboats and made his shark go in the water. This just made him laugh even more. He was smothered in love and gave lots of kisses to his mum, loved to make his dad laugh by squeezing noses and had more than enough hugs to give his little brother Noah.

Mason also had a big brother, Blake, in heaven looking down on him.

Mason sadly lost his battle on the 25 April, 2017 on Anzac Day. A courageous, brave little superhero, beautiful son and brother, who will always make the sky a little brighter. Meeting Mason changed my life. I am grateful I met such an incredible soul.





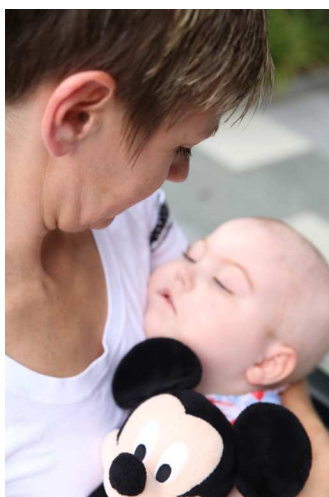
Matilda

by Angela Ritchie
Lady Cilento Children's Hospital, QLD

It was Christmas Eve when the request came for this family. Two and a half year old Matilda had been in hospital and deteriorating but ready to start another round of chemotherapy. This was a special family when, despite their own pain and anguish at the hand dealt to them, they were wishing me a happy Christmas and already telling me how grateful they were. I drove to Brisbane a few days later to meet little Matilda and the family. Matilda was in terrible pain which was heartbreaking to witness, but we managed to go up to the garden briefly for some photos and cuddles with her family and her favourite Mickey Mouse toy. I was touched by the tenderness her family showed and the deep love they had for her. I couldn't stop thinking of them after I left the hospital that day.

Matilda continued to fight on, amazing the oncologists for another few weeks but in a heartbreaking turn of events, she passed away shortly after.

I had the honour of photographing for the family at her funeral where hundreds of guests wore a splash of pink for a little girl who was so loved. The courage and faith of this beautiful family impacted me. Heartfelt gives me the privilege of witnessing the power of love, even in heartbreak.



Thomas

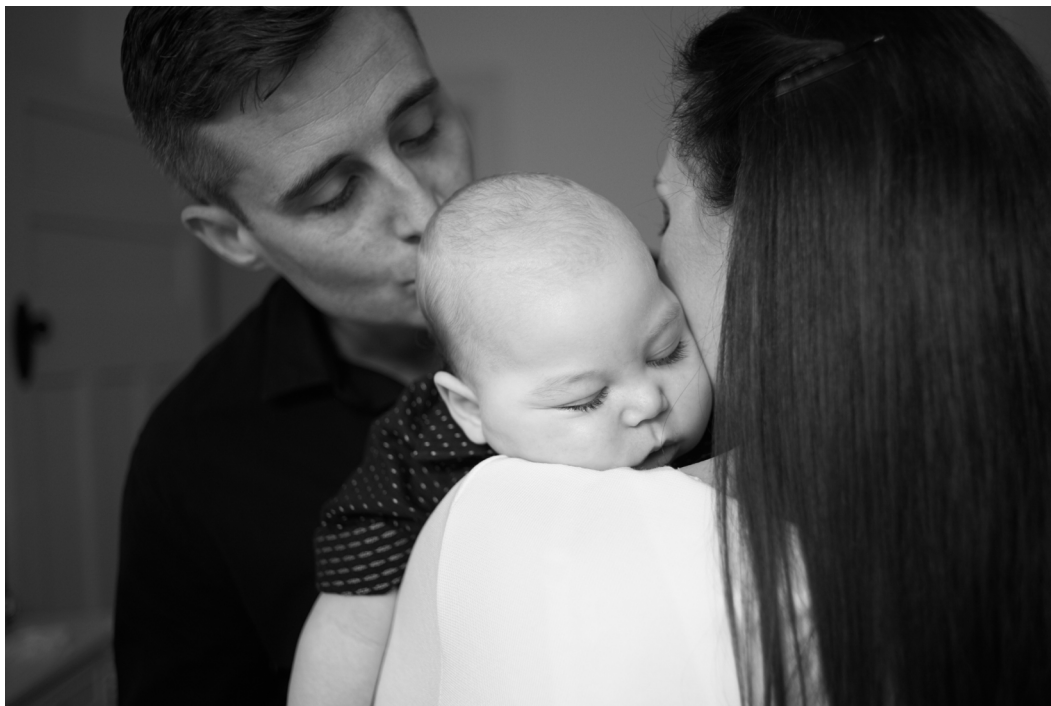
by Anthea Kirkman
Family home, WA

I met the Larkin family when Thomas was almost ten months old.

When his mum Kellie was thirty six weeks and five days pregnant, her uterus ruptured and Thomas was deprived of oxygen. Dear little Thomas' life path changed in an instant and he was born with severe cerebral palsy and an uncontrolled seizure disorder. Very sadly, Thomas passed away on 11 December 2017, at just thirteen and a half months old.

Thomas was a beautiful little boy with chubby arms, thick dark eyelashes, piercing blue eyes and a sweet heart. He loved to snuggle into his mum's arms, and was as good as gold throughout the photo shoot, although he was moved about more than usual.

I loved my time with Thomas and will never forget their loving family. I feel truly lucky to have met them all and to photograph little Thomas for them.



Atticus and Theo

by Nicole Proy
at the family home, VIC

Atticus' parents Lydia and Tony requested Heartfelt photos at home with Atticus and his twin Theo, along with big brother Hugo and some extended family. Atticus was palliative and they did not know how much longer they had left with him. When I arrived I was introduced to the family including aunts and grandparents. We stayed in the courtyard of the home as it was a beautiful sunny day. It was just ten minutes after I arrived, and I think I had taken one photo, when Dad lent down to listen for Atticus' breathing and realised he had passed. This was a heart shattering moment to witness. I didn't know whether to put my camera down and give them some space or keep shooting. I have had my fair experience of emotional photography, having been a birth photographer for 4 years, but this was like nothing I have ever experienced. There was so much love to see, pain and love, and I knew I had to document this for them.

I really wasn't sure if Tony and Lydia would ever want to look at these photos again. Their most final moments with their precious boy, and Theo's last time together with his twin. But they did. They really did. It was months later when I received a gorgeous card in the mail with these words:

"It is hard to put into words how precious the photos are that you took of Atticus. They will be looked at a million times and cherished forever. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

And this confirms that I did the right thing, taking these photos, being there and able to do this for them. And this absolutely and totally fills my heart."



Grace and Chelsea

By Helen Roberts

Women's and Children's Hospital, SA

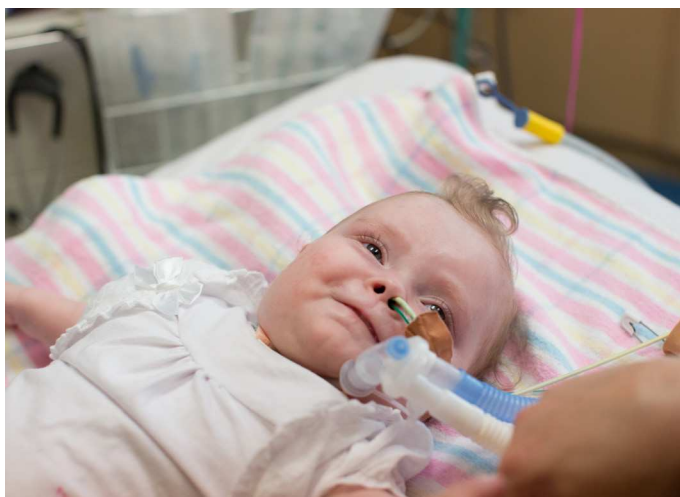
I first met Grace and her family before Christmas 2012. Grace and Chelsea were twins who were very premature, and had come home from hospital after a long wait. Both girls were very sick throughout their first months and their lives hung in the balance at times.

I spent some time with the family and took some family photos. It was a time full of hope and love and excitement. Sadly, this was short lived and Grace was admitted back to the PICU after only three weeks.

