Field of Women goes West

Fields of Women sprung up around Australia about the time of Australia’s Breast Cancer Day in October.

Perth hosted the Network’s major Field of Women, while mini fields appeared in Adelaide, Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Melbourne, Coffs Harbour, Karratha, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Sydney, Toowoomba, Canberra, Bunbury and Albany.

In Perth, we planted 10,000 pink silhouettes to represent the number of Australians diagnosed with breast cancer every year. There were also 2500 white silhouettes for the women who die from breast cancer each year.

The silhouettes carried sponsored messages, vivid reminders of the real people behind the statistics.

The messages offered hope and encouragement to those living with the disease, while others were a tribute to women whose lives had been taken prematurely.

The silhouettes were planted in a shape which incorporated the male/female symbols, as a reminder that breast cancer affects us all.

Actress, June Salter, launched this year’s Field, which was planted by Perth school children and AMP staff.

Congratulations to our WA project officer, Sue Harding, and WA state representative, Carol Bishop, who, with a band of committed Network members, worked hard to ensure this year’s event was a resounding success.

We thank this year’s sponsors, AMP, Bakers Delight and Puma. We were also given much assistance from a number of companies and individuals.

Thank-you too to those companies and supporters who gave so generously and helped in so many ways.

Finally, congratulations and thanks to the Network members who held mini fields around the country (see pages 2 and 11).

In 2001, we will have two major Fields! The first will be in Brisbane in September to coincide with the Goodwill Games and Adelaide will host the Field of Women in October.
Melbourne

Two Field of Women events were held in Melbourne this year.

The first was an invitation-only reception at Government House (left), hosted on behalf of the Network by the Governor of Victoria and his wife, Sir James Gobbo and Lady Gobbo.

BCNA’s national co-ordinator, Lyn Swinburne, presented three special awards at the reception to Network supporters: Bakers Delight, Puma and John Doyle of the Print Centre.

The second event was held the next day in the Royal Botanic Gardens (right).

Unfortunately, the rain fell constantly, but the mini-field of Women brought together many people affected by breast cancer. Pictured are Gil Paulsen and Mary Funder, BCNA volunteer.

Coffs Harbour

For the first time, Coffs Harbour joined in the Field of Women tribute, thanks particularly to the work of Chris Stanford and her team.

It began with a silent walk from The Mall to the Botanic Gardens, where a planting ceremony took place while the Bellingen Akabella Choir sang (left).

According to Chris, the response was great – about 200 people joined the celebration and around 200 of the 300 silhouettes planted were sponsored.

There on the day was Lily Brennan (right) with a silhouette for her mother, Ellen, who was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was pregnant with her.

More photos of the mini-fields are featured on page 11.
Recently a young woman from the US woman, Polly Letofsky, and her friend, Vicki Tosher, visited the BCNA office in Melbourne. They wanted to find out more about the Network, to tell us about Polly’s planned adventure and to see if we could help.

In August last year, Polly began her journey – she is walking around the world to raise awareness and funds for advocacy and breast cancer research. So far, Polly has walked to the US West Coast from Colorado, then from the top of New Zealand’s North Island to the bottom of the South Island. Polly has not experienced breast cancer herself, but she is an endurance athlete. Since she was a young girl, Polly has dreamed about taking on such an adventure and the more she learnt about breast cancer (she has two aunts with the disease) the more determined she became to use her dream to make a difference for others.

Polly is collecting donations for the San Francisco Breast Cancer Fund, which researches links between breast cancer and the environment. She was impressed with the type of work undertaken by our Network and will also help raise funds for us along the way. Importantly, she will let Australians know that we exist!

Polly’s trek is a daunting proposition. Her friend Vicky could only travel with her for a few days; after that Polly was on her own, except for the small cart she has to push. The cart contains water, a tent and sleeping bag, a small amount of clothing and brochures that she distributes along the way. She is hoping that, as in NZ, people she meets along the way will help by offering her a bed, meal and shower. Polly’s initial route will parallel the Hume Highway and she plans to reach Sydney around Christmas time. From there she will travel along the coast past Brisbane and Cairns.

Already, Polly has discovered friendship and generosity. Network member, Jenny Childs, contacted her local Lions Club in suburban Melbourne, to tell them about Polly’s plight. As a result, Lions Clubs along the way will be watching out for her.

Network sponsor, Bakers Delight, has also offered Polly free produce from any bakery she passes and it has asked its franchisees to help with a bed and a welcome.

