In October, the then Federal Minister for Health, Dr Michael Wooldridge, announced that Herceptin would become available for women with advanced breast cancer. This announcement was greeted with delight and relief by women and their families all around Australia. It was the result of months of hard work on the part of our Network, and shows what team work can achieve!

We knew Herceptin could be effective for some women (see article on page 11) but, at a $1000 a week, few women could afford to pay themselves. Some women had considered selling their homes; one woman sold her farm to pay for the drug. For women with young children, the chance of longer survival times was even more vital.

A proposal to put Herceptin on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme was rejected three times due to the cost. We swung into action!

This really was a combined effort. Several member groups decided to support the Network’s policy that Herceptin be made available to all women who needed it – not just those who could afford to pay.

Breast Cancer Action Group devoted a newsletter to this campaign, urging its women to write and e-mail their Members of Parliament.

BCAG NSW organised for women to be interviewed on national television to highlight their plight.

We at Breast Cancer Network Australia send all our members and supporters best wishes for the festive season, and a wondrous, healthy year to follow.

Jill Suppree has become the ‘face’ of our Herceptin campaign. Her letters to politicians often contained drawings by her two sons.

In the end, the winners are those women who need Herceptin and will now be able to get it.

– Lyn Swinburne, National Co-ordinator
TASMANIA

Several Network members were invited to attend the stakeholder seminar on the Strengthening Support Project being run by Siobhan Harper on behalf of the Commonwealth Health Department.

Siobhan delivered her first report and invited those present to nominate for the project reference group that will form the next phase of her three-year project.

Three of our members, Margaret Tassell, Beth Batchelor and Gerry Rockliff, continue to work hard on their working group projects. We congratulate and thank them for their terrific efforts!

Australia’s Breast Cancer Day functions were held in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport. Deidre Moses reports that the mini Field of Women at the Royal Hobart Hospital, went extremely well.

Planning has already commenced for the major Field of Women, which will be held in Hobart in 2003. Anyone interested in joining the committee, should phone me as soon as possible.

Launceston members, Pauline Watson and Beth Batchelor, attended the Capacity Building Workshop in Launceston during November.

This workshop, run by the Commonwealth Office for the Status of Women, offers national non-government women’s organisations training about seeking change in policy or practice.

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

NEW SOUTH WALES

A busy time for all in NSW! Breast Cancer Action Group NSW and other NSW BCNA members contributed to the outstanding success of the Herceptin campaign by writing letters and making the most of speaking and media opportunities. Everyone is thrilled with the outcome.

Eight Mini Fields of Women were held across the State, with great success and good representation from local politicians and celebrities.

Decorated Bakers Delight stores throughout NSW added to community awareness of the effects of breast cancer. Congratulations must go to Rosanna Martinello and her team for their work in presenting the Young Women and Breast Cancer Moving Forward Forum at Darling Harbour on October 21.

Thanks also to the Network for its financial sponsorship of this important initiative.

Eight hundred people attended the National Breast Cancer Centre’s Federation presentation of this year’s Fashion Extravaganza.

Norma claims this is her last year and thanks are due to her for the past three years in raising awareness in the community of the positive side of a diagnosis of breast cancer.

We are delighted to report that Calvary Hospital will be officially opening a Lymphoedema Clinic in February 2002. The doors open at the end of November for a much-needed service in Canberra.

Two of our members have been on the steering committee and we congratulate the management and physiotherapists at Calvary and vascular surgeon, Dr David Hardman, in bringing this long-awaited clinic to Canberra.

Elspeth Humphries, Anna Wellings Booth and Leona Furstenberg presented the women’s perspective to the BabyDocs program at The Canberra Hospital recently.

Leona spoke passionately about issues for young women with breast cancer, including sexuality and fertility.

Contact: Anna Wellings Booth (02) 6247 8470 or wbfamily@interact.net.au or Elspeth Humphries (02) 6239 6344.

QUEENSLAND

During Breast Cancer Week, the Wesley Breast Clinic hosted a gala fashion parade in Brisbane with breast cancer survivors as models. A highlight was the appearance of John and Otto, men who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

BreastScreen Northside invited Janelle Gamble and Leonie Young, together with Liddy Clark, the member for Clayfield, to speak at its mini Field of Women.