I was called for a Heartfelt session while Grace was in hospital for Grace and Chelsea's christening. Grace's lungs were working hard to keep her breathing. I was greeted with a beautiful family scene, cake, smiles and eventually a happy Grace. She loved the balloons and butterflies that surrounded her bed and was full of smiles and hand waving. There was excitement and hope that Grace would regain strength and come home again to be with her family. The two girls were christened and afterwards had a celebration party.

I received a call a month later and Grace had deteriorated significantly. It was time to say goodbye. This time when I arrived the atmosphere was very quiet and sombre - just the sound of the ventilator. There were hugs, and silence.

Everybody said their goodbyes including the staff who cared for her. Gracie died peacefully in the arms of her family.



Heidi and Connor

by Hilary Wardaugh
Canberra Centenary Hospital for Women and
Children, ACT

I was called to the hospital NICU to photograph Graeme and Sheree's twins, Heidi and Connor. Both babies were intubated and in intensive care cribs.

The priest had been called to do a christening blessing as it was feared that Heidi would not make it. It is always a beautiful ceremony to photograph where I try to capture it unobtrusively when family are present and so upset. It is difficult to do portraits when the babies are so small and inside the intensive care cribs, but we photographed them holding hands, which is always a poignant image.

Update:

I am happy to say that they are all home now. Heidi is still on oxygen but doing well.





Joel and Ray

by Adrienne Gilligan
Monash, VIC

I met Meg and Ken at Monash Medical Centre with their perfect identical twin boys. They were dressed in perfectly knitted hats and cardigans.

I gently suggested some relaxed posing and encouraged some loving interaction. Meg and Ken were such natural parents and held their boys with so much love and pride.

I remember watching Ken just gazing into his son's eyes with total devastation and disbelief on his face. Meg was cuddling and talking to the boys. She kissed them lovingly. She carefully gave them equal attention, one on one and then together. It was such an honour to capture these memories for them.

When the family took their boys home, another session was arranged at the family home. The boys were placed in their cots and dressed in different outfits.

Meg and Ken celebrated, cherished and said goodbye to their beautiful boys.

Update: Almost two years on the family welcomed a healthy baby boy.



Lee and Max

by Dianne Linder
Monash Hospital, VIC

When the message came out that there was a session at Monash for a very ill 26 week premature twin, I was sitting at home enjoying a quiet afternoon. I try to mentally prepare myself for walking into the room with the family, however, this was my first session in the NICU. It was very confronting to see such a tiny baby hooked up to so many monitors.

Lee was very poorly and there were nurses and doctors preparing to withdraw treatment from him. Beside Lee's cot was his grandmother, and his parents Ruth and John who were so gently caressing his head.

As they were taking Lee off the monitors the doctor said I could capture some images of both boys together but that I'd only have 15 to 20 seconds. I think these photos are some of the most precious photos I have ever taken. These are the only photos they will ever have of their two boys together.

As the staff were getting ready to move Lee and his parents to a quiet room I asked them if they would like me to stay and continue to take photos and they agreed.

Lee's breathing had slowed right down and he quietly passed away. I took a few more images of Lee being held by his parents and not hooked up to machines.

Words can't describe how honoured I feel to have been there for Ruth and John and to capture the most precious memories for them of their beautiful son.



Patrick and Lulu

by Marion Cullen

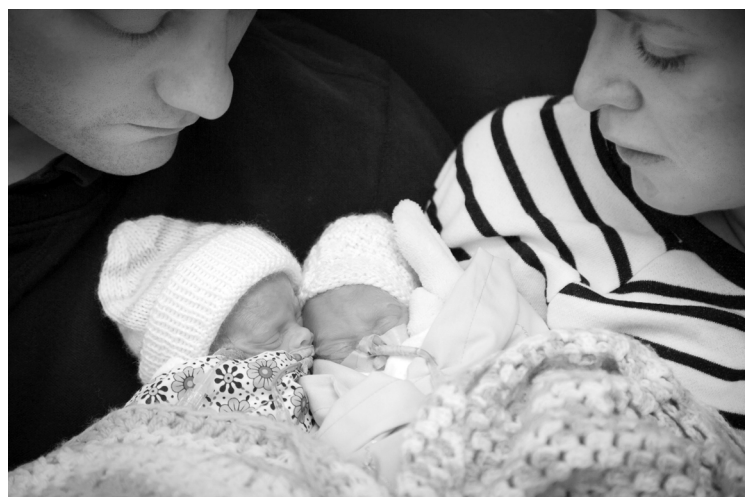
Women's and Children's Hospital, SA

When I took the call for Patrick and Lulu's session in mid April 2016, I had been on a break from Heartfelt because my father had passed away.

Patrick and Lulu had been born at 24 weeks gestation, (a week prior to our session), and they were still in NICU when I arrived. Tragically, parents Amy and Finn were faced with the heartbreaking decision of having their care withdrawn. I spent time in NICU photographing them both before they were brought in for last cuddles with their loving family.

Amy and Finn, with son Harry and Harry's grandmother, were there awaiting the twins arrival. Finn and Amy, although weighed down by what lay ahead, were incredibly moved and engaged, and once Patrick and Lulu arrived, there were many lovely moments of connectedness, loving smiles and incredible tenderness. The love in that room was palpable, as was the incredible sadness.

Lulu and Patrick's session was incredibly rewarding and it was also a defining one for me. It affirmed for me that Heartfelt is the right way for me to make a difference in the lives of people on this difficult journey.



Samsara and Maya

by Nathalie Hicks
Canberra Hospital, ACT

I love the fact that as a professional photographer I am able to use my skills to give something concrete to parents who have either lost their precious newborn or newborns or whose babies are really sick in NICU.

I was so nervous when I first arrived at the hospital. I had no idea how the family I was about to meet and photograph was going to react to me walking into their darkest of hours.

When I walked in the room I was welcomed by the most beautiful smiles. There was such love emanating from this amazing family. I spent the next hour capturing a moment in time for them.

Christina and John's baby girls had been born at 26 weeks. Unfortunately Samsara did not make it but little Maya had amazing determination. Maya spent the next few months growing in NICU and is now a gorgeous, healthy 11 month old. Christina also put one of the photos from our Heartfelt session in Maya's crib so she was always close to her Mummy, Daddy, big brother Kailash and sister Samsara.

It was heartbreaking but it was also beautiful. I was honoured to be there as a Heartfelt photographer for this family. Thank you Christina, John, Kailash, Maya and Samsara.



Redirection of Care

There is no footprint too small to leave an imprint on this world.

~ Unknown

Bentley

by Adrienne Gilligan
Monash Medical, VIC

I met parents Kass and Daniel with their baby Bentley, at Monash. On that night they appeared absolutely terrified for what was to come. They were about to say goodbye to Bentley as treatment was being withdrawn.

Kass and Daniel were supported by Kass's mum Sue (Bentley's nan). Despite her own heartache and distress, Sue gently encouraged Kass and Daniel. She knew that in time these photos would be important to the family.

When it all became too much, Kass and Daniel left the room for a short period of time to gather themselves. Sue cuddled, bathed and dressed Bentley. When Kass and Daniel returned, Sue handed Bentley to them and encouraged them to have more photos taken.

It was a privilege and honour to capture these precious memories for the family.

Thank you so much for Kass's package. It was beautiful. She has looked at the photos. And in time she will realise how much a treasure they are. Thank you so much for being there for us. The photos are so beautiful." ~ Bentley's nan, Sue



Brayden

by Diana Fernie
Women's and Children's Hospital, SA

Brayden was a 15 year old boy with severe cerebral palsy who had developed an incurable lung condition.

Surrounded by close family, Crows paraphernalia, an iPad playing a Liverpool match and a room bursting with love, his younger brother blew bubbles while his older brother and sister stood by his bedside.

The doctor came in with Brayden's mum and dad, it was time. I left the room along with Brayden's brothers and sister. They mostly sat in silence. His younger brother showed me a beautiful photo of the two of them.

