1999 Field of Women invades the MCG

The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) has a history of hosting battles. On October 18, it was the venue for a very different battle – a battle for recognition.

We launched this year’s Field of Women on the MCG to highlight the incredible impact of this disease.

The 10,000 bright pink silhouettes represented the women diagnosed with breast cancer during the past year. The 2500 white silhouettes marked the women we lost.

It seems like yesterday that we planted the silhouettes for the first time in the lawns of Parliament House, Canberra. It was a year ago and since then another 10,000 women have been diagnosed and another 2500 lives taken!

It was a beautiful, sunny, spring day; the sort that reminds you life is precious. Breast cancer survivors gathered from all over, proudly wearing their pink survivor ribbons as a badge of honour.

Our families, supporters and members of the public helped pay tribute to the women and families affected, and to pledge that we will work to reduce the impact of breast cancer in Australia.

Highlights of the day were the Silent Walk, which gave the day its focus, the beautiful young voices of the a cappella choir, The Q, and a big screen message from the women of Philadelphia.

One of them, Paulette Calabro, was with us in Canberra last year and this year they held a US Field of Women of their own a week before ours.

The greatest highlight continues to be the powerful messages attached to the silhouettes, showing us that breast cancer touches so many.

The MCG reminded us that breast cancer was not just a medical or scientific issue, but a community issue; that it is not just about women, but affects everyone.

The 100,000 empty seats at the MCG were silent reminders of the 100,000 Australian women estimated to be living following a diagnosis of breast cancer.

At the end of the day, the silhouettes were replanted in Melbourne’s beautiful Treasury Gardens, where they remained throughout the following week.

Many people read the messages. Overseas tourists took photos. People came to talk, seek information, share their experiences or to sit quietly with their own thoughts.

Across the country, in each state and territory, women and their supporters gathered for Field of Women ceremonies on the same day as our MCG launch in Melbourne.

The coverage on pages 6 and 7 shows that each was different and special.

Thanks to all the people who cared enough to help with our Field of Women ceremonies. Some of them are listed on page 2. We particularly thank the AMP Foundation, which donated the funds to repeat the project across Australia.

Sponsorships are still coming in, but it appears we have raised more than $50,000. This will help the Network continue our activities as the voice of Australians affected by breast cancer.
Thank you for your support

Thank you to everyone who cared enough to help with our 1999 Field of Women ceremonies around Australia.

We are grateful for the overwhelming assistance and support we received from so many volunteer helpers, individuals and companies.

We particularly want to recognise the AMP Foundation, which gave us the funds, advice and support to make this project happen around Australia.

This is a list of supporters who made a significant contribution to our Melbourne event:

- AMP Foundation and AMP staff
- Melbourne Cricket Club
- Melbourne Cricket Ground staff
- City of Melbourne Parks and Gardens
- Sir Peter Derham, Red Hill Estate Winery
- Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria
- BreastScreen Victoria
- The Print Centre – John Doyle
- Amcal
- Spotless Catering
- The Chocolate Box
- The Q – a cappella choir
- Colette Mann
- Pauls Shloss
- Naughton Transport Services
- Vega Press
- Storpak
- Lincraft
- VIP Home Services
- Generations Productions
- Students from Methodist Ladies' College, Lauriston Girls' School, Camberwell High School and Star of the Sea
- Field of Women Committee members
- Breast care nurse volunteers.

Most importantly, thanks to our terrific project managers, Jan Bottcher and Lyne Geier.

On the move?

Don’t forget to let us know if you are moving house. We don’t want you to miss a single issue of The Beacon.

Phone us on (03) 9660 6865.

A child’s view of the Field of Women

On Sunday, October 17, I went to the Field of Women at the MCG. I went thinking, ‘This will be one of those boring things that Mum and Dad drag me along to’, only to find it wasn’t that bad when I got there.

It was pretty sad, because mum knew heaps of people who had breast cancer – some who survived, some who hadn’t.

We all went on a silent walk from Yarra Park right into the MCG. It was really quiet apart from the occasional cough or sneeze.

As we walked into the MCG, some a cappella singers sang, ‘Happy Day’. We all sat down in the cricket grandstand.