A special blessing by Tunbal song and law woman, Maroochy Baramban, and a prayer by the Reverend Peter Lockyer, set the scene for the day, which finished with a fabulous cake featuring the pink silhouette.

Janelle Gamble was a guest speaker, along with the Premier’s wife, Heather Beattie, at a luncheon during Breast Cancer Week.

Joan Sheldon, the member for Caloundra, was so impressed by the Field of Women in Brisbane that she invited all female parliamentarians to meet with Network board member, Dr Cherrell Hirst, and Leonie Young to discuss important issues relating to breast cancer.
Like everywhere else, October was a busy month.

Thanks must go to the Administrator's wife, Jeanette Anidomatis, who kindly hosted a cocktail party in Alice Springs and a luncheon in Darwin. Both were well attended and much enjoyed.

Australia's Breast Cancer Day started with a breakfast at Rydges Plaza, where our breast care nurse, Deb Amery, and local surgeon, Phil Carson, gave a Territory perspective of breast cancer.

Lunchtime saw a 'Breast Patrol' through the city mall and the rest of the day was spent manning information stalls in local shopping centres.

Over the past few months, we have made contact with new and enthusiastic women, all of which bodes well for next year! Have a safe and undoubtedly hot Christmas.

Contact: Susan Tully (08) 8927 3327 or tullynt@msn.com.au or Michelle Hanton (08) 8941 8923 or hanton@ozemail.com.au

What great news! Herceptin is finally available for all! Just goes to show the power (and persistence) of women. Well done to all of those concerned.

Some of our dedicated members put a lot of time and effort into organising mini Fields of Women in 11 metropolitan Perth and five regional shopping centres in WA to coincide with Australia's Breast Cancer Day (and the week leading up to it).

A lot of positive interest was shown in the displays. It all helps to raise awareness in our community and, of course, much-needed funds. About $5000 has been raised so far.

Congratulations should go to all of those who organised the event and helped on the day. Thank you.

Action on Breast Cancer (AoBC) has applied to become a member of the Western Australian Council of Social Service.

Its assistance will include facilitative workshops highlighting such topics as information for board and committee members. The council also provides the opportunity to network with government and non-government organisations.

The AoBC is looking at a name change in the near future. A few alternatives have been thrown around, but the one that seems to have the most support is Breast Cancer WA. Steps are in place for the change.

Our wonderful dragon boat rowers, the Cockburn Amazons Dragons Abreast, took part in the 'Bridge to Bridge' event on Sunday 28 October – a 12km paddle from Perth to Fremantle in our bright pink boat. The rowers were amazing.

The team is always happy to welcome new enthusiastic paddlers.

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

The Australian Field of Women was a spectacular sight in Adelaide's Victoria Square.

The steering committee for Strengthening Support for Women in Rural and Remote SA had meetings in September and November, while a National Breast Cancer Centre (NBCC) workshop was held in Adelaide on November 5.

I was one of a panel interviewed for the Doorways Project - Analysis of the Provision of Breast Cancer Services at RAH, another NBCC study.

The Action for Breast Cancer SA AGM was held on October 3. Dr Deborah Rathjen from Bionomics gave a presentation about genetic research and the company's focus on developing genetic indicators for the early diagnosis of disease types, to facilitate more accurate treatment regimes.

Margaret Ryan talked about her new position at ACE; one which is evolving as she settles in. Action for Breast Cancer SA hopes for a close working relationship with Margaret.

Liz Libregts was appointed president; Raeane Walker, vice-president; Pam Balfour, secretary; and Raylene Gribble, treasurer.

I attended a cancer expo at the Enfield Community Centre. Susan Timpani runs workshops for many groups and a breast cancer session is always included.

Dragons Abreast SA was launched in October with a Dragonboat Association SA (DASA) social event providing special support. Our watermelon and champagne drink went down well!

The various dragon boat clubs cheered us on and gave generously to help establish our team. One team gave me $101 after the event – “just because we think you are great”.

The SA Dragons Abreast team is managed by Vicki Nottage. The secretary is Lyndal Outram, while the treasurer is Marion Holland.