We ask all readers and supporters of The Beacon along Polly’s route to do what they can. Polly is a fascinating, inspiring person, who would be a joy to have in your house. She would love the chance to meet you, and it would be great for her to have a roof over her head and a home-cooked meal under her belt.

A group of us waved goodbye to Polly as she began her Australian section from St Kilda beach, heading north, on October 29. She went off with our admiration and thanks.

If you can help Polly, phone her on 0415 537 783 or send an e-mail to polly@globalwalk.org

Polly is helping our Network, so we hope you can help her!

---

Farewell Pam

It is with great sadness that we must tell our readers about the passing of Pam Baber.

Pam, who lived in Sydney, was an inspiration to all those with whom she came into contact.

She represented our Network on several committees, mostly speaking on behalf of women with advanced breast cancer. She always took an approach which, while informed and sensible, was full of passion and commitment to those she was representing.

Many of you will have read Pam’s beautiful book, ‘Butterfly’, which remains as a tender depiction of her journey with the disease, through short verse and simple, poignant insights which she generously shared with readers.

Pam’s speech at the Sydney Breast Cancer Day breakfast last year powerfully highlighted many of the issues for women living with the disease. She moved everyone there, including the Prime Minister, who admired Pam’s courage in the face of great adversity.

Pam leaves behind her husband, Rod, and children, Sophie and Andrew, to whom we send our love. Another marvellous woman gone!
October left us breathless, after a number of events, media interest and speaking invitations.

The highlight was the Second NSW Breast Cancer Consumers’ Forum, sponsored by the National Breast Cancer Centre, on October 14.

The forum was booked out (130) and gave us an opportunity to hear about the progress that has been made since Canberra two years ago, and consider what issues should be added or reinforced – to make that difference.

All attendees and BCAG (Breast Cancer Action Group) NSW members will receive a report about the forum before the latter’s AGM on December 3.

We are happy to send it to others on request.

On October 11, BCAG NSW and the National Breast Cancer Foundation held a lunch in the dining room of the President of the NSW Legislative Council. It was hosted by Faye Lo Po, the state Minister for Women.

This was followed by a bipartisan Matter of Public Importance Debate about breast cancer issues.

Sally Crossing spoke at the NSW Breast Cancer Institute and Royal North Shore Hospital’s breast cancer information days.

More than 40 of us attended the 700-strong Australia’s Breast Cancer Day (ABCDay) breakfast at Sydney’s Westin Hotel on October 23.

It was a big media month, with coverage of our views and aims in Sydney’s metropolitan press, and on several radio and television programs throughout NSW.

We also launched BCAG’s new logo and an associated membership drive. Another 75 members have joined BCAG NSW and all will be invited to join the Network.

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

A forum about the social and psychological aspects of cancer was held in conjunction with the Fifth International Psycho-Oncology conference in Melbourne during September.

This forum, a Network initiative in conjunction with the Breast Cancer Action Group, attracted about 300 people who questioned and heard from key researchers in the areas of cancer which we thought important.

The researchers commented on how much they enjoyed the experience. It is not often they can speak directly to those who benefit from their research. For those who couldn’t attend, we have ordered tapes from the conference which will be available to borrow.

Contact: Sue Lockwood (03) 9878 0736 or lockwood@bigpond.com

Tasmanian Network members had a busy Australian Breast Cancer week, with functions held across the state. North-west coast member, Jenny Littler, hosted a party for 180 people in the grounds of her Forth home, raising more than $1800 for breast cancer support services.

The Fenceliners’ Tasmanian cycle tour will begin on March 2, 2001, when 16 riders and support crew arrive on the Spirit of Tasmania. If you are interested in joining the Mainlanders phone Lorrie Leadwell or Jan Dowd on (02) 4739 3428.

The Fenceliners will be at Salamanca Market on March 24, to coincide with the Tasmanian public meeting hosted by the National Breast Cancer Centre, which will be at the Salamanca Inn from 10am to 3pm.

It is hoped the Hobart City Council will host a civic reception for the Fenceliners on that evening.

Contact: Joan Williams (03) 6421 7700 or joan.williams@dchs.tas.gov.au

October was a busy month, as usual.

We started on October 4 with a lunch at Government House to celebrate life after breast cancer, hosted by the Administrator’s wife, Lesley Conn. The day was enjoyed by all the women who attended.

A tour of the residence, conducted by Mrs Conn, after lunch was really appreciated.

Many of the women had travelled hundreds of kilometres to attend the lunch.

An exhibition of pottery, painting and written pieces by women who had experienced breast cancer was organised by the NT Cancer Council Breast Cancer Support Group and exhibited at Parliament House.