A few people made speeches. They talked about how much of a tragedy it was to lose someone from breast cancer, how important it was to ask questions about breast cancer and what it all meant.

Then we walked down to plant our silhouettes. Mum looked for the one she wrote for her Mum and aunty, who both died from breast cancer. I wrote one for mum about how brave she was because she fought cancer and won.

There were already pink silhouettes planted and when all the white ones were planted it was in the silhouette of a woman.

I enjoyed it, even though it was sad.

– Zoe Clark, aged 12

Joy Georgeson closed formal proceedings at the Canberra Field of Women ceremony by reading this piece, written by her sister on the last day of her chemotherapy treatment.

Joy’s mother died of breast cancer. Her sister, Robyn, was diagnosed with breast cancer three weeks before her first child was born and then, four weeks later, Joy too was diagnosed.

I’ve been waiting for spring for so long. It’s a beautiful day today – I can feel it in the air.

I’m excited. I feel like an eight-year-old wanting to kick my legs furiously under the blankets at the thought of going to the Royal Melbourne Show. But I can’t do that – it will wake John and Jessica.

Jessica stirs beside me. She stretches her limbs, and looks warm and content. She opens her eyes and stares her unblinking stare at me. She is perfectly still. I run my finger down her cheek and jaw line.

Seven months ago she stared at me in the same way. Not moving, not blinking, just drinking in the wonder of life as she lay on my chest after her birth. She blinks, stretches her little hand to touch my face and the spell is broken.

John wakes beside me. The day begins. It’s the weekend, so I can take the dog for a walk without the weight of Jessica in the sling.

The air is fresh and sweet smelling. It rained during the night. There are plenty of puddles for Paddy to drink from. The mist is low in the valley and the air bites my cheeks.

I can feel the excitement well inside of me – the buds are sprouting! Spring is beginning to unfurl her wings!

I touch the fluffy balls of wattle blossom on low hanging branches and a cockatoo screeches overhead. Paddy yanks me away in search of another scent. I can hear the ting … ting … of the bellbirds in the gum tree ahead.

We’re almost home. I’m high on the elixir of the coming spring. I’ve been waiting for spring for so long.

I momentarily think of my sister – she’ll feel this way too when the hot breath of summer approaches.

The buds are sprouting and my hair has begun to grow. It’s a beautiful day … I finish chemo today.

– Robyn Handisides

A round-up of our mini Fields of Women is on pages 6 and 7.
Meet ‘Madeleine’ our newest member

A few months ago, we received a most generous donation from a Network member. With great delight, we wrote thanking the lady for her generosity.

Imagine our amazement when, a few weeks later, the lady wrote again, this time offering an even larger donation, one we could never have imagined – a vintage BMW car!

As she lives in Darwin, we could not easily meet her, but we could talk on the phone. This is her story:

Madeleine Luck first became involved with cancer issues when she joined the Northern Territory Cancer Council as a volunteer in 1997.

She quickly found out what was going on around Australia, heard about the formation of Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) and has been a member from the start.

Madeleine became a volunteer after the painful experience of watching her partner die of ovarian cancer. What she witnessed and learned from talking to other patients and their relatives will, she says, “never let her go”.

Madeleine has a strong desire to help other women and feels not enough is done to help women with cancer.

But how does a left-hand-drive, vintage BMW come to be in Darwin? Madeleine’s father bought the car in 1954, two years after she was born. He gave it to her when he could no longer drive. She could not bear to part with it when she left Switzerland in 1986 and had it shipped to Australia.

The time came when she decided it was time to part with her beloved car, but was unable to find a suitable buyer.

People were interested in the car, but no-one was willing to spend even a few thousand dollars to cover at least some of the maintenance and shipping costs.

Then the idea of making a big difference, instead of a few dollars, made Madeleine give the BMW to BCNA.

Having been a member of the Network from the start, Madeleine knew our goals and vision, and felt she could reach out to other women and help them through our Network.

It is now easy to part with her car, as Madeleine knows she is doing the right thing. Her dad, she knows, would approve.

A beautiful old car like this must have a name. What have we decided to call it? Madeleine, of course!