Then I was ushered back into the room and stood at the end of the bed witnessing a family going through their worst nightmare.

The nurse stood by with a row of morphine taking every opportunity to ease the physical pain. I captured the moments, and quietly left the room, changed forever by what I had just witnessed.



Bodhi

by Adrienne Gilligan
The Royal Children's Hospital, VIC

Romy and Daniel wanted to have photos taken outside with Bodhi. It looked like any other loving family session, but this was different because it was probably the first and last time Bodhi would be outside. It was really hard to comprehend that this little boy had just been removed from life support.

Fortunately Bodhi was able to go home with Romy and Daniel and it was such a privilege to be requested to provide Heartfelt photos for them at this time. It was an intimate and beautifully sad session.

Beautiful Bodhi passed away in his parents arms on Thursday morning. They had the photos all over Romy's mum's house. It was so special. There were people taking photos of the photos.

'Thank you so so much for the most beautiful pictures! I can't possibly express how grateful we are. If there is ever anything that we can do for you please let us know.' ~ Bodhi's mum, Romy



Jhye

by Dianne Lindner
Mercy Hospital, VIC

When I walked into the NICU and was introduced to Chloe and her partner Damian and their beautiful baby boy, Jhye, who was born at 38 weeks. They were preparing to redirect treatment.

I had never met this family but I felt the photos we were about to take as a Heartfelt photographer would offer them comfort as they grieve, and memories of their beautiful son, for the rest of their lives.

The nurses assisted Chloe and Damian to dress Jhye in their chosen outfit which included a beautiful hand knitted blue cardigan from one of Jhye's grandparents. Tears flowed from everyone as they tenderly dressed their newborn son for the first and last time. As I stood there taking photos with tears welling in my own eyes I wondered how life can be so unfair and why some people have to go through such indescribable grief.

All the staff supporting Chloe and Damian were gentle and caring. They rearranged the tubes and monitors so Chloe and Damian could sit and hold their son for the first time. The love that these two parents had for their baby was beautiful and tender. I moved around quietly capturing the preciousness of the moment as their parents and other family comforted them and in turn had their moments captured as a reminder of the beautiful little boy who was so wanted, so loved and would be so terribly missed.



Lewis

by Lee Illfield

John Hunter Hospital, NSW

This session was significant for me in that I had the privilege of photographing Liz and Luke's Wedding six years earlier, along with photographing their two older boys as babies. Liz asked for me specifically. As soon as I got the call, it became apparent how important this session was for me to do. I would be there as an experienced Heartfelt photographer but I was also going to be a familiar face to this family in a time of absolute grief and chaos.

On arrival I congratulated Liz with smiles and hugs on the arrival of her third beautiful son. This quickly turned to grief and tears, because the reality was I was there to capture the moment they had to take him off life support. I would capture their darling boy as he passed away in their arms.

I watched and photographed his two big brothers, as they loved and admired him, and I was there to capture their family. I watched two parents trying to cope with their own grief while supporting two boys to give the most wonderful cuddles and important kisses. The sense of unbelievable sadness along with the urgency in knowing there was just one more cuddle was apparent.

I saw so much strength from this amazing family. In supporting their big boys saying goodbye to their baby brother, saying goodbye themselves and the privilege I felt in being present and being able to capture one of the most intimate moments of their lives. To experience the unbelievable love, the radiant love for a son who they were not taking home. To then watch a courageous woman with the support of her husband bathe and dress and cuddle and say goodbye to their little baby just one week old, is something I will never forget.



Stillbirths

A family is a circle of love, not broken by a loss,
but made stronger by the memories. We remember.

~ Unknown

Alex

By Sharalynne Allsopp
Royal North Shore Hospital, NSW

It was late on Christmas Eve when the call came through for a Heartfelt Photographer. I knew most of my fellow photographers would be knee deep in preparations for their own youngsters. My family were all grown up and not needing me that night, so I headed out to the birthing unit.

I entered a quiet, calm room to see a new mum and dad gazing at their precious little son. They both looked understandably shell shocked at the situation they were in, but nothing could diminish the look of love in their eyes as they held their baby boy.

Together we captured as many photographic memories as possible, memories which I hoped could ease the pain for this family, if just a little.

I remember this session with pride, not only because it was my first solo session with Heartfelt, but also as a reminder of the importance of what we do, and that any life, no matter how short, is a celebration that deserves to be treasured and remembered.





Angel Neveah

by Emma Shaw
Nambour General, QLD

I was at the hospital photographing a stillborn baby when I was told of another mum who had just found out her baby's heartbeat had stopped. She had just arrived for the induction process. I left after my first session for that day thinking of the next family just starting the birthing process.

A very early phone call the following morning and I headed back to the hospital. I was welcomed in by the family.

Angel had the cutest button nose and the chubbiest cheeks I've ever seen. Angel Neveah Cooper, I am honoured to have provided this service for your family.

Update:

Nathan and Krystle had a little brother for Angel to watch over, baby Loki.

Benjamin

by Christian Jeldres
Mercy Hospital, VIC

Benjamin's family was so loving and caring, and losing him was totally unexpected by his parents, John and Sandra.

Benjamin's parents had extended and immediate family with them at the hospital. They were surrounded by immense love and support on the day and throughout their session.

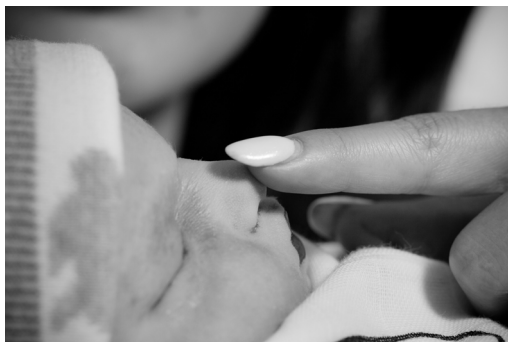
It was a beautiful, calm session full of love for Benjamin. The love between John and Sandra was clearly evident. This enabled me to produce some beautiful images for their family that I am sure they will cherish in years to come.

As I finished the session and was packing up, Sandra asked me why I do this work with Heartfelt.

I replied that I wanted to give back to families going through these times and if I could do it through photography, then I would.

She said that what we do is a beautiful gift and thanked me and Heartfelt.

Despite what the family were going through, Sandra was so kind and caring, enquiring about the organisation and interested in what we do. This was a very emotional moment for me.



Bethany

By Rebecca Rayner
Shoalhaven Hospital, NSW

I joined Heartfelt after I delivered our second daughter Grace at 18 weeks. Her delivery and the grief is one of the hardest things I have had to experience in my life. But what made it less traumatic were the midwives and all the support services made available to my husband and I. Because of the people I met during that process, I knew then that I wanted to use my experience to help other people, through photographs, in their time of need.

When I arrived at the hospital I walked the long hall toward the maternity ward and at the end of the corridor I could see a little girl and boy sitting excitedly with their grandparents. As I walked closer I realised I knew them. I waited in the reception area as I always do, when their Mum Lisa came out to the hall and greeted them and then emotionally collapsed into her Mother's arms and wept. My heart sank, the baby I was waiting to take photographs of was her baby.

Their beautiful little girl Bethany, with her button nose, was perfect. Her big brother and sister were so proud. We took photos with Bethany's big sister's most favourite toy and with flowers from Mum and Dad's garden. We detailed tiny fingers and ear fluff. She looked just like her big brother and they all marvelled at their likeness.

I feel privileged that I could be there in this way for this family.