The exhibition, called ‘Breast Cancer Impressions & Expressions’, was well received.

On the eve of ABCDay, a twilight celebration was held in Michelle Hanton’s garden.

Candlelight was the theme of this tranquil evening.

On ABCD, the Cancer Council of the NT opened its new community resource centre. Sara Henderson officiated, and it was good to meet her and share experiences.

The resource centre looks inviting and relaxing, and we hope it is going to be put to good use.

The real news is that $355,000, over four years, has been allocated to the NT to implement the ‘Strengthening Support for Women with Breast Cancer’ initiative.

This money will be used to create a position for a breast care nurse.

Contact: Susan Tulley (08) 8927 3327 or tullynt@msn.com.au

These are summaries of the state representatives’ reports. To read the complete reports, visit our website – www.bcna.org.au
Queensland

Breast Friends in Bundaberg held a Celebration of Survival Fashion Parade for ABCDay. Swimwear, lingerie and clothing were modelled by breast cancer survivors. Sadly, Sylvia Walters, a founding member of Breast Cancer Queensland passed away on September 30.

Sylvia was an avid reader and researcher of anything related to breast cancer, as well as an enthusiastic and tireless member of our group. She will be greatly missed by us all.

A dragon boat team competed in a regatta at the Gold Coast on October 22.

It was sponsored by the Southbank Corporation, which, at short notice, supplied shirts and hats for the day.

We still want team members, so if you are interested in fun, friendship and exercise, phone Janelle on (07) 3353 4141 (bh) or 3353 4100 (ah).

ABCDay functions in Brisbane included an exhibition at the Ladies Laverty Artists Studio of Art by artists who have experienced breast cancer, called ‘An Artist’s Response’.

A luncheon at Lennon’s Hotel was sponsored by Queensland Women in Public Service, the Queensland Cancer Fund and BreastScreen Queensland. Wesley Breast Clinic held a dinner and fashion parade.

Contact: Janelle Gamble (07) 3353 4151 or janelle@kedrononthebrook.com.au and Leonie Young (07) 3341 7570 or leonie@everycloud.com

South Australia

On September 14, the Port Lincoln Support Group held a Breast Cancer Information Day. Kate Eglington from the Community Health Services welcomed Carlene Butavicius (representing Action for Breast Cancer SA), Liz Penfold (Member for Flinders), Ian Fletcher (surgeon), Kathy Webber (physiotherapist) and Pauline Mc Nair (lingerie manager).

Carlene, whose airfare was donated by ZONTA, noted the concern in rural communities about the PATS travel scheme.

Among the issues raised, several women provided information about their problems securing travel insurance.

ACTION for Breast Cancer SA held its second AGM on October 11.

Two ACTION members gave interesting and entertaining talks:

- Raylene Fiorita on ‘Naturopathy and breast cancer’;
- Sandra Sebelis on ‘The Amazon Story’ and the value of shiatsu, yoga and meditation.

The good news for Canberra was that Calvary Hospital indicated it was going to set up a lymphoedema clinic.

The Network has been on the go in the Capital!

The Breast Cancer Consumer Forum on August 26, sponsored by the National Breast Cancer Centre, was well attended, including women from many country areas.

Perennial issues arose, such as lymphoedema, but vascular surgeon, David Hardman, presented the best talk we have ever heard, about what I call the great ‘cover-up problem’.

The Network also co-hosted a Pink Ribbon Breakfast with the National Breast Cancer Foundation, YWCA, the ACT Cancer Society and Bosom Buddies.

The dragon boat crew is growing, and now has a visible and high profile in the community.

If you are interested in joining, contact me and I will put you in touch with June McMahon or Elspeth Humphries.

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

Western Australia

Perth’s Esplanade hosted the Field of Women on the weekend of October 21-23.

It was launched by actress, June Salter, who is part of the cast of The Sound of Music.

Office workers who could see the field taking shape from their high-rise buildings came down during their lunch break or at the end of the day to walk through the silhouettes.

A Celebration of Life parade was held on Australia’s Breast Cancer Day. All the models were women who had had treatment for breast cancer and they looked very professional on the catwalk.

More than 100 women attended the WA Breast Cancer Forum on November 4.

Several clinicians gave an update of diagnosis and treatment, while Prof. Sally Redman provided information about the progress and future plans of the National Breast Cancer Centre.

Six workshops, which covered topics such as the role of the specialist breast nurse, lymphoedema and young women, raised many issues and some suggestions for improvement.