Madeleine has told us we can use the car to raise money in any way we like – raffle it, sell it, auction it or paint it pink and drive it around Australia!

We are not rushing into a decision. We will consider the possibilities and take things slowly, including some good advice from the motoring world.

More news in future issues of The Beacon.

Farewell Australia

It had to come – leaving Australia – but it is still painful to pull up the roots which have grown so deeply.

I shall miss Australia – the sun, space and people – especially the extraordinary women I have met over the past few years. I am so grateful for the chance to work with Lyn and the other remarkable women associated with the Network.

What we breast cancer survivors have in our Network is unique, something that we have developed, we run and from which we benefit.

While still feeling its way, the Network has achieved considerable recognition and admiration in its life.

There are so many possibilities for its development, so many things we can do, but more women must come forward to help make this happen. We must work together, as no-one else will do this for us. Contact your state representative or phone Lyn.

I shall stay a part of the Network as a proud overseas member.

Farewell Australia!

– Jenny James

Jenny has returned to her native England. We wish her well.
The organisers of Devonport’s Wedding Extravaganza have given the Tasmanian Breast Cancer Network $4000. Of this, $1000 is to be given to the Cancer Council to promote the breast cancer support services. Fundraising by members has added another $1300 to our bank balance. The National Breast Cancer Centre’s Science and Advocacy Training Program in Hobart during September attracted 20 women. Seventeen were breast cancer survivors; the other three had an interest in breast cancer and advocacy. The St Mary’s community has raised about $20,000 for the purchase of a helium neon scanning laser for lymphoedema sufferers, which was due to arrive in Tasmania in late October.

Contact: Pat Mathew (03) 6492 3257 or mathewp@southcom.com.au

Some Network members became part of a photographic exhibition about women with breast cancer, called ‘Living Their Lives’, at Brisbane’s Customs House. This exhibition will travel around the state.

We printed special T-shirts for our Field of Women. If you are interested in buying this ‘wonderful fashion item’, we have some left at $20 each.

Contact: Janelle Gamble (07) 3341 7570 or leonie@everycloud.com

October was just too busy! Our Twilight Field of Women went well – it was hot but didn’t rain! Our calendar has been launched and we are very proud. I encourage everyone to buy at least one. At $10 it would make a wonderful Christmas present. The Minister for Health even mentioned our calendar in Parliament.

Australia’s Breast Cancer Day was celebrated with Dragon Boating. We are seeking old prostheses – if you have any lying dormant could you let us know – we need them for a future event.

Contact: Sue Tully (08) 9872 3327 or tullynt@msn.com.au

The Anti-Cancer Foundation SA held its refresher course for Breast Cancer Support Service volunteers from city and country regions in October and many women from this service joined us at the Field of Women.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the women from Whyalla and Pt Lincoln who supported breast cancer survivors and promoted the Field of Women.

Contact: Carlene Butavicius (08) 8272 2895 or butavic@chariot.net.au

This year’s Bosom Buddies Fashion Event was again a success, with about 800 people attending. I represented the Network at the ACT Cancer Society’s Ecumenical Service on October 24, where I was given advocacy as my topic in the Rainbow Ceremony. I also represented the Network at a breakfast on Australia’s Breast Cancer Day sponsored by the Australian College of Health Service Executives.

Two Bosom Buddies members, Margaret Dando and Jan Murphy, have completed the training for the Encore Program sponsored by Avon. The first group of 14 women under their guidance began the course on October 20. Two Network members modelled underwear at an evening at David Jones where a Canberra breast surgeon was a guest speaker, together with Denise Sharp, one of our members, and a breast care nurse from Calvary Hospital.

Contact: Anna Wellings Booth (02) 6247 8470 or wbfamily@interact.net.au

A Parliamentary Matter of Public Importance on breast cancer issues followed in the afternoon.

Contact: Sally Crossing (02) 9436 1755, or crossings@bigpond.com

To highlight an activity or a project, contact your state representative and have it included in the next ‘State Round-up’.
A cause for celebration

The Novotel Twin Waters Resort on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast was the venue for a fabulous BCNA fundraiser on Australia’s Breast Cancer Day.

