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**Griefline & AI May Joint Press Release**

***Griefline joins forces with playwright to destigmatise grief***

National grief-and loss not for profit organisation, Griefline, has formed a creative partnership with Brisbane-based multicultural theatre group, Embodi Theatre, to promote safe conversations around grief through *AI May*, a bold new play, written by former SBS journalist, Amy Chien-Yu Wang.

When COVID-19 emerged in Australia in 2020, demand for Griefline's free telephone support service increased by 1100%, with people calling the helpline from all over the country.

"Grief is commonly suppressed in the Chinese community in which many tend to keep their sorrow within to practice resilience. However, if unaddressed, feelings of grief and loss can affect one's ability to function in everyday life and work situations," according to Mason Tai, a Sydney-based bilingual Griefline volunteer telephone counsellor.

*AI May* is a sci-fi bilingual play in Mandarin and English which explores grief, love and loss in the age of artificial intelligence through a grieving Chinese mother's interactions with a grieving bot resembling her deceased daughter. Its creator, Amy Chien-Yu Wang, hopes to use this play as a conversation starter to destigmatise mental health issues within the Chinese migrant community and address loneliness in Australia's ageing society.

"I started writing *AI May* to explore my own grief after losing a dear friend. In the process, I found others who are still deeply affected by the loss of a

loved one after years or even decades. I want to create opportunities for Chinese migrants to begin changing their perceptions around grief, loss and depression in order to move forward stronger and lighter," says Wang.

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that one in five Australians experience some kind of mental health condition in their lifetime. Griefline's Chief Marketing Officer Louisa Smith says, "Griefline acknowledges that the stigma and taboo often associated with loss and death can prevent people from expressing their grief and seeking support when they need it. Talking about grief is hard enough, even more so for older migrants challenged by loneliness and social isolation. We believe *AI May* is an important story to share as a powerful conversation starter to those who've lost a loved one to begin their healing journey."

Griefline and Embodi Theatre will co-host an online forum in Mandarin to highlight issues migrants often face when it comes to coping with grief and loss on Tuesday 6 December at 8-9pm AEDT.

*AI May* has been in development over the past two years involving artists from the United States, New Zealand and Australia. Embodi Theatre will host a 90-minute work-in-progress public showing in Brisbane which will be live-streamed on Sunday 11 December at 2:30pm AEST.

Anyone struggling to cope with grief, relating to any type of loss including death, divorce, illness, homes and livelihoods can call Griefline for free emotional support from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday AEST on 1300 845 745.

For more information, contact:

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About Amy Chien-Yu Wang:

Amy is a 1.5 generational Taiwanese playwright/director/theatre-maker based in Meanjin/Brisbane. Formally an SBS multicultural journalist and winner of the 2018 Queensland Multicultural Awards (Business Category). Amy is passionate in telling authentic multicultural stories that represent the stories and voices of under-represented communities.