These workshops were facilitated by health providers, with assistance from members of Action on Breast Cancer WA.

Contact: Carol Bishop (08) 9489 7312 or carol@cancerwa.asn.au

A liaison with the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW), was a valuable way to highlight this year’s Field of Women in Adelaide.

BPW president, Sheila Evans, presented a video about the SA Field of Women to 300 women attending the 31st National BPW Conference at the Stamford Grand, Glenelg.

Whyalla and Port Lincoln also held Field of Women functions.

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

The ACT

The Network has been on the go in the Capital!

The Breast Cancer Consumer Forum on August 26, sponsored by the National Breast Cancer Centre, was well attended, including women from many country areas.

Perennial issues arose, such as lymphoedema, but vascular surgeon, David Hardman, presented the best talk we have ever heard, about what I call the great ‘cover-up problem’.

The good news for Canberra was that Calvary Hospital indicated it was going to set up a lymphoedema clinic.

October saw us donning our pink to participate in many events.

Fashion events were high on the agenda, including the Bosom Buddies Celebration of Life Event and a parade at the Hyatt Hotel.

The Network was represented at Calvary Hospital’s information evening, ‘Breast Surgery in the ACT’, which was attended by many GPs.

The Network also co-hosted a Pink Ribbon Breakfast with the National Breast Cancer Foundation, YWCA, Encore, the ACT Cancer Society and Bosom Buddies.

The dragon boat crew is growing, and now has a visible and high profile in the community.

If you are interested in joining, contact me and I will put you in touch with June McMahon or Elspeth Humphries.

Contact: Anna Wellings Booth (02) 6247 8470 or wbfamily@interact.net.au
Studies have proved the importance of detecting cancer cells in the lymph glands of the armpit (axilla) when a women is treated for breast cancer.

The information gained after removing these glands (axillary clearance) is used to:

• plan treatment;
• predict long-term outcomes; and
• reduce the risk of recurrence in the armpit.

With trends to decreasing tumour size, many more women will undergo axillary clearance, only to find their lymph glands were free of disease.

Axillary clearance also carries a risk of affecting the arm with numbness, reduced shoulder mobility and lymphoedema.

The concept of the sentinel lymph node in breast cancer is based on the premise that the first lymph node to receive lymphatic drainage from a primary cancer in the breast should be the first site of lymphatic spread.

If that gland can be identified and analysed, it may indicate the status of remaining axillary lymph glands.

Sentinel node biopsy has the potential to provide an accurate assessment of axillary lymph node status, without the risks of an axillary clearance.

The technique involves injecting a substance around the primary tumour pre-operatively.

A scan (lympho-scintogram) is then performed to identify which lymph glands have taken up the substance.

At the time of surgery, a water-soluble blue dye is similarly injected.

A small incision is made in the armpit and the sentinel node is identified using a hand-held ‘gamma camera’ which follows the blue dye in the lymph channels and glands.

This technique has identified the sentinel node in more than 95% of cases.

The concept of sentinel node biopsy may sound simple, but the successful completion of this sometimes technically difficult procedure depends on the experience and judgement of the clinicians involved and the technique.

It is still problematic that 2-3% of patients exhibit positive axillary nodes when the sentinel node biopsy is falsely negative. The implications of this is uncertain.

New techniques require proper evaluation to ensure rates of recurrence and survival are obtained with no detrimental effect to the patient. The advantage may be a reduction in arm side effects, particularly lymphoedema.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons’ (RACS) Breast Surgery Section has proposed an Australian multi-centre, randomised, controlled trial comparing Sentinel Node biopsy to Axillary Clearance for early invasive breast cancer.

It will be called the ‘SNAC Trial’.

To be eligible to enter patients in the trial, surgeons will be required to demonstrate they have completed at least 20 sentinel node biopsies, followed by an axillary dissection, which have successfully identified the sentinel node in 90% of cases.

This criteria is essential to ensure that the trial results are not hampered by incorrect techniques.

Women who agree to enter the trial will have the primary tumour in their breast treated no differently, but will all undergo a sentinel node biopsy as part of their assessment.

Those randomly allocated to the axillary clearance arm of the trial will undergo that procedure, while those in the sentinel node arm will have no further axillary procedure if the sentinel node doesn’t contain tumour.

If the sentinel node contains a tumour, an axillary clearance will be recommended, as other glands remaining in the armpit may contain tumour. Both groups of women will be asked

**Sentinel node biopsy clinical trial**

We have had many queries from members about the latest developments in dealing with surgery to the lymph nodes, so we asked Professor Neil Wetzig, Chair of the Breast Section of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, to tell us about a trial to begin in the new year.