The Clare Quilters have made a beautiful quilt in memory of Joan Heath, a seven-year member of the group who died of breast cancer. Elaine Forrest, the quilters' spokesperson, asked Action for Breast Cancer SA to raffle the quilt and we raised more than $1000. A special thank you, Elaine.

Contact; Carlene Butavicus (08) 8272 2895 or butavic@chariot.net.au

Victoria is on the verge of launching a Dragons Abreast team under the enthusiastic management of Pamela Williams, a new BCNA member from the Bayside Group. Any women interested in joining this dragon boat team may contact Pamela on (03) 9592 6352 or 0417 147 822.

Dragon boat racing is a great way to exercise, have fun and promote breast cancer awareness all at once. It is an activity that attracts the public's attention and has been a really wonderful experience for the women involved from other parts of Australia.

The Warrior Women exhibition has begun touring Victoria. For details, see Upcoming Events on page 16.

October 22 (Australia's Breast Cancer Day) provided opportunities for awareness of breast cancer issues. There were a number of mini Fields Of Women in Victoria, which attracted a good deal of attention. This was a great opportunity for the Network to recruit more women.

We wish you all the best for a wonderful festive season and good health into the new year.

Contact: Gerda Evans (03) 9805 2500 or gerda@bigpond.net.au

These reports are extracts of more comprehensive quarterly reports written by our State representatives. The complete reports can be found on our web site, www.bcna.org.au. Our state representatives are always happy to hear from our readers or to promote activities within the state. Just give them a call!
Outstanding and hair-razing efforts!

The Network has been absolutely bowled over by the extraordinary fundraising efforts of everyone involved in head shavings at Spotlight and Bakers Delight.

What started out as a friendly bet at the Spotlight store managers conference in Surfers Paradise turned into an impromptu fundraising event for the Network.

Four were shaved, raising $13,000. Pledges were collected from the managers and stores during the final night of the conference.

The head-shaving craze also caught on at the Bakers Delight conference in September.

On the final evening, a number of people, including Bakers Delight founder and Executive Chairman, Roger Gillespie, were without their hair.

An amazing $37,500 was raised for our Network by franchisees, staff and Bakers Delight suppliers.

Thanks to everyone involved – the shavers, shavees and financial backers.

The spirited support you have shown is so appreciated and will enable the Network’s work to reach women right across the length and breadth of Australia.

Congratulations Networkers!

Dragons Abreast

The National Australia Bank’s Community Link Volunteer Award in the Northern Territory’s Health Category has been won by the NT/ACT Dragons Abreast.

The $5000 in prize money will assist our national Dragons Abreast fund.

Congratulations to the dragon boaters and national co-ordinator, Michelle Hanton.

Bakers Delight

In September, Network and Bakers Delight representatives applauded with gusto when we received one of three Finalists Awards in the Prime Minister’s Business and Community Partnerships Awards, presented in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra.

Bakers Delight founder, Lesley Gillespie, and the Network’s national co-ordinator, Lyn Swinburne, received the award from the Prime Minister, John Howard, who spoke about the importance of corporate and non-profit organisations working together to make a difference.

Patricia Edgar

In October, the Network’s chair, Dr Patricia Edgar, accepted two significant awards within four days.

As director of the Australian Children’s Television Foundation, Patricia accepted the prestigious Image and Science international conference’s Youth TV Prize at the Eiffel Tower in Paris before UNESCO and the Council of Europe’s International Jury.

Four days later, she was back home to be presented with a Melbourne Award by The Committee for Melbourne.

Lyn Swinburne

National co-ordinator, Lyn Swinburne, won the Shell Community and Government Section of the Victorian Telstra Business Woman of the Year Awards. The $4000 prize money has been given to the Network.

Participants needed for study

Shirley O’Connell, a PhD student at Queensland’s University of Technology, is recruiting women for her study of the concerns of young women with breast cancer.

If you were diagnosed with breast cancer between 18-40 years of age, not more than three years ago, you are eligible to volunteer for the study.

Shirley’s research is aiming to help develop appropriate services and programs for young women with breast cancer.