As reported last issue, Network board member, Raelene Boyle, was so impressed by last year’s Bosom Buddies fashion parade in Canberra that she decided to host her own. It was a night of great celebration!

The 370 guests (there was also a waiting list) enjoyed a three-course dinner and entertainment. Sydney comedian, Brian Doyle, kept the laughter rolling.

All the fashion parade models were breast cancer survivors. The audience was stunned to hear that some were still undergoing chemotherapy!

The women were delighted to be involved and to inspire others with their courage and celebration of life.

They also put a face to the disease and reminded everyone that behind the overwhelming statistics are real women.

Organisers, Raelene and Judy Wild, are incredibly determined and energetic women. It took a lot of time and hard work to make the event happen and they appreciated the marvellous support from the Sunshine Coast community, such as the evening’s comperes, Peter Lang and Caroline Hutchinson, breakfast hosts on local radio station, 92.7 Mixed FM.

As well as the fashion parade, there was a raffle and an auction of three major pieces.

The night’s proceeds, more than $30,000, were given to the Network and will help make a difference for women diagnosed in the future.

Ansett sponsored the attendance of Brian Doyle and Network co-ordinator, Lyn Swinburne.

The Teachers’ Health Union is to be commended for its continued financial support of our projects. Well done Judy and Raelene!

Network badges

The Network now has its own membership badge.

These small, enamel badges shaped like our silhouettes were designed for us by Maria Conlan and are bright pink, with a thin gold edging. They are small and unobtrusive, but very distinct. We think they are great!

If you would like one, send a cheque or money order for $5.00 made payable to The Breast Cancer Network Australia. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

My left breast

‘My Left Breast’ is a new Australian book about breast cancer. Subtitled, ‘How Breast Cancer Transformed My Life’, it is Barbara Joss’ experience of diagnosis, treatment and recovery. Like many women, Barbara found plenty to be glad about once she got well again.

Published by Joss & Company, you will find this book in good book shops or phone The Breast Cancer Book Service on (07) 3341 7570.

Pink Ribbon swimwear

What to wear when we take the kids to the beach? Finding bathers that will hide a prosthesis and hold it securely while we swim, surf and dig holes in the sand has been a problem for many of us.

Now there is a new line of swimwear especially for us. It is has been designed and manufactured by breast cancer survivor, Jenny Marwood, and her sister, Debbie, who are preparing their first mail order catalogue.

The swimwear is made from Lycra, so it is comfortable and flattering. Sizes range from 10A to 18D.

Contact Jenny and Debbie on (03) 5143 0663, fax (03) 5413 0664, e-mail pinkribbon@t-o.net.au or send mail to PO Box 206, Stratford, Victoria 3862.

Taking our message to the world

Penny La Sette of Darwin took the Field of Women message to new heights, displaying her silhouette in Nepal on October 17.

Organiser, Raelene Boyle (centre), with two of the evening’s fashion parade models, Jan and Lorraine [Photo courtesy of Sunshine Coast Daily].
Canberra

A small, but enthusiastic, group met outside the Canberra Centre and walked in silence with pink silhouettes and white balloons through to Glebe Park.

Senator Kate Lundy and her daughters, Annabelle and Alex, walked with us. We were joined at the park’s entrance by the ACT’s Chief Minister, Kate Carnell.

Senator Margaret Reid, President of the Senate, also joined us as we planted the figures in a grove encircled by trees.

The Chief Minister announced that as a result of efforts by the Calvary Hospital’s Breast Team, which the Network had supported, the subsidisation of prostheses will be on the agenda for the next health budget. What wonderful news!

NSW

Our smaller Field of Women, held in the heart of Sydney at First Fleet Park, Circular Quay, attracted a warm-hearted group of survivors and families.

One hundred pink silhouettes, covered with messages, were planted by those present. Lots of photos were taken for suburban and regional papers to promote the awareness message.

Northern Territory

The grounds of Darwin’s Christ Church Cathedral was the venue for our Field of Women ceremony.

To avoid the day’s heat, the ceremony was held in the late afternoon and each silhouette was lit with a night light as evening fell.

It all looked serene and peaceful on the hill by the church.