Campbell

By Sarah Richardson
At the family home, VIC

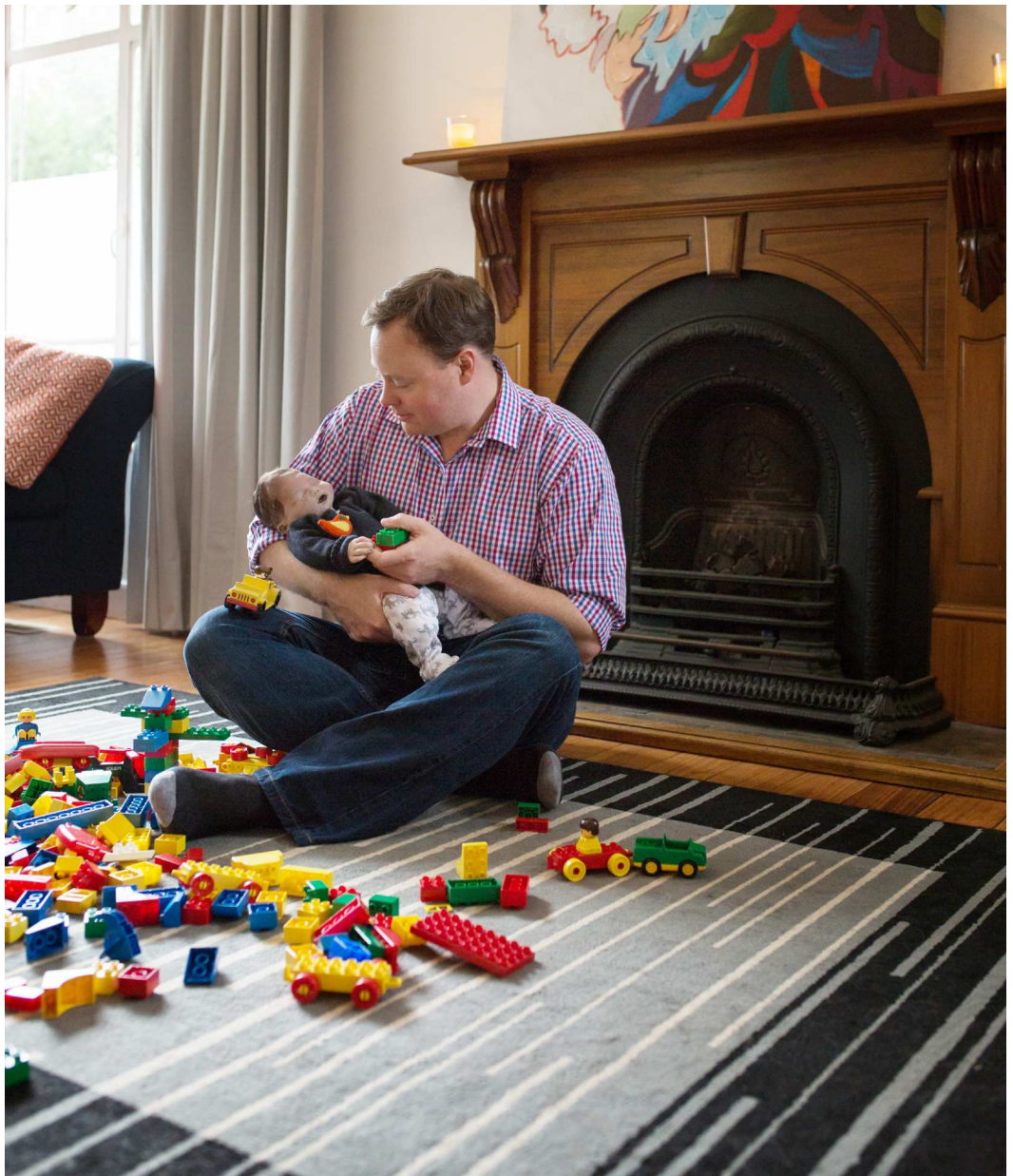
There was a request for a session for a baby who had passed away and been taken home by his parents, Karen and Andrew. I was welcomed into their home and taken into the nursery. The nursery was beautifully decorated, and in the cot was baby Campbell.

Campbell was able to be held gently but we were unable to touch him too much, he was dressed in a gorgeous navy cardigan with a little bird badge on it which I latter found out was a special gift from his Mum. Andrew mentioned that not long ago he purchased a huge tub of Duplo to play with his son. He was sad that he wouldn't get to experience playing Lego with Campbell, so I suggested it might be nice to get the lego out and be in that space with Campbell, in his arms. I documented this time for them.

I started to tear up as it was much more real seeing first hand the life that this family had prepared for their baby in their home, and not in a clinical setting of the hospital

Update:

Karen is pregnant with a little brother or sister for Campbell! They are so happy to have their Heartfelt photos to one day show this new baby their time with Campbell.





Chloe

By Karen Anderson
Mater Hospital, NSW

As a photographer, I always feel well supported when going to a Heartfelt session with Social Worker, Deb de Wilde. Deb will already have spent a long time with the parents getting to know them and how they want to approach the birth of their baby. Deb will have an in-depth knowledge of the family wishes and the situation I will be facing going into the room.

Chloe had been stillborn, her parents had bathed and dressed her and when I arrived the parents were dressing her for the photographs, talking to her all the time.

In this instance Deb talks gently with the parents about what we are going to do and helps with positioning the baby, and I photograph until I have enough photographs, or the parents decide that is enough.

In this photograph, the connection that Hanh has with baby Chloe was very obvious, taking in every inch of Chloe before having to eventually say goodbye.

In all my Heartfelt sessions it is impossible to be immune to the grief in the room, I always try my best to be compassionate and sensitive to when the parents would like to be on their own with their baby.

This session was slightly unique in that the parents, Deb and I were going to be interviewed by ABC Radio National on the subject of Stillbirth.

Deb and I went with the interviewer after the session, to go through what we do and why we do what we do, in the face of unimaginable grief.

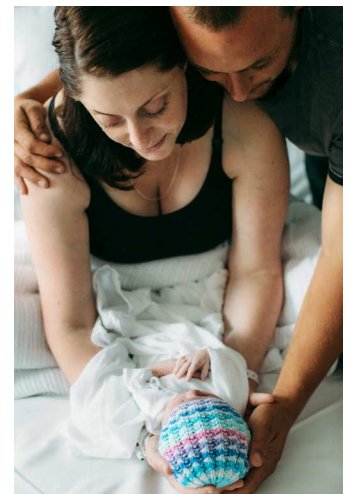
Eva

By Nicole Akhurst
Wollongong Hospital, NSW

Amanda and Jim needed Heartfelt for their firstborn baby girl, Eva Grace. Amanda and Jim were preparing to meet their daughter the next day by induction.

Eva's session was filled with adoring, overwhelming love and complete heartbreaking sadness. Eva wore a beautiful gown and rainbow beanie. Her beautiful little face and little fingers placed delicately around her parents was a significant and special moment in the session.

Jim and Amanda have fund raised and donated a Cuddle Cot to their local hospital, a beautiful legacy for their baby Chloe.





Florence

by Charmaine Tilley
Caboolture Hospital, QLD

Every session is unique. Walking into the room I could see the family were in so much grief for the loss of their beautiful, perfect, baby girl, delivered at full term.

The gut-wrenching pain of Florence's loving mothers tugged at my heartstrings. My eyes held many unshed tears throughout this session. I quietly took photos, interacting with the family, being open to their suggestions while gently guiding them so I could use the natural light coming in the window. Photographs give us something tangible to help recall all the tiny little features, showing tiny fingers and toes, the length of her eyelashes and the shape of her sweet little ears. Tiny fingers wrapped around theirs, these images help to create a visual reminder of a moment in time that is incredibly precious.

There was so much love in the room. Two parents who were incredibly attentive to each other and to their baby girl. It was a great honour to be there for Florence and her mothers in the capacity of a Heartfelt photographer. It is a privilege to be a part of Heartfelt, an amazing group of dedicated and loyal photographers.

Jimmy

by Alyssa Evans
Coffs Harbour Hospital, NSW

Like any new parents, Phoebe and Luke couldn't take their eyes of their son's beautiful little face. Both sets of grandparents came to meet Jimmy and they all took turns cuddling and admiring him while I photographed.

It's an honour to be trusted with this task, to be given the opportunity to do such meaningful work in the community and make a difference in the lives of grieving families. I don't have any beautiful photos to show to my children of the big sister they never got to meet, but I wish I did. I am so pleased to be able to provide this for others.