If you are interested in taking part or finding out more about Shirley’s study, phone her on (07) 3864 5872 or e-mail se.connell@student.qut.edu.au
Bakers ‘delight’ the Network

On Saturday, October 20, Bakers Delight bakeries around Australia supported the Network’s Field of Women by donating 50¢ cents to the Network from every $2.30 loaf they sold.

As this issue of The Beacon went to print, the Network had received more than $53,000!

The promotion has been a fantastic opportunity to spread the word about the Network.

Many more people around Australia will now be aware of our pink ladies and their significance.

Some of the bakeries went all-out to promote the event, with pink hair, streamers, balloons, sausage sizzles, face painting, and even more head and leg shaving!

We have had many phone calls from supporters telling us they now have freezers full of bread!

We would like to thank you for supporting Bakers Delight who do so much to help our Network.

We would like to thank you all, as every cent raised helps the Network to continue its work in seeking to improve the treatment and care of those diagnosed with breast cancer, and work towards preventing this disease for the benefit of the whole community.

Thanks to the franchisees, bakers, staff and all involved, especially Kath Snell whose tireless commitment made the day run so smoothly.

Next time you visit your local Bakers Delight, please let them know how grateful we are!

Since our launch in October 1998, Breast Cancer Network Australia has gone from strength to strength. We now have more than 60 member groups around Australia.

We need to strengthen the ways we work closely with our member groups and to communicate what the Network is doing – our plans for the future and how we can actively involve our members in these initiatives on an on-going basis.

We have decided to do this at a Network Summit, to be held in Melbourne on February 22 and 23, 2002.

The Network has invited our member groups to nominate a delegate to attend, and we will cover each delegate’s travel and accommodation costs.

It should be a marvellous opportunity for women to learn about our progress and plans for the future.

We are hoping that women will report back to their member groups and consider ways to get actively involved in Network projects and community initiatives on behalf of women with breast cancer and their families.

We are excited about the prospect of getting together with key Network women from all parts of Australia to share our plans for the Network – the energy will be amazing!

Since the last issue of The Beacon, these women have been appointed to working groups and committees, or participated in forums:

- Maryanne Maher (NSW) and Mary Macheras-Magias (Vic) – National Breast Cancer Centre’s Young Women’s Advisory Group.
- Pam Williams (Vic) and Jenny Morrison (Qld) – National Breast Cancer Centre’s Psycho-social clinical practice guidelines (Summary cards for health professionals project team).
- Veronica Macaulay-Cross (Qld) and Jayne Poynts (Qld) – Queensland Health’s Oncology Scenario Planning Workshop.
- Lyn Swinburne (Vic) – National Breast Cancer Foundation’s Research Priorities Steering Committee.
- Carlene Butavicius (SA) – South Australia’s Strengthening Support for Women with Breast Cancer Project’s national workshop.
- Diane Shore (Qld) – Queensland Women’s Cancer Screening Services Consumer Reference Group.

To learn more about A Seat at the Table, phone Gil Paulsen on (03) 9805 2500 or e-mail gpaulsen@bcna.org.au

Summit to gather members from across Australia

Fundraising by Bakers Delight stores around Australia on October 20 has raised more than $53,000 for the Network.

Here, Melbourne Bakers Delight staff spread the word about the Network.
Victoria Square, in the heart of Adelaide, was transformed into a Field of Women between Saturday October 20 and Monday, October 22 – Australia’s Breast Cancer Day.

Thousands saw the display as they passed in their cars. Others came to see the silhouettes up close and to read their messages of encouragement, hope and remembrance.

Students and teachers from Walford Girls School, St. Peters Girls School, Genungu International High School, Annesley College Boarding House, Seymour College, Wilderness College and Gilles Street Primary School, along with some Venturers arrived early on the Saturday to help plant the silhouettes.

Anyone with teenagers will appreciate how precious ‘sleep-ins’ are, and yet these lovely girls were keen to play an active role in our event.

The Organising Committee had worked tirelessly to rope in friends and family to help. Husbands put up signs, hooked up the power, lifted and carted. BreastScreen staff, women from the ACTION group and BCSS volunteers set up displays and spoke to the public.

