



# The Beacon

Breast Cancer  
Network Australia  
newsletter

## Giving life to a Field of Women



Breast cancer survivor, Raelene Boyle, amid the 'Field of Women' (Photography by Gary Schafer, courtesy of The Canberra Times).

Anyone visiting Australia's New Parliament House on Sunday, October 18, would have been surprised by the sight that met their eyes.

Across the huge area of the lower lawn stretched a bright pink carpet. Had our visitors had a bird's eye view, they would have seen the carpet was in the shape of a woman. A closer look would have revealed thousands of pink silhouettes shaped like women standing.

This was our *Field of Women* – 10,000 pink figures, each representing one of the women diagnosed with breast cancer each year. More were to be added before the afternoon was over, for in addition to the 10,000 diagnosed, 2500 Australian women die from the disease each year.

Our visitors would have watched a long procession of silent women, men and children move slowly from the Old Parliament House, past the carpet of pink silhouettes all the way up the hill to New Parliament House.

Everyone was carrying a bouquet of white silhouettes, many of which bore a name and a message. These messages had been sponsored by someone in honour of

a woman living with the disease or in memory of a loved one whose life had been cut short by it.

We gathered at the top of the hill to formally launch our Network, to hear messages of support from many politicians, and we cried as we thought of all the much-loved women we had lost, and would lose in the future.

While we again committed ourselves to our cause of eradicating the disease, the rain stopped, the clouds parted and the sun bathed us in golden light.

As the women dispersed, we planted our silhouettes, like little maids in a row, around the edge of the lawn, enclosing the pink carpet in a white border.

The silhouettes were left on the hillside, where they stood proudly, demonstrating to all Australians that we are not breast cancer statistics, but individual women with families and friends, hopes, dreams and plans for the future. Women for whom life is so sweet.

Our silhouettes will one day all bear names, for we will never allow the thousands of women living with, and dying from, this disease to be forgotten.

– Jenny James

### Special Issue

This full colour issue marks the official launch of the Breast Cancer Network Australia.

# Making a difference

**T**hree hundred women from all over Australia descended on Canberra in October for our long-anticipated National Breast Cancer Conference for Women.

Conference places had been filled within the first few days, which indicated the enormous level of interest from women, but it was upsetting that some women missed out.

A conference report is available to anyone who sends a stamped, self-addressed envelope to PO Box 4082, Auburn South, Victoria 3122.

For others, an overview will be enough. We have endeavoured to provide this through the following 'snapshots'.

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16



- The conference was opened by **Judi Moylan**, Minister for the Status of Women. She reaffirmed the Federal Coalition's promise to provide an additional \$4 million over four years for support services, including specialised nursing care and assistance with the costs of prostheses and travel for treatment.

- Presentations by conference patron, **Raelene Boyle**; the Director of the National Breast Cancer Centre,



*A well-travelled delegate! Bettina Woodburn of the Fence Line Group.*

**Professor Sally Redman**; Canadian author and breast cancer activist, **Sharon Batt**; and the Network's co-ordinator, **Lyn Swinburne**.

- A hypothetical-type presentation, 'Lymphoedema – Why Aren't We Doing More?', skilfully and humorously led by **Justice Margaret Beazley**.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17



- A presentation by **Christine Brunswick**, vice-president of US National Breast Cancer Coalition.

- A series of interactive workshop sessions based on the major issues arising from state forums held around the country over the past eight months. Each workshop was expected to record the most pressing strategies recommended for attention in the conference's Action Plan.

- The viewing of the remarkable and moving film, 'Rachel's Daughters'.
- A presentation from **Cherrell Hirst**, director of the Wesley Breast Clinic in Brisbane.

- The most challenging session of them all! Workshop outcomes were listed on overheads and delegates voted for the most urgent, important and effective actions which would achieve the conference's goal – To Make a Difference!

- Saturday evening saw many delegates having fun and celebrating life at The Bosom Buddies Fashion Event, where all the models on the catwalk were breast cancer survivors.