'Staring at that ultrasound screen, looking at my Jimmy I knew something was not right. His heartbeat had stopped at 36 weeks gestation.

Our photographer, Lyss, was gentle in her approach, allowing us to bond with Jimmy, while she captured all the raw emotion that came from our loss. Not only was it one of the most overwhelming experiences of my life it was one of the most memorable and rewarding.

Having the opportunity to have our Jimmy captured on that first day by a Heartfelt photographer, and with the support and respect shown towards our family through the whole process, I couldn't have felt more at ease.

Jimmy is very present in our home thanks to the beautiful memories captured on that day - a father and son, a mother and child; our family of three. I'm just so thankful to Heartfelt and our photographer Lyss for the beautiful work they do in providing families like ourselves with the gift of photographic memories.' ~ Jimmy's mum, Phoebe



Kayleigh

Naomi Tascon
Armadale Hospital, WA



Meeting Kayleigh and her family was heart wrenching. It was my first Heartfelt session.

I walked into the labour room having been briefed by the nurses that mum and dad had attended the hospital at 6am that morning having gone into natural labour and were excitedly awaiting the arrival of their first child.

Little did they know the sadness that was ahead for them. Baby Kayleigh had sadly passed away prior to the birth and they would spend their one and only day with her in grief.

A Heartfelt session is something we wish we'd never be called upon to do, but as photographers we can give a family in the most excruciating of circumstances, a beautiful gift.

I am grateful to have met and spent a few precious moments with Kayleigh and her parents and will always carry them in a special place in my heart.

Lincoln

By Nicole Thomas
Toowoomba Base Hospital, QLD

Since being introduced to what Heartfelt volunteers offer, I knew immediately I had to become a member.

I received my first Heartfelt call shortly after joining and, with a team of fellow volunteers behind me, I knew I would be okay.

I was told I'd be meeting a full-term baby boy, alongside his mum and dad. On arrival I was greeted by the midwife in charge, who took me to meet the family. Before entering the room, I reminded myself, 'their grief is not my grief.'

My role is to capture everything for the parents, to be there with compassion and care towards the family while they are facing one of the hardest situations in their lives.

I introduced myself to Kylie and spoke quietly to their precious boy Lincoln whilst capturing everything I would want to remember with my own child. His long fingers, his little nose and his perfect eye lashes. Beneath the unimaginable pain and grief, unconditional love fills the room. Watching Kylie hold Lincoln close, I couldn't help but be there as more than just a photographer, I was there as a friend.

Once our session was complete, I put my camera down while Kylie and I sat and spoke for a while before I left she and Shane to spend time with their son.

Kylie and I had kept in touch afterwards and I was elated to hear they were expecting another son, Saxon.

Heartbreakingly Saxon also passed away in utero and his story is on the next page. I had no hesitation in being by their side again.





Saxon

by Nicole Thomas
Toowoomba Base Hospital, QLD

After the stillbirth of their first son Lincoln at full-term, Kylie and Shane experienced the devastating loss of their next child Saxon.

There was no hesitation when it came to me being there for them again. Heartfelt has been able to give the Caban family so many memories and Kylie and Shane have continually expressed how grateful they are for that.

Update:

Kylie and Shane have had another son, Orion. Little brother to their eldest son, Memphis. I feel honoured that they invited Heartfelt to photograph their time with Lincoln and Saxon.

Linik

By Lee Illfield

John Hunter Hospital, NSW

James and Laura had enormous pride and love for their darling boy, Linik. It radiated throughout the room, along with great support for each other.

I was introduced to Linik, 'Link' and told about the history of his name. I watched and captured these new parents as they talked and cried and loved their little boy. I captured moments as they touched his hands, held his perfect little feet, admired his little nose with a smile and brushed his hair. Capturing moments of absolute sadness and heartbreak and moments of joy of these new parents.

As I look at the photos now, its takes my breath away how strong the bond is between Laura and her child. I am in awe of how Laura looked at her darling boy, so much love, care and tenderness.

Update: I recently bumped into Laura and James at a café and was delighted to learn they are pregnant again! As she said, their little one will have a special big brother and his very own guardian angel! Laura is the most amazing woman and with inspiration from Link she has started a company named Link and Luna. She is a spokesperson for stillbirth in the community.



Milla

by Helen Roberts
Ashford Private, SA



I received a call for a full term baby unexpectedly stillborn. It is devastating when the anticipation and excitement of birth turns unexpectedly to the delivery of a silent, still child, no breath, no life.

I am always a little nervous before these sessions even after nine years of service with Heartfelt. I have learnt that silence is okay, and no matter how I feel, this is not about me. It's about giving this family precious memories of their children in their darkest time.

I go into the room, I introduce myself and then say hello to Milla. I use her name and touch her gently. I say hi to Olive who tells me she is a new big sister. She was so sweet.

Children can be amazing at these times and Olive was loving and caring in her big sister role. Her parents loved them both with moments of joy and unimaginable pain all mixed together. Olive had presents to unwrap and a special teddy for Milla. A little reluctant at first when up on the bed, she became comfortable when Lena and Tim gently encouraged, explained and laughed with her. She even had her own cuddles too.

After a couple of hours of photographing this family, I hope these photographs make a difference for them during the painful process of their grief.



Owen

by Emma Shaw
Nambour General, QLD

I arrived this day for this call out, late in the afternoon. I knew the parents had older siblings there all day, awaiting the birth of their now suddenly stillborn baby. During the session, the room was filled with laughter one moment, and then a primal cry, the next.

Owen was due, he was planned for, he was absolutely perfect. In a room full of family members, he was cuddled, dressed, kissed and he was drenched in tears. I will always remember his chubby little hands. A family tradition of a monkey stuffed toy was upheld, and many hours more of just cuddling and breathing in all of that little boy before them.

Update:

Tara, Phillip, Lily, Ruby, Jack and Owen recently welcomed their new baby, Elijah Owen.





Paislee

By Leighsa Cox
John Hunter Hospital, NSW

I met Melanie and Drew and their baby Paislee on a cold winter afternoon. It was the same day I met my newborn niece. I was in the same hospital introducing my children to their new cousin and I left them to have cuddles while I went to photograph little Paislee.

It was so difficult walking into that room full of sadness after seeing such joy. Melanie and Drew looked tired and heartbroken. They were strong and so supportive of each other. I am sure it had been a horrific day for them meeting their new daughter they would never see grow up. Paislee had died in utero at 31 weeks gestation.

I photographed Paislee as I would any newborn baby. Details and face, cuddles with mum and dad. I wanted to make sure I was covering all the important things so Melanie and Drew could remember their little girl.

Melanie and Drew were so thankful when I left. I was happy I could do a small thing to help them in such a horrible time.



Sapphire Rose

By Marion Cullen
Ashford Hospital, SA

In July 2015, I was called to photograph baby Sapphire Rose with her parents, Renee and Pat, and big sister Savannah. Sadly, little Sapphire was stillborn at 36 weeks. Obviously devastated by their loss, Renee and Patrick very much wanted to create lasting, visual memories of their beautiful, raven-haired daughter for their family.

I clearly remember the instant warmth that greeted me when I first entered their room at the Ashford Hospital. Renee, Pat, and Renee's parents, were all giving Renee and each other support and helping look after big sister, Savannah.

Sapphire Rose had a mass of thick, dark hair, like both her parents, and dusky rose coloured cheeks. She was perfect, but it was heartbreaking to see her because one could easily have mistaken her for simply being asleep.

During their session Renee and Pat shared some of Sapphire Rose's story with me, and I witnessed their enormous heartbreak over the loss of their daughter and how much they loved and cherished her.

It had been a long session and all of us were exhausted. I'm still not sure how Renee and Patrick managed it, but they were amazing and were as gracious as the moment we'd begun.

This session brought with it some remarkable, memorable and defining moments for me. It strengthened my commitment as a Heartfelt photographer, but also reinforced what a privilege it is to be trusted with such a significant and meaningful task and to witness the strength, commitment and love that Heartfelt families experience.