Even passers-by joined the planting team. One man, Steve, who calls Victoria Square his home, came to check us out and became our greatest support. Husbands put up signs, worked tirelessly to rope in friends and implement the event, but it’s often the busy people who are most ready to find time for such a worthwhile cause.

We were greeted at the start of our Silent Walk by two policewomen on horses decorated with pink and white ribbons who escorted participants across the road.

Our MC was Carlene Butavicius, BCNA’s SA state representative. Newly appointed Governor, Marjorie Jackson-Nelson, officially launched the Field of Women. She spoke of how her good friend, Raelene Boyle, had asked her to perform this task in her place, as Raelene was still recovering from recent surgery.

The speakers included Diana Laidlaw, the Minister for Transport, and the SA Office of the Status of Women, pathologist and former Lord Mayor, Dr Jane Lomax-Smith and the Network’s national co-ordinator, Lyn Swinburne.

Adelaide media identity, Leigh McClusky, spoke about Margaret Kelly, who had achieved much in her life despite her challenges with breast cancer. Margaret’s husband, Graham, led the ceremonial planting.

Breast cancer survivor, Vanessa Lambert, read her moving poem about the significance of the silhouettes. We were then warmed by the beautiful voices of the girls from Pembroke Girls Choir and the church bells rang out across Adelaide.

Following the official proceedings, we had a chance to meet women and their families from Adelaide and across the state. Several Network members even travelled from interstate to take part.

It was a great opportunity to celebrate our lives and to pay tribute to those we have lost.

On Monday, the silhouettes were packed away and everyone was able to put their feet up at long last.

Outstanding leadership was shown by Carlene Butavicius and our project manager, Cathie Tonkin. We thank them for their incredible contribution, along with that of the members of the Organising Committee: Judith Brine (Adelaide City Council), Sheila Evans (BPW SA), May Jackson, Helen Wiltshire, Vanessa Lambert, Meredith Russell, Judith Stewart, Karen Shepherd (BreastScreen) and TraceyLee Carey (Bakers Delight).

The Network recognises the work and dedication of all those who made Adelaide’s Field of Women such a successful and memorable event.

Be part of the 2002 Field of Women

The Network is looking for people in NSW to join the organising committee for next year’s Field of Women in Sydney during October.

We need people with ideas, commitment and time. Of course, few of us have hours of spare time to devote, but it’s often the busy people who are most ready to find time for such a worthwhile cause.

We will be appointing a project manager in Sydney to co-ordinate and implement the event, but she/he will need a team of all sorts of people to help make this happen.

Being on the organising committee may not be your thing, but you might be able to help in other ways.

To be a part of the Sydney Field of Women, phone 1800 500 258 and register your interest.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be involved!

Thank you

A huge thank-you to our 2001 Field of Women major sponsor, New Idea. We appreciate the support it gives us and a range of breast cancer initiatives.
SA’s new Governor, Marjorie Jackson-Nelson, launched the Field of Woman and paid tribute to her friend, fellow athlete and breast cancer survivor, Raelene Boyle.

Victoria Square, in the heart of Adelaide, was the site of the 2001 Field of Women between Saturday, October 20, and Monday, October 22 – Australia’s Breast Cancer Day.

Left: Police women mounted on horses decorated with pink and white ribbons, accompanied the Silent Walk.
**Right: Cooma, NSW**
The Cooma-Monaro Shire Council was supportive, posters were displayed in local shops, Cooma Hospital, Community Health Centre and GP surgeries. Local radio stations ran community announcements and Jane Redmond did several live interviews. Local newspapers were also supportive as was local photography studio SCHOO’s. Hospital maintenance staff gave their time, and many breast cancer survivors, partners and children of women who did not survive planted the silhouettes, sold badges, drew pink silhouettes on the footpath. It was a successful day involving the whole community.

**Left: Ringwood, Victoria**
Participants held a Silent Walk around Ringwood Lake followed by an opening ceremony including songs performed by the hospital’s choir. Afternoon tea was provided by the hospital and the North Ringwood Bakers Delight. The silhouettes were planted in the shape of a star, to represent the group’s theme ‘Lighting the Way’ for women in the future. The silhouettes were later moved into the hospital’s garden.