Neil Wetzig, chair of the Breast Section, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

The Beacon

Earlier this year, the National Breast Cancer Foundation, the peak funder of Australian breast cancer research, asked the Network for its view on a plan to fund a research scholarship that took into account the priorities and needs of women with breast cancer.

Following feedback from our members, we compiled a list of priorities which was presented to the Foundation for consideration.

As a result, a scholarship has been awarded which will research the needs of long-term survivors.

The $75,000 scholarship, provided by the National Network of Women in Superannuation, will be spread over three years, with $25,000 allocated each year to the research program.

It has been awarded to Louisa Collins, who is based at the Queensland University of Technology.

The scholarship was announced in Sydney in October by Senator Jocelyn Newman, the Minister assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women.

Congratulations to Louisa and to Women in Super.

We plan to stay in touch with the Foundation and to report the study’s progress through The Beacon.
BCNA has offered its assistance as a partner in the on-going management of this trial. We believe it is vital to have a representative on the steering group, to ensure that the woman’s perspective is presented and considered. We’ll keep you posted!

– Lyn Swinburne

Issues of concern …

Letrozole – Can it be used instead of Tamoxifen?

The Network has received several calls from women seeking information about the treatment, Letrozole, which has been prescribed to women rather than Tamoxifen.

We asked Professor Richard Bell, director of Medical Oncology at Geelong Hospital, for some information about Letrozole, as he has been involved in an international study using Letrozole, the results of which were presented recently at the European Breast Cancer Conference in Brussels.

Letrozole is an inhibitor of an enzyme called aromatase. In post-menopausal women, the aromatase pathway is the main source of oestrogen, which stimulates the growth of hormone-dependent cancer cells.

Letrozole acts by inhibiting the aromatase enzyme, shutting off the supply of oestrogen.

A recent international study of post-menopausal women with advanced breast cancer, that compared Tamoxifen, the current standard hormonal treatment for advanced breast cancer, with Letrozole (marketed as Femara), found Letrozole to be superior to Tamoxifen.

Richard wants to highlight that this study involved women with advanced breast cancer and that Tamoxifen continues to be a valuable treatment for breast cancer.

At this time, Tamoxifen remains the treatment of choice in early breast cancer and in pre-menopausal women. Richard recommends that post-menopausal women with advanced breast cancer doing well on Tamoxifen should not change their treatment.

If you have any further queries, raise them with your oncologist.

The RACS Breast Surgery Section believes that sentinel node biopsy should not be performed as definitive treatment for breast cancer outside of the bounds of this trial, unless a woman makes an informed decision to undergo what is non-standard treatment before it has been proven to be of benefit and not harmful.

The time is propitious to evaluate this new procedure in Australia before it is introduced into practice without scientific assessment of its role in cancer management. We encourage the support of all interested women.

This means there is now a new treatment option providing better disease control, particularly for newly diagnosed post-menopausal advanced breast cancer patients.

– Prof. Richard Bell

The Beacon

The Beacon is the newsletter of the Breast Cancer Network Australia. Editor: Lyn Swinburne (03) 9805 2500 Layout: Substitution

Your comments and items for the next newsletter are welcome. Send them to PO Box 4082, Auburn South, Victoria 3122.
Learn from life’s lessons and live

My daughter and son gave me a card on what would have been my oldest son’s 23rd birthday, had he not been killed. Inside the card they wrote:

“It may not always be easy, but I know you will make it. It costs so much to be a full human being that there are very few who have the enlightenment or the courage to pay the price. One has to abandon altogether the search for security and reach out to take the risk of living. One has to accept pain as a condition of existence. One has to count doubt and darkness as the cost of knowing. One needs a will stubborn in conflict, but always open to total acceptance of every consequence of living and dying.”

I cannot acknowledge this quotation, but I believe some of it comes from Kahil Gibran, along with some of my daughter's thoughts and feelings.

When my sons were tragically killed, I learnt the value of life, how precious it is and how vulnerable we really are. I learnt that the quality of your life is important, not how long you live. I learnt to prioritise my goals in life and things I once valued no longer had any real significance.

Life is precious – you must live and live fully, every minute of every day, but only one day at a time. Life is too precious to be wasted on trivialities and past regrets.

Life is lived in the present; yesterday has gone; tomorrow is yet to come. Today is the miracle; experience it, enjoy it, embrace it with open arms, live it.