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18



- Comments from three delegates who reflected the diversity of the women present – **Susan Tully** from Darwin represented women facing the added challenges of distance and remoteness; **Maureen Kirk** from Brisbane represented Indigenous women; and **Tanya Wilson** from Victoria represented young women.

- Presentation and ratification of the Priority Action Plan – It was agreed that state-based groups would present the Priority Action Plan to state bodies, Ministers and Shadow Ministers for Health, state arms of Royal Colleges, state cancer councils, major research organisations, a range of all involved and relevant bodies, as well as to people in their own communities.

We recognise the contribution made by the National Breast Cancer Centre, which sponsored the conference and invested considerable funds, expertise and energy to ensure it was a success.



*Women travelled from all over Australia to take part in the Canberra conference. This group travelled from Victoria in a coach sponsored by the Anti-Cancer Council.*

# Priority Action List

**T**he National Breast Cancer Conference for Women was an opportunity for women affected by breast cancer to exchange views on many topics and agree that it is necessary to make a difference to the management of breast cancer.

The actions necessary to *make a difference* were discussed and generated in workshops, and endorsed by the conference as a whole. The major actions from the conference were:

- Breast Cancer Network Australia to lobby for more breast care nurses to follow women from diagnosis throughout treatment.
- Ensure that all women are provided with information at the time of diagnosis and before treatment, particularly consumer guidelines and relevant local information.
- Breast Cancer Network Australia to lobby the Australian Medical Council and Royal Colleges that communication skills must be made an essential component in initial and continuing medical education and training.
- Consumers to promote consumer representation in all areas and at all levels of decision making related to breast cancer research, including the development and co-ordination of clinical trials.
- Undertake to ensure funding is increased and maintained through grassroots approaches (e.g. letter writing, lobbying) for medical, scientific and policy research.
- State groups and Breast Cancer Network Australia to lobby government for the continued funding of the NHMRC National Breast Cancer Centre.
- Develop a mechanism for linking young women nationally.
- Lobby the medical profession to ensure that all women are told about the risk of lymphoedema following axillary clearance or radiotherapy before the procedure to enable informed consent.



*Women with special needs, such as Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, have been recognised in the Network's Priority Action List.*

## Issues of concern ...



### Special needs

The conference recognised that there were many women with special needs who might not be represented in large numbers, so the following additional actions were recommended.

#### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders**

- Lobby to develop resources for Indigenous women on information, education, counselling, support and the training of Aboriginal health workers.

#### **Women with recurrent and advanced disease**

- Promote access to clinical trials and ensure equitable access to therapies and drugs.
- To lobby Breast Cancer Support Service and other appropriate bodies to be inclusive of women with advanced breast cancer.

#### **Rural and regional women**

- Lobby to improve access to information for rural and regional women, e.g. raise awareness of the

National Information Hot Line, and develop information packages with local and regional specifics.

A full Action Plan will be available from Leah Salo on (02) 9334 1992 or PO Box 572, Kings Cross, NSW 2011.

All members are urged to take the time to read the acknowledgements in our accompanying brochure. Without the support and assistance of our major supporters, particularly marvellous individuals such as Sir Peter Derham from Melbourne, the Field of Women would still be just a dream.



# Cameos from Canberra



The Network truly is a beacon of hope for women living with breast cancer.

– Dr Michael Wooldridge  
Federal Health Minister

I have just returned home from the conference in Canberra – tired and emotionally drained, but also elated and on a high better than I could have imagined!

Breast cancer has claimed the lives of my grandmother, great aunt, Auntie Jan, Auntie

Helen and, most recently, my dear Mum. I am a 3½ year survivor. I have a young daughter and the sentiments expressed many times, that we must do this for all our daughters, was very powerful.

I gained so much in the three days. Not just the knowledge and facts but, most importantly, an overwhelming sense of belonging to an exclusive club.

We often reflect on the positive aspects of a cancer diagnosis. For me, this weekend was one of these. The kinship, warmth, genuine love and understanding between the women almost took one's breath away.

While I'm delighted by the outcomes of the conference and feel very privileged to have been a part of the decisions made, the highlight would have to be the Field of Women.