**Right: Taree, NSW**
The Taree Mini-Field was held in Fotheringham Park. It was co-ordinated by Lyn Mills and officially opened by the Mayor, Councillor Mick Tuck. The captain of the local high school, Samantha Fisher, made a moving speech dedicated to her grandmother, a breast cancer survivor. The day was well supported by the community, with the local breast cancer support groups handing out information, the Taree RSL band playing, a motor bike display and many businesses offering goods and services.

**Left: Canberra, ACT**
This year’s mini Field of Women was combined with a dragon boat regatta; an effective way of involving a sporting body, while maintaining the solemnity and significance of the Silent Walk. Chris Emery, husband of our esteemed past member, Jean, presented the trophy to the winning crew. Senators Margaret Reid and Kate Lundy, two of our most faithful supporters, attended, despite pre-election activities. We thank them both sincerely for their on-going support and encouragement of the Network.
Below: Bundaberg, Queensland
ABC Day saw Bundaberg’s inaugural Mini-Field of Women.
We began with a Silent Walk through the main street to Buss Park
where the field was launched by Councillor Peters. Dr Denise Powell
spoke, as did Bev Cross, who shared her experiences with BCNA and
support services for women. The silhouettes were planted while the
QCWA Choir sang. The Field was blessed and 100 balloons were
released. Morning tea was served at the Civic Centre.

Above: Wagga Wagga, NSW
The Wagga mini Field was held in Victory Memorial Gardens. It was organised by the Breast Cancer
Support Group and compered by Mary-Helen Martens. Participants first gathered for the Silent Walk
on the footpaths surrounding the gardens. A short silhouette planting ceremony was followed by
speeches, readings and a prayer from local ministers. The overall response was great. Quite a few
women described the event as “just what we needed”.

Right: Laidley, Queensland
The Field was planted at Das Neumann house. During the day,
Bob Dutton, executive officer to local
MP, Bill Flynn, presented Majorie
Cusack and Val Neubling with a
certificate of appreciation for their
work as volunteers over the past seven
years. Among those in attendance was
Kerry Zibell, who has learnt of a
recurrence of her initial inflammatory
breast cancer. She continues in the
fight, attending a local cancer support
group, and is planning a trip around
Australia with her husband soon.

Left: Campbelltown, NSW
This mini Field was successfully managed by Cindy Gilliam at the University of Western Sydney. She
held a ceremony during the day, which was attended by local politicians, including Federal MP
Bronwyn Bishop and many special guests. The guest speakers were Dr
Stephen Della-Fiorentina and
Dorothy Kwasniak – a breast cancer survivor. An evening
program was also held which began with a Silent Walk and a
Candlelight ceremony. The University Choir sang and Robyn
Wicks spoke about The Network.
The whole event was well
supported by the student body at the University and also local Rotarians
who helped raise more than $1000.
Thousands join together in Brisbane’s Silent Walk

A huge crowd came to pay tribute in their own way by joining together for the Network’s Silent Walk leading to the Brisbane Field of Women in September. The Walk started at Parliament House and moved along Brisbane’s George Street, with policemen on motorbikes closing the street to all other traffic.

Some people came alone; others with friends and supporters. Entire families came to walk together and spend time reading the messages in the Field.

We were joined by several Brisbane identities, including former mayor, Sally-Anne Atkinson, and Bonny Barry, the member for Apsley, representing the Premier, Peter Beattie.

We arrived at the Suncorp Metway Park to the spectacular sight of the 12,500 silhouettes, which had been planted in the lawn that morning by teams of volunteers. These included students from Brisbane State High School, Moreton Bay College, Clayfield College, Brisbane Girls Grammar and Milton State School.

Local personality, Anne-Marie White, introduced the speakers, including Raelene Boyle and Wayne Goss, who, as head of the Goodwill Games and a cancer survivor, spoke of the event’s theme, ‘Celebrating Life’.

Young country singer, Kylie Sackley, then reduced us all to tears with a song she had written for her mother, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Again, the Brisbane Field of Women was the result of hours of work by a number of key Network people, especially Leonie Young, Janelle Gamble and Cherrell Hirst.

Young country singer, Kylie Sackley, then reduced us all to tears with a song she had written for her mother, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Again, the Brisbane Field of Women was the result of hours of work by a number of key Network people, especially Leonie Young, Janelle Gamble and Cherrell Hirst.