What I learnt from my friend, Julie, was practical and spiritual. I went to doctors and oncologists with her from the time of her first diagnosis until she passed away eight years later.

I learnt about the different procedures and processes involved in breast cancer. I learnt about the drugs used and the effects of chemotherapy.

I learnt about meditation, vitamin therapy and alternative treatments. I learnt about an holistic approach to treating breast cancer.

I learnt to question medical practitioners. I learnt what a prosthesis looked and felt like. I learnt not to feel embarrassed when your hair fell out. Most importantly, I learnt to get on with life, that life still went on, and not to give up.

I learnt about strength of character, the ability to laugh, and to look for the positive in unpleasant treatments and experiences.

I learnt about dying with dignity and without regrets.

From my family and friends I learnt about unconditional love. They love me for what I am, not who I should be. They just love me.

My husband still loved me when I had no hair. He still loves me now, even though I have no breasts.

My children still love me when I sunbake topless – they are embarrassed, but they still love me. They love me when I don’t do the shopping or forget it’s my turn to cook the tea or behave outrageously (all of which I do frequently).

Live in the present and make it so beautiful that it will be worth remembering. You have one body and one soul, and you don’t get a second chance.

Your life is precious. Take time today. Live!

– Dianne Chellew

Dianne Chellew is remarkable. In her own words: “I’m sports mad and I don’t like housework. I play golf, swim, surf, paddle kayaks and surf skis, ride a 10-foot Malibu surfboard and play around in the gym. I work full-time shift work, so I have time to play with all my toys, as my husband puts it.”

Dianne, who is 48 years old, and married with two children, Kelly (21) and Nathaniel (18), has just returned from Canada, where she competed in the marathon kayak event (22km) at the Masters World Championships, winning a silver medal.

When I met Dianne earlier this year in Wollongong, I was most impressed by her courage, resilience and love for life.

Dianne lost two sons 16 years ago. Then her best friend, Julie, from breast cancer.

As if that wasn’t enough, Dianne was diagnosed with breast cancer, shortly after Julie’s death. She had a lumpectomy in 1997, followed by a bilateral mastectomy last year.

Dianne’s response, when asked to share her story with The Beacon, was, “Why would people want to read about me?” Here are some of her thoughts. I hope they touch and inspire you.

– Lyn Swinburne
Raelene’s night is a hit – again

Raelene Boyle is a national treasure, especially to us at the Network! She is not only a Board member, but for the second year she has hosted a fabulous evening of fundraising and fun on the Sunshine Coast to promote Australia’s Breast Cancer Day.

We thought Raelene might have given the event a miss this year – a recent diagnosis of a new and separate cancer, combined with her hectic Olympic schedule, should have seen her take things easy.

Not Raelene! Wonderfully supported by Judy Wild and some fantastic helpers from the Buderim area, Raelene’s evening was again an overwhelming success.

A highlight this year was the arrival of two members from Australia’s gold medal-winning Olympic water polo team.

They arrived with an item for the auction – a framed T-shirt signed by all the members of the team.

The girls wanted to help because their mother is undergoing treatment for breast cancer in Perth.

They (and we) were delighted when the T-shirt was auctioned for $4000.

I thought this poem might bring some cheer to readers of The Beacon.

It was written by Vanda Forrest, who has breast cancer and a great fighting spirit, considering her problems.

Vanda wrote this poem when convinced she had a brain tumor, but has since been cleared of her suspicions.

‘The Taxol Club’ is six women who have the drug, Taxol, administered each Tuesday at Westmead Hospital, Sydney.

We discuss problems, tell jokes (some rather risqué) and solve the problems of the world while having our chemo. We all have a positive outlook and this is due partly, I’m sure, to our comradeship.

Chemo day is not such a bad day, as we look forward to catching up with friends.

Our little group is growing and soon we will have to get a bigger room!

– Robyn Phillips

Letter to the Editor – Meet the ladies of the Taxol Club

We really are quite ill you know
Although we sure don’t look it
We’re trying to be brave
Although sometimes we’d rather sook it
So come in, grab a chair and exchange a happy greeting
For the ladies of the Taxol Club
Are here to take a meeting
Our business is to fight the foe, the cancer that attacks us
But while we’re here
A laugh, a cheer can stop us feeling fractious
The ‘minutes’ of our medicals
We read and analyse
For the ‘Doctors’ of the Taxol Club are truly onco-wise!
Our platelets and our white cells
Are the source of much discussion
And why the blessed chemo
Makes us look like we are blushing!
The prowess of the nursing staff at canularisation
Is a topic dear to all of us with veins in hibernation.