It was extremely taxing emotionally, but there is nowhere else I would have been at that time. Being able to plant a white silhouette bearing my mum's name was a moment I will cherish always.

– Sharon Murphy  
Bacchus Marsh



Student volunteers from Daramalan College in Canberra helped plant the pink figures in *The Field of Women* early on Sunday morning.

Right: Virginia Rogers in the *Field of Women*.



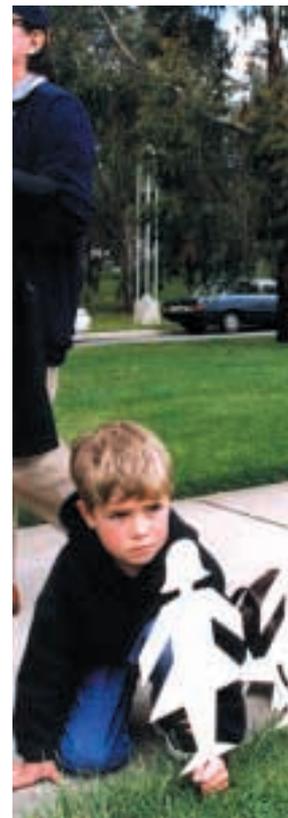
I learnt so much about current treatment and future directions. Talking to other women and sharing experiences strengthened the bond shared by all women with breast cancer.

The highlight for me was the *Field of Women*. Walking past all those silhouettes with someone whispering “so many ... so many” just left me awe struck.

Reading the messages on the silhouettes was a moving experience. The support from Bendigo showed how many lives in this area are affected by the disease.

The images of the *Field of Women* will stay with me forever and fuelled a burning desire to make a difference for my sisters, nieces, friends and newly diagnosed women.

– Barb Miller  
Bendigo, Victoria



Right: Debbie Barrie plants white silhouettes around the *Field of Women* with her son, Tim. Debbie was also a model during the *Bosom Buddies Fashion Event* on the Saturday night.



I believe very strongly in the importance of ritual and I will not forget the feelings of love, compassion, strength and powerful bonding that surrounded and embraced us all as we made that silent walk together as a special tribute to those who have died and those who are living. Despite the overwhelming sadness, I felt strengthened by the closeness and connection with all those other women and supporters, and

there was a wonderful sense of unity, love and grace.

– Jilly Pascoe  
Sydney, NSW



What a great weekend the conference proved to be. It was very full and very rewarding. I think as a group we have accomplished an awful lot for women. Setting goals is the only way one can hope to accomplish anything. What came out of the conference and the Network means a lot of hard work, but in the end all women with breast cancer and those to come will benefit. It was great to be a part of history making.

– Denise Wehnert  
Glengowie, SA



While I can't be with you today, you will be in my thoughts as you walk silently to the Field of Women for this solemn and moving occasion.

– Senator Jocelyn Newman



Raelene Boyle formally launches the Network, watched by Senator Kate Lundy from the ACT, who also addressed the group.

I would have to say that the *Field of Women* surpassed any major emotional event that has occurred in my life since breast cancer. The wonderful human spirit that shone (dare I say it) like a 'beacon', bonding us together emotionally in a unique and special way, baring our very souls to each other. Although the conference was full of surprises in many ways, listening to the stories of others, it was a great learning curve for me personally, making me aware that there is so much more to breast cancer and so much more to do in our fight against it.

– Norma Hudson  
Burnie, Tasmania

It is a fitting tribute to the courage and commitment of so many and this stunning exhibition says more than words ever can.

– Senator Trish Worth



# The outcomes of the inaugural meeting of the Breast Cancer Network Australia

With the conference agenda formally completed, it was time for the history-making formalisation of the Breast Cancer Network Australia.

Links had been created between existing groups throughout the country and between interested individuals whose lives had been affected by breast cancer. Now it was time for the Network to be given the formal authority to take action.

Presentations were made on the suggested structure and functions of the Network. Proposals were formally put forward for ratification and the members present voted on each resolution.

In the previous issue of *The Beacon*, readers were offered a copy of the Network's Strategic Plan, in order to be fully informed before the meeting.