They were able to gain sponsorships from local companies, including Energex, Thiess and Minter Ellison, and support from a range of other companies and individuals.

Over the last few weeks of preparations, a new team of helpers emerged from the Twelfth Night Theatre.

The staff wanted to be so actively involved because the theatre’s owner, Gail Wiltshire, is a breast cancer survivor.

One staffer, Lyn Pelgrave, took responsibility for the management of the Launch Day and another, Lewis, took calls in the preceding fortnight from people seeking information and wanting to record silhouette messages.

For three weeks, Twelfth Night Theatre became headquarters for the Field of Women.

A crew from Foxtel filmed throughout the day and the resulting program was shown during October – breast cancer month.

The Field of Women remained in place for a week. A roster of volunteers and health professionals were in place throughout this time to give information and support to the public, and to help in recording messages to be placed on the silhouettes.

Key public messages were circulated about the importance of early detection, the need for support for those touched by this disease and the need for the community to keep striving to find answers to the breast cancer riddles.
Issues of Concern ...

Herceptin – the facts

Herceptin is the first of the new 'targeted' drugs, so called because it attacks only the overexpressing tumour cells.

Chemotherapy, while a useful tool for fighting cancer, cannot differentiate between cancerous and normal cells – all cells are affected.

Herceptin works best on women whose breast tumours overexpress a protein, called Her2. Generally, the more this is overexpressed, the more effective the drug.

As of December 1, Herceptin will be available free of charge to women with metastatic breast cancer (where the cancer has travelled to more distant parts of the body), whose tumours overexpress Her2 – about 20-25% of women with metastatic disease.

Oncologists will be able to have their patients’ tumours tested by pathologists to identify those for whom this therapy might be effective.

Herceptin is not a cure, but a 45% improvement in overall survival has been recorded among women whose tumours strongly overexpress Her2, (New England Journal of Medicine, March 2000).

As Herceptin is a targeted drug, it has relatively few side effects, which means an improved quality of life for women taking the drug. That is important for all women, but even more so for women with young families, as means they can continue to be active within their families.

Women who have been taking Herceptin have told us that, after months of feeling weak and ill on chemotherapy, they have been able to resume a normal life – go back to university, help with reading at their children's school, join the kindergarten helpers roster.

The Network’s web site – www.bcna.org.au – has more information about Herceptin, but if you have advanced breast cancer, we suggest discussing the suitability of the drug for you with your oncologist.

Thank you to the friends of the Fields

These people headed up mini field for 2001. The Network would like to thank them and their committees for their work.

Queensland
Sholeh Boyle, Townsville
Judy Wild, Buderim
Marianne Zangari, Chirnside
Bev Cross and Shirley Harrison, Bundaberg
Astrid Raines, Laidley
Imelda O’Loughlin, Toowoomba
Felicity Pembroke, Cairns
Julie Foreman, Southport
Christine Lindemann, Ipswich
NSW
Kim Harris, Penrith
Gay Lee, Goulburn Goulburn
Linda Williams, Broken Hill
Jane Redmond, Cooma
Lyn Mills, Taree
Cindy Gilliam, Campbelltown
Helen Gray, Wagga Wagga
Anna Banks, Port Macquarie
ACT
Anna Wellings Booth and Tania Pirotta, Canberra
Victoria
Sue Heffernan and the Year 9 girls at Methodist Ladies College, Kew
Annie Bailey, San Remo
Maggie Stowers, Ringwood
Maree Scanlan, Traralgon
Melissa Billing, Bendigo
Kim Pinniger, Ararat
Jenny Watson, Abbotsford
Phillipa Bourke and Maxine Corfield, Heidelberg
Mary Funder and Libby Pearce, Camberwell
Gorda Evans, East Melbourne
Lauren Costello, Ferntree Gully
Tasmania
Nola Polmear and Denise Walshe, Hobart
South Australia
Merrilyn Harrington, Kingston
Rhonda Smith and Maxine Barker, Port Lincoln
Janet Williams, Mount Gambier
Di Reade, Minalton
West Australia
Marina Johns, Bridgetown
Carol Bishop, co-ordinated mini Fields at Albany, Booragoon, Bunbury, Caroussel, Floreat, Geraldton, Innaloo, Joondalup, Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Midland, Mirrabooka, Morley, Rockingham, Warwick and Whitfords.