A local choir, which included three GPs, sang beautifully.

The Very Reverend Dennis Vanderwolf conducted a ceremony for NT families affected by breast cancer.

Queensland

Queensland’s Field of Women was held on Centre Stage at the Myer Centre, Brisbane, and we were grateful for help from Myer’s events co-ordinator, Kelly Hayden.

We displayed our 100 silhouettes in one giant polystyrene silhouette donated by Dyman Foam. A sign from Andy’s Signs explained our purpose.

Local identity, Betty Byrne-Henderson, addressed the audience with an informative and stirring speech.

Dr Cherrell Hirst, Friends of the Wesley and volunteers from the Queensland Cancer Fund all helped.

Out in the WA Field of Women at the Perth Cultural Centre.

In the Canberra Field of Women, Joy Georgeson, Senator Kate Lundy, holding her daughter, Alex, and ACT BCNA state representative, Anna Wellings Booth.

One of Sydney’s most famous landmarks was the backdrop for the NSW Field of Women.

To avoid the heat, the Northern Territory’s Field of Women was celebrated with an evening service.
When the Network began planning the 1999 Field of Women, we aimed to have a ceremony in each capital city. Then the women in Port Lincoln, SA, decided to use their energy and initiative to create their own Field of Women. This is a report on their day.

Western Australia
The WA Field of Women was held outside the Perth Cultural Centre.

Our members wore t-shirts and caps which announced, ‘Giving a Voice to women with Breast Cancer’. The public showed great interest in our display and several sponsored silhouettes.

The silhouettes were on show again at a major hospital on Australia’s Breast Cancer Day, in conjunction with the hospital’s breast clinic display.

South Australia
Without exception, everyone thought the atmosphere wonderful. There was a feeling of togetherness and bonding, and some very sad and happy moments.

Professor Oliver, head of the Cancer Centre at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, opened the event. Julie Olsen, the Premier’s wife and breast cancer survivor, addressed the gathering and we all walked to the field to plant our messages.

On the beautiful Rotunda in Elder Park, the Onkaparinga Concert Band provided quiet music at the beginning. Later there was more music from a Dixieland band, ‘Free Beer’, whose lead singer, Betty May, is a breast cancer survivor.

A poem read by Field of Women committee member, Vanessa Lambert, was especially beautiful (See page 11).

Tasmania
The participants in our Silent Walk, included a good sprinkling of men and several young people.

After the walk, we planted the silhouettes in the grounds of Parliament House in Hobart and had a short ceremony.

Pat Mathew, spoke about the reasons for the Field of Women. Then Cyril Dann, chaplain at the Royal Hobart Hospital, conducted a prayer service.

Afterwards we had a picnic in the park.

When we ‘planted’ our paper Field of Women on a pin-up board inside the hall.

It quickly filled with 82 silhouettes and we were amazed at the number of cut-out figures taken by women to write personal messages.

It was great to see so many women whose lives had been touched by breast cancer, caring, sharing and making new friends over a cup of tea afterwards.

– Maxine Barker and Joy Broughton, Caring Cancer Support Group, Port Lincoln (SA)
In 1993, when I was 34 years old and with two small children, I began my breast cancer journey – what an amazing journey of highs and lows it has been! I've had cause to use just about every breast-cancer treatment and service available, so I have been well placed to become a consumer representative.

Upon diagnosis, I had lumpectomy and axillary clearance, followed by radiotherapy. A year later, I developed a second primary in the same breast and elected to have a bilateral mastectomy and chemotherapy. Once recovered, I had a reconstruction, which was vital for getting on with my life.

I also embarked on a lifestyle change, getting fit, losing excess weight, learning to meditate and having counselling to alter life-long habits of stressful living.

These changes helped develop the physical and emotional strength needed to deal with advanced breast cancer. It began as a spinal secondary in 1996.

High dose chemotherapy and stem cell rescue resolved that metastasis, but I've had several others since, treated with radiotherapy.

Breast cancer appeared in my liver last year and I had extensive surgery. Unfortunately, it was unsuccessful, the secondaries recurring earlier this year.

