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MEDIA RELEASE

Courageous mother shares her family's heart-break to help families

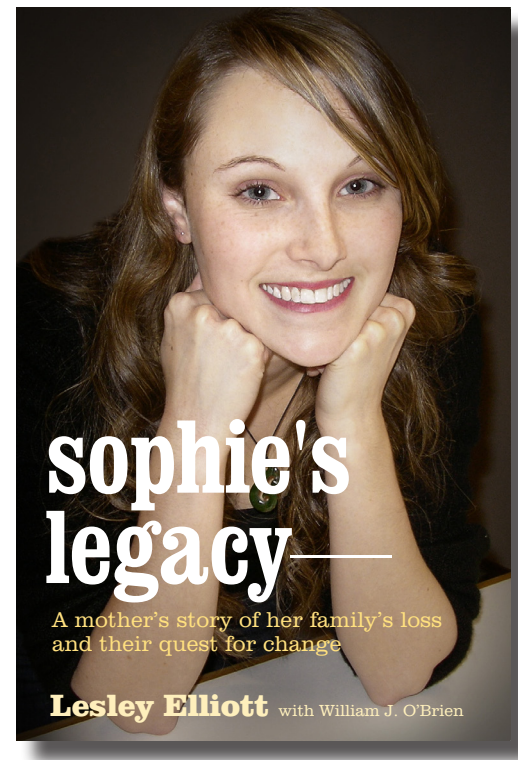
If there's a glimmer of hope to come out of the monstrous murder of Sophie Elliott, it's the Foundation which has been set up in the memory of Lesley and Gil Elliott's treasured only daughter to help ensure other families never have to go through what they did.

All proceeds of Lesley Elliott's courageous, compelling and utterly moving new book, *Sophie's Legacy: A mother's story of her family's loss and their quest for change* will go towards realising Lesley's dream – to resource a school-based programme which will better prepare our girls for their emotional lives so they can look after themselves at a time in their life when they are most vulnerable. The nation was deeply shocked and affected by Sophie's horrific, senseless death and the establishment of the Foundation is a constructive way forward for us all.

The book and the Sophie Elliott Foundation will be officially launched in Dunedin on Saturday, 11 June at a fundraising event to mark what would have been Sophie's 26th birthday.

Written with family friend and former policeman, Bill O'Brien – a veteran champion for victim justice – Lesley examines with vivid honesty and frank introspection the events that led to that terrible moment when the lives of her family changed forever – the sunny Dunedin morning when, as she was helping Sophie pack things for her move to Wellington, Clayton Weatherston showed up.

Understandably, it's a very tough read in parts but what compels us to keep going is the underlying sense of the Elliotts' determination to get through for Sophie's sake. Lesley and Gil are proof that despite a harrowing tragedy and the dark days that follow, it is possible to come out the other side resolute, determined and heroic. Three years on, the Elliotts are still trying to make sense of it all and *Sophie's Legacy* is, without a doubt, part of this journey.



Title: *Sophie's Legacy*

Author: Lesley Elliott and William J O'Brien

RRP: \$39.99

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Imprint: Longacre



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What continues to trouble Lesley is that, despite she and Sophie being concerned at Weatherston's behaviour, neither recognised he was displaying classic signs of an abusive partner. Only after Sophie's death did Lesley become aware of the signs they both missed. Her fervent wish is to find a way where young women and their family and friends can recognise those signs. She aims to do this through a nationwide education programme.

What we get from this book – because Lesley has come to understand it herself – is how a manipulative and dangerous person like Weatherston can so easily get inside the head of a highly intelligent young woman.

Lesley says she is indebted to Bill O'Brien not just for his help in writing the book but also for his emotional support right from the start. He shares Lesley's vision to make our communities safer, especially for women.

One of the book's clear angles is that if it wasn't bad enough for the family dealing with the murder and its aftermath, then the trial was a re-traumatising experience. Although they got the outcome they wanted, it was harrowing to be in court, listening to Sophie's reputation being trashed. The Elliotts have come up with some really clear solutions for how the trial could have been handled better for the family. They are saying to the justice system that there's got to be a better way for victims.

The book has four sections: Sophie's murder and the devastating personal impact on her family; setting the record straight regarding Sophie's reputation and addressing Weatherston's defence that Sophie provoked him to do what he did; Lesley and Gil's resilience and determination to take on the justice system over how it failed Sophie – and continues to fail victims; and then finally Lesley's aspirations for the Foundation.

Powerful, gripping, inspiring, *Sophie's Legacy* is a major book.

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About William O'Brien:

After retiring from a 35-year career with the New Zealand Police, Bill O'Brien took up writing as an alternative career. His best known work is also his first book, *Aramoana — Twenty-Two Hours of Terror*, which subsequently became the basis for the film *Out of the Blue*. He has gone on to write both fiction and non-fiction for adults and children.



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