This Strategic Plan has been the result of many hours of planning, debate and collaboration.

Advice has been sought and received from a number of experts from the Williamson Community Leadership Program in Melbourne, especially **Debbie Goodin, Maureen O'Keefe** and **Damien Lockie**, ensuring that we were able to record our vision, aims, strategies and targets (see boxes).

It was agreed that this Strategic Plan, along with the conference's Priority Action Plan, would form the basis of the Network's future activities.

The Network's Advisory Group was formally established with a woman



## The vision of the Breast Cancer Network Australia

The Breast Cancer Network Australia will be the national voice of Australians personally affected by breast cancer. It seeks to both improve the treatment and care of those diagnosed with breast cancer, and work towards preventing this disease for the benefit of the whole community.

representing each state (names and contact numbers are on Page 7). It was also acknowledged that we need to include the voices of special groups, such as Aboriginal and women from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The Network's next steps are crucial. The structural foundation must be

strong and have the ability to move the agenda forward from goals to achievable actions.

Seeding funding from the National Breast Cancer Centre has run out and we must find our own finances to continue.

The establishment of an effective and influential board was a topic that received a good deal of consideration.

It was recognised that a truly national body would be our long-term goal, but that for the interim, and considering financial constraints, the board would need to be based in Melbourne, where we have already established an office.

We also recognised the need for national input into the board and, together with the Advisory Group, will establish a board and a constitution, to be ratified by members, which is capable of achieving our vision.

Complete copies of the Strategic Plan are available on request (please send a stamp).

## Goals of the Breast Cancer Network Australia

1. Establish a high-profile, independent organisation which is able to promote, on behalf of consumers, the issues and needs of Australians touched by breast cancer.
2. Promote and contribute to research into the causes, prevention, optimal treatment and care of those with breast cancer.
3. Encourage access to optimal care and facilities by those who are touched by breast cancer in our community, irrespective of age, gender, disability, socio-economic circumstances, geographic location, cultural beliefs, stage of illness or ability to speak English.
4. On behalf of the community, influence decision-making forums.
5. Foster the development of initiatives which contribute to reducing the impact of breast cancer in the community.

## The Field of Women – a powerful symbol of our Network

The Field of Women concept was developed with the following objectives. We needed to:

- highlight the devastating impact of breast cancer;
- humanise the statistics;
- attract media attention to invite Australian women to join the Network;
- announce the establishment of the Network to those with the power to influence change;
- involve and mobilise people across the country; and
- raise sufficient funds for the continuation of the Network and its activities.

Over the past few months, many of us have spent hours dreaming of how the silhouettes might look against the green Canberra lawn.

Yet, I was totally unprepared for the visual impact of these silhouettes as I turned the corner and saw the 10,000 bright pink figures which had been planted in the early hours of the morning by Venturer Scouts and student volunteers from Daramarlan College in Canberra.

It was great to know that we had the support of so many Australians.

ACT Senator, **Kate Lundy**, and ACT Chief Minister, **Kate Carnell**, joined us in *The Field of Women*.

A number of politicians sent messages of encouragement, including the Health Minister, **Dr Michael Wooldridge**, and Senators **Jocelyn Newman** (Tas), **Trish Crossin** (NT) and **Trish Worth** (SA)

Apparently in the days that followed, hundreds of Canberrans and many more visitors came to read the individual messages attached to the silhouettes.

They paid tribute, in their own way, to the women whose names are recorded on the figures.

On Australia's Breast Cancer Day eight days after they were planted, more volunteers arrived to pack the silhouettes back into their boxes for



*The Network's national co-ordinator, Lyn Swinburne, in Canberra with Christine Brunswick, vice-president of the US National Breast Cancer Coalition.*

their trip back to storage in Melbourne.

Throughout the year to follow, we plan to continue to attract sponsors and attach their new messages onto our silhouettes for next time in another place where this powerful, compelling image of *The Field of Women* will again be seen by others.

Please encourage people you know to sponsor a silhouette and record a message for next time.

For information on sponsorships, contact your Network state representative (see box below).