In the process of planning the next line of attack, I was devastated to find I had acute myeloid leukemia as a result of previous treatments. You could be excused for doubting the quality of life possible while living with this seemingly relentless disease. Believe me, my life has been wonderful between the tough times. I live and love every day to the fullest. I've just recovered from a bone marrow transplant. I'm free of leukemia and breast cancer, and, although the future is uncertain, I look forward to it with joy.

Belonging to an advocacy group and being a consumer representative is a constructive and practical way to contribute to the future of breast cancer services.

I have participated in a group producing guidelines for the management of advanced breast cancer and a National Breast Cancer Centre forum on the needs of children of women with breast cancer.

I am also interested in contributing to discussions about high-dose chemotherapy outcomes, as it relates to my experiences.

I would certainly encourage other women to use their invaluable work at the 'coal-face' in this rewarding way.


Pamela recently addressed the audience at a special breakfast on in Sydney Australia’s Breast Cancer Day. She wowed everyone, including the Prime Minister, who was moved by her story.

Meet our representatives ... Pamela Baber
News from the NBCC

Lymphoedema summit

Lymphoedema and the need for more research will be the focus of a summit hosted by the National Breast Cancer Centre (NBCC) in February 2000.

It will bring together researchers, funding agencies, consumers, clinicians and governments in an effort to seek consensus and action about lymphoedema research.

Before the summit, women with lymphoedema will have a chance to outline their concerns and describe how the condition has affected them.

Many issues need to be considered, but the summit will focus on the need for more research.

Over time, research will allow the NBCC to develop better programs for diagnosis, prevention and treatment.

The acquisition of a greater body of evidence will enable the production of better consumer literature and increase the rate of early detection.

Consumer representatives helping plan the conference are Sally Crossing, Sue Lockwood and Robyn Wicks.

It is difficult to develop research projects for lymphoedema that have the right approach to all of the methodological issues.

Research in this area is often plagued by questions such as: How should we define and measure lymphoedema?

What is the most appropriate time after treatment to assess the occurrence of lymphoedema? How can we rigorously trial the effectiveness of treatment?

Research projects are often implemented by individual treatment or research centres, rather than several groups working together, which allows answers to be found more quickly.

It is hoped the summit will agree on several research protocols about different aspects of lymphoedema following breast cancer treatment.

The protocols may address areas such as the prevalence of lymphoedema, risk factors, opportunities for prevention and/or the effectiveness of treatment.

The summit will detail the correct research methods, so that reliable answers can be reached as soon as possible. Using the best research methods greatly enhances a project’s chances of securing funding.

Research funding agencies will also be invited to attend the summit, to help them understand the importance of lymphoedema and how they can forward work in this area.

Other anticipated results of the summit are a database of current research projects in lymphoedema and a national network of researchers in lymphoedema linked via e-mail.

– Prof. Sally Redman, Director, NBCC

Music to nourish the soul

Sue Ridgway, an Adelaide musician composed and played piano compositions to ‘nourish’ her soul, while living through her own cancer experience.

Her CD, ‘Glimpses of a Journey’, is available to readers of The Beacon for $20, plus postage.

It can be ordered from Susong Productions, PO Box 212, Coburg, Victoria 3065, ph (03) 9489 2020 or e-mail maddy@ mikka.net.au

Spotlight on rural support networks

Strengthening the level of support and care for women with breast cancer in rural and remote areas will be the focus of a national workshop next year.

In the May federal budget, funding of $4.1 million over four years was announced for the ‘Strengthening support for women with breast cancer’ program.

The National Breast Cancer Centre, at the invitation of the Commonwealth Government, will help develop and implement the program’s objectives.

A workshop for representatives from around Australia was the first step in this process.

Held in Sydney on November 18, it canvassed the views of key stakeholders about increasing support services for women in isolated areas.

Four Network women represented the views of women with breast cancer living in rural and remote Australia.

A discussion document will be drafted as a result of the workshop and this will be made available for public comment in early 2000.

Further information about the summit can be found in the ‘What’s New’ section of the National Breast Cancer Centre’s web site www.nbcc.org.au

A special calendar for the millenium

The ‘Australian Face of Breast Cancer’ calendar is an initiative of NT Breast Cancer Voice featuring ordinary women from throughout Australia.