Scout

by Jerusha Sutton
Royal Hospital for Women, NSW

It is always with a heavy heart that I go to the Butterfly Room at Royal Hospital for Women to take Heartfelt photos. Yet I am honoured to help in some small way in these families' time of need.

Jess and Rohan discovered that Scout had passed away at 35 weeks and she had been born the day before, surrounded by family.

Jess and Rohan were a beautiful young couple. They were completely connected, both with each other and their beautiful daughter. As I photographed them, I witnessed them take in every little detail of Scout over and over, much as I imagined they had been doing since her birth the day before.

It blew me away to receive a message of thanks from Jess within days of their Heartfelt session, before they had even received their photographs. Such thoughtfulness amid such sorrow.

From that first message we have kept in contact. I was with them for the birth of their second baby, a beautiful healthy boy named Hendrix Bear, and am looking forward to seeing them once again in the coming months when Scout will, once again, become a big sister.



Summer

By Sheryn Ellis
Gold Coast University Hospital, QLD

This was my second solo Heartfelt session. I'd been a member for only three weeks at this stage and I was still feeling like I'd never know the right words to say when I first walk into a room. As I drove to the Hospital that day I wondered how I would feel to walk into a room where mum's condition was not yet stable, she'd just delivered a 35 week baby, who yesterday was alive and well, and today, was not, and now her own life was in jeopardy.

It's hard to explain just how intense it was to walk into Amy's room. It was crowded, I couldn't even get inside the door at first. There were nurses everywhere as a team had just come down from ICU ready to transport her upstairs. Amy was hooked up to multiple machines, Summer was in the cot beside her bed, her partner Luke, her parents (who'd flown in from Melbourne) and her brother were all there supporting her. I didn't know where to look or who to talk to and it was at that moment that Amy saw me. She was crying, her mum was holding her hand. She called me over and grabbed my hand and just kept saying thank you, thank you for coming, thank you for being here, thank you.

Shortly after Amy was taken to ICU and I was left with her family and Summer. I stayed with the family for about 30 minutes, photographing Summer with each of them, before being taken up to ICU with Luke and Summer so that I could photograph Amy holding Summer.

The images I captured with Amy, Summer and Luke in ICU are some of the most precious images I've ever created. The love I photographed that day touched me so much I knew with certainty, that Heartfelt was the right way for me to give back.



Zenn

By Emma Shaw

Nambour General Hospital, QLD



After arriving at the hospital the lovely midwife looking after this family quickly stopped in the hallway to brief me on the situation. Not only had this family suffered a horrendous loss of their full term baby boy but they were frantically trying to save his mother, Jacqueline.

I was ushered to the tiny corner of the room as Jacqueline was not doing well. As I looked into the baby cot I saw the most precious little face, with beautiful big lips and dark hair. He looked like he was sleeping.

The room was filled with so many family members, it was hard to move. I remember what a beautiful experience it was to witness their family priest come in and do a blessing on both beautiful baby Zenn and his mummy.

The room was filled with family, love and faith.

Update:

Peter and Jacqueline have welcomed their fourth child, baby Jett.

Zoe

by Angela Ritchie

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, QLD

I met these heartbroken parents on one of my first solo sessions. I felt humbled to be there, to capture memories of their time with their stillborn, first baby girl. Her Dad, Matthew, had Zoe on his chest and stroked her so gently and it seemed as though she was simply sleeping.

She had the prettiest, perfect little face. She had been born at 28 weeks and bravely fought for another 31 days. A single tear rolled down her mum's face as she cradled her daughter and thanked me. At that moment, I truly understood the gift of Heartfelt and what a privilege it was to be there.

Three years later, Ally and Matthew welcomed their third child into the world. Zoe will never be forgotten and the images we created that day mean that her brother and sister will always know that she was an important part of the family.



Ava May

by Karen Pfeiffer
Wollongong Hospital, NSW

I'll never forget the moment that one of my closest friends, Nicole, told me that her daughter wasn't going to make it. With plans already in place for a shoot booked in Sydney, the timing meant that I could be there for Nicole and her family, and that I could photograph Ava's Heartfelt session.

When I boarded my flight to Sydney the night before, Nicole was already in labour. Upon landing, I expected that Ava would have been born...but she hadn't arrived, and didn't until the next day. Fellow Heartfelt photographer Netra and I drove to Wollongong in the afternoon and awaited news of Ava's arrival. Nicole, Netra and I share many incredible bonds and moments, and I think the three of us knew that this would be one of the most momentous of all.

Ava's session was something extraordinary for me, because whilst every single baby we photograph is special, this baby was someone I had loved from the moment I'd known of her conception. It was hard to watch our friends going through the utter heartbreak and grief of losing their baby girl, and yet still stay focused on the task of creating memories for them.

We cried (oh, how we cried). We smiled (she was just so beautiful). We held each other and we celebrated the joy of Ava, with every single emotion that I've ever seen in any of my other Heartfelt sessions.

Ava's Heartfelt session was one of the hardest I think I'll ever do, but I'm so proud to have been able to give the family the memories they deserved. We were able to photograph Ava with her parents, and with her brothers and sister and with some of her extended family as well. I know that these photographs are treasured and loved, and I am so glad I could provide them to Ava's family.





From Alva's mum, Nicole

Having been a Heartfelt Photographer myself for a year and half before my loss with Ava, I had the honour and privilege to provide images for families whose hearts were completely broken but it wasn't until my own experience, that I could truly value and understand the healing and gift these photos provide.

Our very much longed for and loved fifth child and baby girl, Ava who passed at 18 weeks made me see through a different lens. To value the tangible, preserving memories and emotions that have been given to me through the images provided by my beautiful friend Karen from Heartfelt. We were the grieving family holding our daughter in our arms, unable to take her home and it was beyond our deepest sorrow, devastation and heartbreak. Surrounded by close friends and Heartfelt members, Karen and Netra, with family made our time together peaceful, sacred, safe and intimate.

Karen was beyond amazing in her approach. Her caring, bedside manner and respect to our baby girl, was just what I needed. She was calm, and allowed us the time to be with her, cry with her, smile with her and love her without judgment.

Our photos are our most precious treasure of our baby girl. Thank you Heartfelt for providing this service and kind, open-hearted professional photographers like Karen who create memories in the most respectful, timeless and intimate detail I could not have remembered in my time of grief and sadness. Thank you from my family to the Heartfelt Family, we will always be grateful for this gift you gave us.

Abigail

by Emma Shaw
Nambour Hospital, QLD

I remember the call for this session - a hot March day. I got to the hospital as quickly as I could, in order to capture this little baby at her best. There are always those last minute nervous butterflies just as I'm about to walk into the room at the hospital. I just usually worry about the fine lines we tread with knowing when to put the camera down in a moment of grief, or capture it, or even accidentally saying to the parents, "how are you?" upon meeting.

Once I walked into the room I remember vividly how absolutely gorgeous little Abigail looked, so perfect and so peaceful.





Carlin

by Sarah Richardson
The Angliss, VIC

Erin and Jason were naturally upset that they had lost their baby (Carlin was born at just 22 weeks) but at the same time there was joy that they were able to meet him. I remember some laughter as we discussed the tiny little suit he was dressed in. It had ribbon and press studs and poor Mum and Dad had no idea which bit went where. Dressing a baby is hard at the best of times and when everything is miniature it's even harder!

I took photos of all Carlin's tiny little features, his mum and dad holding and loving him as well as him with a teddy. Erin and Jason were going to keep the teddy to remind them of him.

As I was photographing Carlin in the crib, the sun was setting and I could not help but think that this would be the first and last sun set Erin and Jason would have with Carlin. I am happy I was able to meet Carlin, it was an honour and privilege to be able to capture the short period of time his parents would have with him.



Charlie

By Angela Ritchie
Ipswich Hospital, QLD

With the tiniest of feet and hands, baby Charlie made an imprint on my heart. I had been a Heartfelt member for more than three years and captured many precious images, but still, I was nervous about how I was going to honour this little life in the best way.

A dark hospital room, heartbroken parents and a darling boy who couldn't really be moved. He had perfect features.