And now in general business
We have something to discuss
For a man has braved our portals
And now wants to sit with us!
But we welcome our Big Nev
If he wants to join our club
Though we know he’ll cop a ribbing
From his mates down at the pub
For the ladies of the Taxol Club
Are generous to a fault
And a man’s a man after all
Even to women starting to moult
With not much hair
But tons of flair
We sit and chew the fat
From the state of all our nails
To who’s found a comfy hat
So we sit in consternation
With our fear and trepidation
At the thought that this disease will have a win
For we know that fighting cancer
Is a problem with no answer
But that’s not enough … just yet
To stop our grin

Young women and breast cancer

We know that the risk of breast cancer increases with age – but it is also a big concern for women in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

While issues such as sexuality, reproduction and body image are of concern to women generally, they may be even more acute for young women.

In response to significant recent interest from the media and our members, the next issue of The Beacon will consider young women and breast cancer.

Among other things, it will cover the Young Women’s Awareness Day held in Melbourne during November.

We recently received a great story from a young woman, Mary Doyle, which is available on our web site.

Readers without Internet access who want a copy of Mary’s story, should contact us and we will send it to you.

The ‘Young Ones’, a new support group for young women with breast cancer in Melbourne has a web site at www.ezia.net.au/theyoungones
New Resources

Breast changes booklet
The National Breast Cancer Centre has developed an booklet that considers the various changes in breasts and what they might mean. It lists the steps a doctor should take when investigating a breast symptom, recommending the triple test, which should reduce the number of women whose symptoms are not thoroughly investigated. Designed primarily for GPs, it is a useful tool for women, enabling them to ask questions and understand the processes which should be followed. Free copies are available from the National Breast Cancer Centre, 153 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011 or call (02) 9334 1700.

New services directory for Mackay
‘Your Companion’ is a new breast cancer services directory for women in Mackay, Queensland. It includes contacts who might be of help, including breast cancer support services, community health/child care/aged care, Meals on Wheels, lymphoedema support, travel assistance, accommodation advice and special needs, such as those of young women. There is also a list of literature/web sites and advice from other women who have had breast cancer. Although the directory has been written for the women of Mackay and its districts, Network member, Fiona Nelson, says it could be adapted to other areas.

Upcoming Events
Contact: (03) 9635 5198 or e-mail Rick.Rundle@accv.org.au
February 23-26: Spirited Women Program
Contact: Petrea King, Quest for Life Centre, (02) 4883 6599
March 19-23: Adcare Lifestyle Retreat, NSW, a health retreat for adults living with cancer.
Contact: Gloria Swift (02) 4296 4200
Contact: Joan Williams (03) 6424 5886 or email: joan.williams@dchs.tas.gov.au

New on the Network’s website
• Full reports from our state representatives.
• Robyn Gregory’s experiences at the Adcare Lifestyle Retreat, NSW.
• Dianne Chellew’s story of energy and inspiration.
• ‘How not to have your breast cancer treated’, the story of a man who lost his wife to breast cancer under distressing circumstances and wants to share his concerns with other readers.
• Mary Doyle’s story of being a young woman diagnosed with breast cancer.
• A review of Barbara Joss’ book ‘My Left Breast’ which is described as a kind and gentle book that should spread cheer among women with breast cancer and those who want to know more about it.
Visit our web site at www.bcna.org.au

Breast changes booklet
The National Breast Cancer Centre has developed an booklet that considers the various changes in breasts and what they might mean. It lists the steps a doctor should take when investigating a breast symptom, recommending the triple test, which should reduce the number of women whose symptoms are not thoroughly investigated. Designed primarily for GPs, it is a useful tool for women, enabling them to ask questions and understand the processes which should be followed. Free copies are available from the National Breast Cancer Centre, 153 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011 or call (02) 9334 1700.

New services directory for Mackay
‘Your Companion’ is a new breast cancer services directory for women in Mackay, Queensland. It includes contacts who might be of help, including breast cancer support services, community health/child care/aged care, Meals on Wheels, lymphoedema support, travel assistance, accommodation advice and special needs, such as those of young women. There is also a list of literature/web sites and advice from other women who have had breast cancer. Although the directory has been written for the women of Mackay and its districts, Network member, Fiona Nelson, says it could be adapted to other areas.