Its aim is to promote breast cancer awareness by showing the:

• diversity of women affected; and
• positive outcomes and quality of life achieved following early detection and treatment.

At only $10, these excellent quality calendars would make a great Christmas present.

All funds raised from the sale of this calendar will be used to improve services for Australians diagnosed with breast cancer.

To place your order or for more details, contact Michelle Hanton on (08) 8941 8923 or e-mail: hanton@ ozemail.com.au
Letters to the Editor

Here’s a photo of two happy survivors in their late 50s.
To me, losing a breast is not as devastating as losing all my hair, but if you don’t like the way your life looks, try looking at it in a different way. I am determined to make the best of what is left in me.
It’s not how long, but how much, I live that counts.
Being a doctor is worse in many ways, because I know my odds.
Becoming a volunteer for the Breast Cancer Support Service has helped me a lot. I get as much out as I put in. I have now lived seven years after my mastectomy. I don’t take anything for granted. Every day is a bonus.

– Sig.

Thanks for the recent splendid issue of The Beacon – it’s getting better and better. I am sure you and the whole production team work really hard and thank you for your time and effort.
For some time now, I’ve thought how secret we sometimes are about our disease – I suppose it’s because it’s not obvious. Yet how pleased and what an immediate bond I feel when I meet another ‘survivor’!
I thought it would be good if we had a ‘logo’ in the form of jewellery (earrings, broach, ring, etc) to wear, so we can recognise one another.

– Yvonne Spielman

No sooner said than done, Yvonne! See page 5 for information about the Network’s new membership badge. We are delighted with it and hope all our members will want to wear one – Editor.

I am writing to express my deepest thanks and appreciation. I really enjoyed the Consumer Science and Advocacy Training Program the Network co-ordinated.
The program was informative and thought provoking. I received many overdue answers to my huge list of questions. I am still no expert on the subject of breast cancer but I feel a lot more confident to address the issue.
Personally, I was moved and inspired by the women I met during the course. There is already a group called the Warrior Women, but I also think of our group as Warrior Women!
There was enough energy in the room to light up Australia. When women gather their enormous talents the results can be quite astounding.
I am looking forward to attending the Field of Women in October. I know there will be many tears on that day, but I will proudly honour my mum as a survivor of breast cancer and the thousands of women who have also faced such an insidious disease.
Thank you again for providing such a memorable course. I won the ‘I’m ready to take on the world’ prize. And you know what? I feel ready to do so.
If I ever need any additional inspiration, I will think of those amazing Warrior Women in our group!

– Michelle Rule

Congratulations on a most moving, inspirational and well-organised event – the Field of Women at the MCG.
It was a privilege to be there, and to be part of a growing and supportive network of women.

– Jean Taylor

Congratulations to you and your team for a stunningly beautiful, soulful, uplifting display at the MCG.
As a breast care nurse, I was deeply moved as I walked in silence with the women from the support group. It was powerful, positive energy en masse.
I’m a sucker for good music and the singing was a wonderful addition to the day. I, together with the group, really enjoyed the message from the US. It was so well done.
My most memorable moment was finding (after going all the way around) the white silhouette I had sponsored in memory of my grandmother.

– Maggie Stowers

I write to congratulate the Network on your recent incorporation. It is heartening to find such an organised and active consumer group.
Your newsletter forms part of the information available to women at the Westmead Centre and the Breast Cancer Institute team.

– A/Prof. John Boyages, Executive Director, NSW Breast Cancer Institute

My copy of The Beacon arrived today and my attention was immediately grabbed by the letter from Jane Murch in WA.
She expressed the same feelings I have had. It was as though she was writing about me.
I, too, have felt isolated at times and a bit different from everyone else in my breast cancer survivors group. It is so good to read that she is living a busy life four years after her diagnosis of metastatic disease.
For me it is 2½ years, but I have renewed my driver’s licence for five years and intend to get its full value.
I would love to write to her and wonder if you could give me her address. If not, for reasons of confidentiality, pass mine on to her.