– Lyn Swinburne  
National Co-ordinator

### STATE NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES CONTACT LIST

	Name	Address	Telephone	Fax
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<b>Queensland</b>	Leonie Young  Janelle Gamble	15 Bronte Pl Eight Mile Plains QLD 4113	(07) 3341 7570 (ah)  (07) 3353 4151 (bh)	(07) 3349 6392
<b>Western Australia</b>	Carol Bishop	Cancer Foundation of Western Australia, 334 Rokeby Rd Subiaco WA 6008	bh: (08) 9381 2070 ah: (08) 9447 9144 E-mail: carol@cancerwa.asn.au	(08) 9382 3348
<b>Tasmania</b>	Pat Mathew	467 West Nook Rd Sheffield TAS 7306	(03) 6492 3257	(08) 8272 2895
<b>South Australia</b>	Carlene Butavicius	11 Lanor Ave Millswood SA 5034	(08) 8272 2895	
<b>Northern Territory</b>	Susan Tully	GPO Box 3987 Darwin NT 0801	(08) 8927 3327 E-mail: tullynt@msn.com.au	(08) 8981 9663
<b>ACT</b>	Anna Wellings Booth	3 Belah St O'Connor ACT 2602	(02) 6247 8470 E-mail: ginge@dialix.canberra.com.au	(02) 62478470
<b>Victoria</b>	Sue Lockwood	17 Alandale Rd Blackburn VIC 3130	(03) 9878 0736 E-mail: lockwood@onaustralia.com.au	(03) 9894 4411

## Photographer extraordinaire!

Helen Fallow spent many hours on top of the old Parliament House to capture the perfect image of our *Field of Women*.

Helen, a gifted photographer, was diagnosed with breast cancer in May. Since then, she has become a member of the Bosom Buddies Support Group in Canberra and was keen to offer her services to the Network when she heard about our Field of Women.

To get this perfect image, Helen needed special permission for her vantage point on top of the old Parliament House. She then had to manoeuvre her way along narrow steel rails like a mountain goat!

Finally, on Friday afternoon, the



shadows, light, cloud formation and even the flag on top of the New Parliament House in the background were just right!

We plan to use this wonderful image to

promote the Breast Cancer Network Australia on postcards, greeting cards and posters.

Our thanks to Helen for her efforts.

On Sunday evening, we drove once more past the *Field of Women* to see how they were getting on. It was dusk, but all was well. Then a gentle breeze stirred as we sat watching in the car and all the ladies were moving in the wind. As we watched, one keeled right over into the arms of another and rested there. I felt compelled to write this verse.

– Jill Braid  
Eight Mile Plains, Qld

### If they could talk

If these women could talk  
What would they say?  
For every one has a story  
A story of life, a story of hope  
Yes, every one has her story.

It seems they're so many  
We just cannot believe  
That this is the number we grieve for  
But these are the facts and their  
message is clear  
As every one tells her story.

But now they're alive  
And they're back in our hearts  
As they dance and move in the breeze  
They're stirring us all and speaking so  
clear  
They're stirring us all with their story.

If they could just talk  
And we could but hear  
These thousands of voices in chorus  
They would shout, "Don't give up,  
fight the fight and endure  
Don't you ever forget our story!".

### THE BEACON

*The Beacon* is the newsletter of the Breast Cancer Network Australia. We rely on donations to continue our work.

All donations are tax-deductible and will be gratefully received.

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(03) 9329 3535

Your comments and items for the next newsletter are welcome.

Send them before February 1 to  
PO Box 4082, Auburn South,  
Victoria 3122.

### YOU'RE NOT YET ON OUR MAILING LIST?

Contact: Lyn Swinburne, phone (03) 9660 6865, fax (03) 9662 3881

Or fill in this coupon and send it to: Breast Cancer Network Australia,  
PO Box 4082, Auburn South, Vic 3122

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

State: ..... Postcode: ..... Phone: ( ) .....

Have you had a diagnosis of breast cancer?  Yes  No

In the  
next issue ...

Priority No. 1 –  
Breast Care Nurses  
Send us your  
thoughts!