We chose the smallest blue beanie in the Hospital's lovely collection. Resting Charlie's tiny feet on it reminded me how fragile these little lives are.



Colt

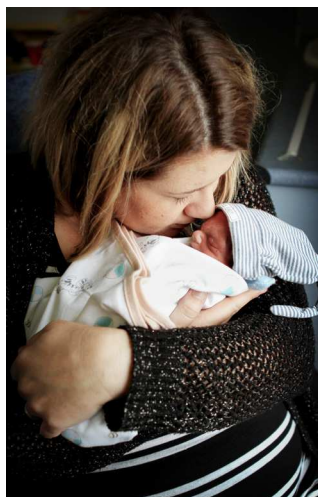
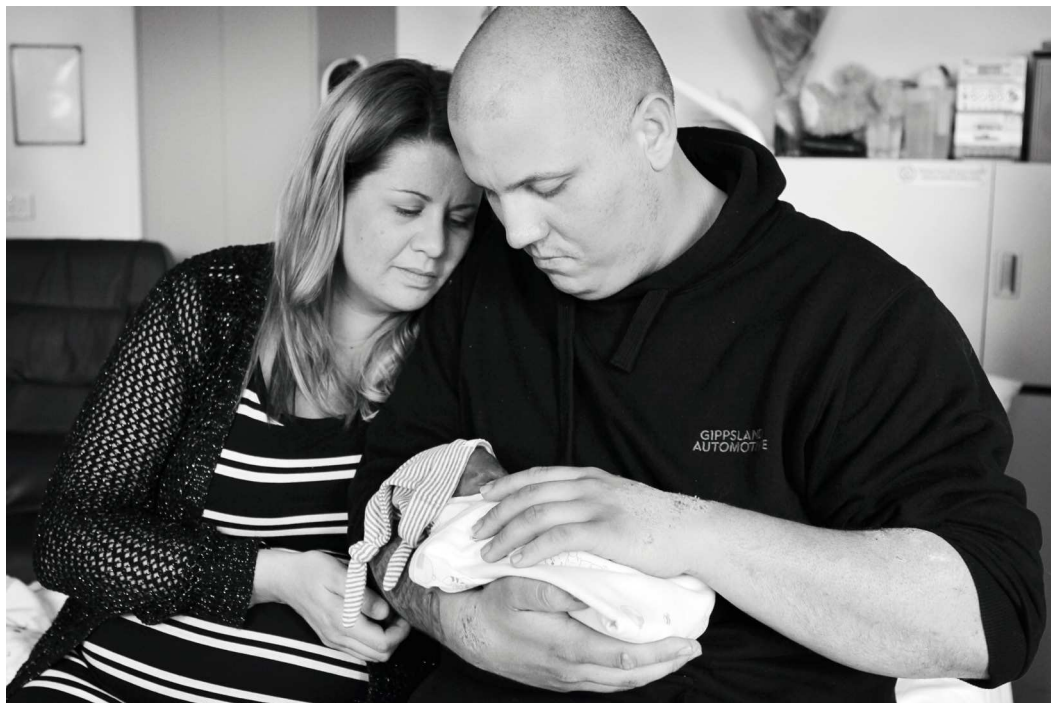
by Nicole Smith
West Gippsland Hospital, VIC

Stacey held little Colt close; she was studying his hair, the texture of his skin, his tiny little fingers, his every single everything. She told me she didn't want to forget a thing, and wanted to absorb every detail. Matt showed indescribable fatherly love; and was both strong and vulnerable all at once.

Extended family were in and out showering little Colt with deep love and affection. Joyous smiles were followed with that look we so often see as Heartfelt photographers, so much love, and so much pain all at once.

As the photographer for their session, it's hard to describe the depths of privilege I feel.

I often shed many tears on the way home, of relief that I captured the session successfully, and of sadness. It is such an incredible honour to be a Heartfelt photographer and provide this service.



Connor

by Hilary Wardaugh
Funeral home, ACT

I met Andrew and Deb and baby Connor in September 2012. Connor was a much wanted child.

I photographed Connor before the funeral service at the funeral home. It was a lovely room and many family members were there. The reason we were late photographing him was that they had not known a service like Heartfelt was available.

I was relatively new to Heartfelt at that time. I felt profoundly sad for them, especially seeing how small the coffin was. It broke my heart.

Update:

Andrew and Deb now have gorgeous twin girls and I have had the privilege to photograph their lovely family.





Darcy

by Helen Roberts
Women's and Children's Hospital, SA

I always stand for a few moments before going in to meet a family to breathe deeply and be present in the moment.

The atmosphere in this room was silent with a deep sadness in the air. Carla and Travis had a quiet calm about them and their love for their beautiful daughter Darcy was palpable.

I step into their world briefly, I take the photos which show this love and sadness, I use her name and speak softly to her.

I hope in some small way these memories can remind her family she was here and she is loved.

I leave with a lump in my throat knowing that the grief they feel is unimaginable and their lives will be forever changed.

Edward

by Sheryn Ellis
Gold Coast University Hospital, QLD

Eddie... The room was silent when I entered and all eyes were on the little tiny bundle in his cot. I introduced myself to Simone and Daniel and learned this little boy's name was Edward John.

Eddie was born at just 21 weeks gestation and he was so tiny. Eddie had four siblings at home. I didn't know if they had met Eddie or if they were even going to meet him, but I did know I would capture photos to make certain they remembered him.

It's hard for children to understand why their baby brother isn't coming home and I knew my photographs could help them with their grief. I wanted to give Eddie's family beautiful photographs to prove he was here, even though their time with him was fleeting. I picked up my camera and captured every detail of Edward.

Beautiful, tiny and perfect little Eddie. It was an honour to meet him.





Eli

by Hilary Wardaugh
Goulburn Base Hospital, NSW

Krystle and Paul had just welcomed Eli, who was 22 weeks and had been stillborn.

It is always so sad to see people seemingly crushed by grief. You never know how things will be when you enter the room. Paul is a tall big man and to photograph his baby son in his hands, so small, was so sad and he was having trouble holding it together. Krystle was shattered and teary.

Sometimes when parents are so grief stricken and crying I am never quite sure I should make a photo of that moment, but in the end I do really think it does all help.

Krystle says that she and Paul are taking each day at a time since Eli's death and the photos they have are a beautiful reminder of their dear son.

Evander

by Emma Shaw
Nambour Hospital, QLD

When I arrived at this session, I entered the room to a calm, serene and loving setting. The midwives spoke softly, the lights were dim, and all eyes were on this stunning little boy. Sometimes the quietness of a room can be deafening, when something so significant has just happened.

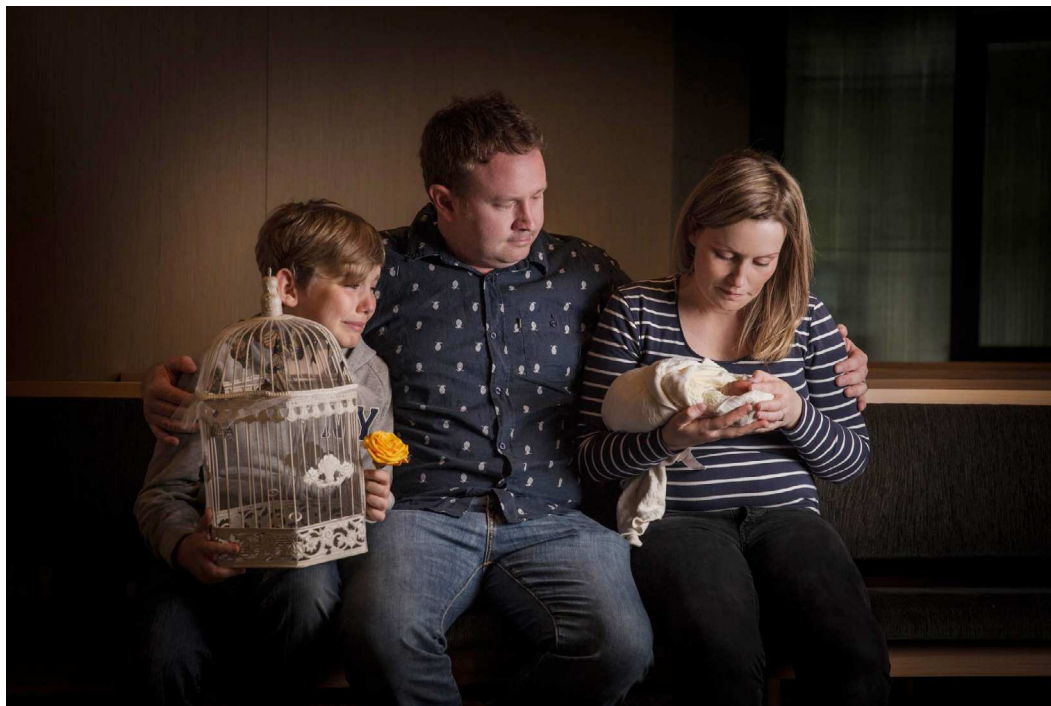
Evander, tiny, perfect and adorable. He was born just a fraction too early to live, although his short stay here will be remembered. Baby Evander was celebrated. Such a sweet little baby.