Upcoming Events
Contact: (03) 9635 5198 or e-mail Rick.Rundle@accv.org.au
February 23-26: Spirited Women Program
Contact: Petrea King, Quest for Life Centre, (02) 4883 6599
March 19-23: Adcare Lifestyle Retreat, NSW, a health retreat for adults living with cancer.
Contact: Gloria Swift (02) 4296 4200
Contact: Joan Williams (03) 6424 5886 or email: joan.williams@dchs.tas.gov.au

New on the Network’s website
• Full reports from our state representatives.
• Robyn Gregory’s experiences at the Adcare Lifestyle Retreat, NSW.
• Dianne Chellew’s story of energy and inspiration.
• ‘How not to have your breast cancer treated’, the story of a man who lost his wife to breast cancer under distressing circumstances and wants to share his concerns with other readers.
• Mary Doyle’s story of being a young woman diagnosed with breast cancer.
• A review of Barbara Joss’ book ‘My Left Breast’ which is described as a kind and gentle book that should spread cheer among women with breast cancer and those who want to know more about it.
Visit our web site at www.bcna.org.au

Young women’s group for ACT
Leona Furstenburg is a young Canberra woman looking to get together with other young women in the ACT who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. The idea is to get together informally from time to time over a tea, coffee or glass of wine.
If this appeals to you, contact Leona on phone (02) 6262 4545 or e-mail leona_furstenburg@bigpond.com

Steps to grow artificial breasts
US scientists have carried out the first human trials of replacement nipples grown in a laboratory. Although it is intended to develop the rest of the breast using cells from a woman’s body, the nipples have been constructed from cartilage derived from purified pig ear cells.
Progress in tissue engineering was discussed at a recent world congress of transplant experts in Rome. There is fierce competition among biotech companies to be the first to capture the market for replacement breasts for cancer patients and those wanting cosmetic breast enlargement.

You’re not yet on our mailing list?
Contact: Gil Paulsen, phone (03) 9805 2500, fax (03) 9805 2599, e-mail beacon@bcna.org.au 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
Adelaide

The SA Field of Women 2000 was opened by Dr David Walsh, chair of the SA Breast Cancer Study Group. He said:

“As we gather here this morning, I am struck by the contrasts and delicate balances that breast cancer involves.

“The desire to celebrate those women who have triumphed over breast cancer is balanced against the mourning for those women who have not.

“We need to be sure that our approach is balanced in how we assist and what we offer women.

“We must balance how we approach breast cancer as a population or community problem versus the personal and specific individual requirements of affected women…”

There was also an address by Julie Olsen, the wife of the SA Premier and herself a breast cancer survivor. Three ACTION members and breast cancer support service volunteers briefly told of their breast cancer experiences.

About 200 women and their families joined us on a warm, sunny day for the silent walk to Elder Park. Afterwards, we talked, laughed, cried, listened to music and enjoyed refreshments.

Canberra

Canberra’s mini Field of Women was held on October 22. The ACT Dragon’s Abreast crew paddled alongside the walkers (above) in a silence broken only by the skirl of the pipes played by Gordon Henderson who led the walk (right).

A Network cake was cut and pink champagne followed the end of the formal proceedings.

This year’s field was brilliantly organised by Tania Pirotta, who had co-ordinated the student planters at the first Field of Women in 1998.

Photographs of this year’s main Field of Women in Perth are on the covers of this issue of The Beacon.
Planting our message in Perth

Actress, June Salter (left), and Bill Bryson (right), who lost his wife to breast cancer helped to launch this year’s Field of Women.

Thanks to all who have helped and supported us throughout the year.
To all our Network members, we send our best wishes and the hope of a happy, healthy year to come.
– Lyn Swinburne and Gil Paulsen

A message of support from Philadelphia

On the eve of our Field of Women, we received this message from our sister organisation, the Linda Creed Breast Cancer Foundation, in Philadelphia, US.

“To the Breast Cancer Network Australia, which inspired us to create the Field of Women in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: We commit that we will continue to stand with you in supporting all women until a cure for breast cancer is found. Our spirit and support transcend the miles between us to unify us for the sake of our daughters, our sisters and friends."

Breast cancer survivor, Yvette Libregts, and her son in the field.

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

Memories

The Esplanade played host today
To silently remember and shed a tear
We thought of those passed away
To tell the stories and keep on growing
Pink ladies planted once again
To fight and learn and keep on
Reminding us of loss and pain
Knowing
Happiness and laughter too
That if not us, our daughters will
Remembering things as you do
Find a cure for this awful ill
When we were whole and all were glad
That plagues our women and our men
Friends and families gathered there
And destroys our lives again and again

– Lorraine Fawkes