– Elizabeth, NSW

We have sent this request on to Jane in WA. That is what a network is all about!

– Editor

If you have something to say, send your letter to Lyn Swinburne, PO Box 4082, Auburn South, Victoria 3122 or e-mail bcan@bigpond.com.
We need your letters

In the new year, we will be approaching companies to financially sponsor The Beacon.

We try to keep costs at a minimum, but the newsletter is a major budget item, and the costs will only increase as more Australians ask to be added to our mailing list.

More than 4000 individuals and groups across Australia already receive The Beacon.

There was a suggestion we spend less money on production – leave out photos and have a more basic layout. However, we believe Australians are looking for the information we offer and that women deserve a high-quality publication.

We have certainly heard from many women and their families, particularly those in country areas, about how much they love The Beacon. They tell us that it gives them a real link, as well as information and support, which is not always accessible outside the cities.

Many have remarked that the stories of other women coping with the challenges of breast cancer have been useful to them, and that the available information is presented in a way that makes sense and has meaning.

WE NEED YOUR LETTERS!

These will be put together in a folder as evidence of the importance and value of The Beacon.

Please write to us, so that we can find a sponsor and keep sending The Beacon to those who need and value it.

In the next issue...

Tamoxifen

We need your letters from women and their families, particularly those in country areas, about how much they love The Beacon. They tell us that it gives them a real link, as well as information and support, which is not always accessible outside the cities.

Many have remarked that the stories of other women coping with the challenges of breast cancer have been useful to them, and that the available information is presented in a way that makes sense and has meaning.

WE NEED YOUR LETTERS!

These will be put together in a folder as evidence of the importance and value of The Beacon.

Please write to us, so that we can find a sponsor and keep sending The Beacon to those who need and value it.

In the next issue...

Tamoxifen

We need your letters from women and their families, particularly those in country areas, about how much they love The Beacon. They tell us that it gives them a real link, as well as information and support, which is not always accessible outside the cities.

Many have remarked that the stories of other women coping with the challenges of breast cancer have been useful to them, and that the available information is presented in a way that makes sense and has meaning.

WE NEED YOUR LETTERS!

These will be put together in a folder as evidence of the importance and value of The Beacon.

Please write to us, so that we can find a sponsor and keep sending The Beacon to those who need and value it.

In the next issue...

Tamoxifen

We need your letters from women and their families, particularly those in country areas, about how much they love The Beacon. They tell us that it gives them a real link, as well as information and support, which is not always accessible outside the cities.

Many have remarked that the stories of other women coping with the challenges of breast cancer have been useful to them, and that the available information is presented in a way that makes sense and has meaning.

WE NEED YOUR LETTERS!

These will be put together in a folder as evidence of the importance and value of The Beacon.

Please write to us, so that we can find a sponsor and keep sending The Beacon to those who need and value it.

In the next issue...

Tamoxifen

We need your letters from women and their families, particularly those in country areas, about how much they love The Beacon. They tell us that it gives them a real link, as well as information and support, which is not always accessible outside the cities.

Many have remarked that the stories of other women coping with the challenges of breast cancer have been useful to them, and that the available information is presented in a way that makes sense and has meaning.

WE NEED YOUR LETTERS!

These will be put together in a folder as evidence of the importance and value of The Beacon.

Please write to us, so that we can find a sponsor and keep sending The Beacon to those who need and value it.
Snapshots from Melbourne’s Field of Women

Left: Those who helped launch this year’s Field of Women included the chair of the BCNA board, Patricia Edgar, head of the AMP Foundation, Lloyd Draney, Lyn Swinburne, and actor, Colette Mann.

Right: Seeing their plans come to fruition, event co-ordinators, Jan Bottcher and Lyne Geier.

The empty seats in the MCG represented the 100,000 women living following a breast cancer diagnosis.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped plant this year’s Field of Women.

A field in the gardens

After its spectacular launch at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, our main Field of Women was replanted in the nearby Treasury Gardens, where it spent another week raising awareness of the need for breast cancer research and our Network.

To read the story of the little blue silhouette at the centre of this field and others who paid their respects at the Treasury Gardens, visit our web site at http://www.users.bigpond.com/bcan