Update:

Nicole and Tom recently welcomed a baby sister for little Evander.

Nicole told me of a friend who had lost a baby, who was in awe of the images she of baby Evander. They too wish they had received Heartfelt photos.





Finnley

by Adrienne Gilligan
Springvale Cemetary, VIC

Trish contacted Heartfelt to say she and partner Luke had lost their 22 week baby boy Finnley. Trish was deeply saddened that the only two photos captured by a caring nurse were dark and not in focus.

When offered a photographer by the hospital, the family felt that the cost would be high and questioned whether the photographer would be able to cope with their family's tears and be okay taking photos of their baby.

Trish couldn't sleep and spent the night online where she found Heartfelt.

The next morning Trish phoned Heartfelt to see if there was anything that they could do to retouch her only two photos. She also asked whether we knew a photographer who would photograph a butterfly release that the family had planned to do after Finnleys final viewing, and cremation at Springvale Cemetery.

I spoke to Trish and asked her whether she would like me to photograph Finnley prior to the butterfly release. She was overwhelmed with gratitude and relief.

Meeting the family and their very special Finnley Jack Adams was very special.

"We haven't stopped crying since your call but I can tell you that some of the weight has been lifted knowing that someone can capture a photograph for us to remember Finnley, so that he can be included on our family wall at home!" ~Finnley's mum, Trish



Harriet

by Laura Gurney
St Andrew's Toowoomba Hospital, QLD

Harriet was a beautiful, tiny baby girl born at 22 weeks.

This was my first solo session and I was extremely nervous. When I walked into the room and met Harriet's parents, Tim and Courtney, I felt much more relaxed. They were lovely people and were cherishing their last precious moments with their beautiful little girl.

The atmosphere in the room was like no other Heartfelt session I have experienced. It was a celebration of Harriet's short life rather than a farewell. I know that Courtney and Tim experienced many heartbreaking moments but during the session they were able to cherish the little things as they made the most of every second with their little girl. They admired her perfectly formed tiny toes, her beautiful little button nose and delicate fingers. Despite being such a tragic time, there was so much beauty and love.

It was an honour to capture these memories of Harriet so her family can reflect back and remember all of the tiny details that can fade in our memories as time goes by. Courtney wrote me an email after the session and I cried reading it, because I felt so blessed to help them in such an awful time. She made me realise how extremely important the gift of Heartfelt Photography is and this knowledge helps me in difficult sessions.





Jaxon

By Angela Ritchie
Logan Hospital, QLD

I was at a family Christmas party when I received the request to provide a Heartfelt session for this beautiful young couple after the loss of their first baby boy. From the moment I arrived, I was touched by the love they had for each other and tiny Jaxon. With his long fingers and toes, he was perfect.

Jaxon's loving grandparents were there for support and I was humbled when they gave me a hand written message in a card which they had purchased at the hospital shop downstairs while waiting for me to arrive. Their gratitude and thoughtfulness, amidst their own pain, touched me deeply and reminded me of the impact that a visit from a Heartfelt member has.

Still born, still beautiful, still loved.

Joshua

by Jodie Craig
King Edward Memorial Hospital, WA

Joshua's family are close family friends of mine and his session was my very first solo session for Heartfelt.

Joshua Shae had sadly passed in utero at 22 weeks and was born a few days later, a tiny little boy, the second child of Kayleigh and Seamus.

Mum, Kayleigh, was induced in the morning and I spent the day waiting by the phone to be called in when she was ready. The midwife phoned in the afternoon to say Joshua was born and I could come in.

I arrived at King Edward Memorial an hour later, just in time to pass Kayleigh in the elevator being wheeled into theatre. I waited in the birth suite with Joshua, Seamus and Kayleigh's Mum.

To be there for anybody let alone your friends at such a terribly sad time is such an honour and I felt so privileged to spend that precious time with them.



Mahlo

by Casey Wood
Lyell Mac Hospital, SA



I first met Tasman and Rachel while they were preparing for the birth of their second child, a daughter named Vadea. A few years later the girls told me they were pregnant again! I was over the moon for them!

Months later, I had received a notification that I had been personally requested for a Heartfelt session. As I read on my heart sank. It was Tasman and Rachel and they had been given the news that their little baby would be stillborn.

Two weeks later, little Mahlo was born. We all stared in amazement at this darling little man. He had perfect little fingers and toes and the sweetest little lips! He was beautiful. And it was amazing to see the strength of these two beautiful mothers celebrating a baby they would get only a few precious days to be with and hold. Their older children Zarlen and Vadea were able to meet and love Mahlo over the two days they spent with him in hospital.

Update:

I was absolutely thrilled to find out mid 2016 that both Tasman and Rachel were pregnant again. On the 24th of December 2016, I photographed the girls again as Tasman gave birth to baby Griffin. Rachel gave birth to a beautiful little girl named Juniper only 6 days prior.



Savannah

by Sheryn Ellis
Gold Coast University Hospital, QLD

My first thoughts as I walk into the room are that there is a calm and happy vibe.

Hayley and Hayden are a young happy couple and are really wanting to celebrate the life of Savannah. It's beautiful to watch them talk to her and to point out her features and kiss her delicately. Savannah is tiny yet perfect, all her features angelic. I take my time to record them interacting with Savannah and then capture her from the tip of her head to the bottom of her toes.

This session has been, as always, a sad loss for the family. I know I captured beautiful moments of this lovely young couple with their daughter who was not able to stay on this earth.



Update:

I was so happy to hear that Hayley and Hayden welcomed baby Quinton nine months later.

How You Can Help

“Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone’s life. Be the light that helps others see; it is what gives life its deepest significance.”

~ Roy T. Bennett

We need your help

Each month, Heartfelt gifts free photography sessions to approximately 130 families who have experienced stillbirths, premature births, or have children with serious and terminal illnesses.

These sessions come at a cost of \$65 each and are funded by the generosity of people who are touched by what we do. We ask you to please consider a monetary donation, so we can concentrate on looking after the families that request our services.

**Please visit www.Heartfelt.org.au to donate today
or to sponsor a session**

Heartfelt : giving the gift of photographic memories is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) from 01 Jul 2014. It is covered by Item 1 of the table in section 30-15 of the Income TaxAssessment Act 1997.



Heartfelt is a volunteer organisation of professional photographers from all over Australia and New Zealand who have come together to form an organisation dedicated to giving the gift of photographic memories to families that have experienced stillbirths, premature and ill infants and children in the Neonatal Intensive Care Units of their local hospitals, as well as children with serious and terminal illnesses.

We have chosen to produce this book, with a selection of our photographs in order to raise awareness of the service we provide and to tell the stories of courage, heartbreak and hope of the everyday people with whom we are privileged to work.

We would like to thank the families who have so generously given us permission to share their stories and photographs. It is our hope that by raising awareness of our services, we will be able to reach many more families in need.

www.Heartfelt.org.au