Queensland women celebrate life

The Network sponsored the Celebrating Life seminar at the Wesley Hospital as part of our Field of Women event in Brisbane.

With 300 people in attendance, this was an excellent way of informing and updating Queenslanders. The speakers ranged from Prof. John Forbes, who spoke about clinical trials, to Jan Power, who entertained with a wise and witty presentation about the meaning of success and celebrating life.

Bakers Delight supplied a sumptuous morning tea and gave each attendee a calico backpack of pamphlets and information about breast cancer resources.

Leonie Young did a great job as the seminar’s MC.

As always, the women with breast cancer were the stars. Edith Cooper spoke about cycling around Australia earlier this year with the Fence liners, while Ellie Willson talked about being diagnosed with breast cancer while pregnant with her first child.

All the while, Ellie’s husband and their son, Nathaniel, now a healthy toddler, were sitting in the front row. Her’s was a wonderful, candid story.
My Journey

Making the most of a new beginning

Monday, December 2, 1996, is a day that will remain forever in my memory. While taking a bath, I discovered a lump in my right breast.

My feelings at that time were no doubt the same as those felt by countless women before me – disbelief and a gut-wrenching fear.

After various tests, breast cancer was diagnosed and I had the lump removed, along with glands from under my arm. Then followed several weeks of radiotherapy and I began the recovery process.

I would have to say that the emotional recovery was the most difficult and, believe me, I ran through the whole range.

Initially, I was convinced I was going to die, totally ignoring the fact that my prognosis was good.

All around me, people were telling me to be positive, but I wasn’t rational. I felt like yelling ‘You be positive’. I realised later I was angry. I didn’t want to have breast cancer and at that stage I didn’t want to be bloody positive!

My writer’s imagination refused to be quelled and I devised my own method of being positive.

I told no one about it, in fact even now I feel uncomfortable that people will think I am a ‘nut case’, although if cancer taught me anything it was not to worry about what people think.

I pictured this little man in my body wearing rubber boots, a raincoat and hat. He carried a backpack vacuum cleaner and every time a cancer cell reared its head he stomped on it and vacuumed it up and blew the dead cells out of my ear.

Despite my efforts to be positive, I lapsed into depression and howled all over my doctor, who told me it would be amazing if I weren’t depressed.

She cited all the physical reasons why I would be depressed, such as having had surgery, being taken off hormone replacement therapy, weeks of radiation treatment and finally coming to terms with the side effects of Tamoxifen.

I felt better when it was all out in the open and agreed to take some anti-depressants until I returned to normal – whatever that was going to be.

A return to physical exercise made a huge difference and I played tennis and went line dancing.

June’s diagnosis of breast cancer left me totally gobsmacked. It was unexpected and I wasn’t sure how to cope or the best way to support her.

I waited in a room a long way from the diagnostic area and as time passed my stomach and my thoughts churned.

Hours passed before I received any feedback and although the doctor who sought me out was kindness itself, her presence filled me with dread.

June was shell-shocked and had asked for me to be present as a plan of action was outlined.

The following days, as June awaited surgery and test results, will be forever engraved in my memory. I was thankful for the support and love of my wonderful children.

The weeks that followed were an emotional minefield for me. I had no idea what to say or how to behave, but I knew that being there for June at this time was the most important thing.

We did what we have always done.

June Ann and Ian Monks with two of their seven grandchildren; twins Tristan and Hannah.

A husband’s thoughts

We spent time together, talked together and loved each other. I tried to encourage her to look ahead and be positive. I would have done anything to take away her pain, especially her depression.

At one stage, I got a bit heavy handed and ordered her to write. I knew this was her solace and even she had no real idea why she had given it up.

She wrote and got her books published and I am so proud of her.

– Ian Monks
Dragons Abreast is thrilled to report that South Australia now boasts a crew of pink ladies and has received an $800 grant from Sport and Recreation, plus generous funding of $2500 from the Minister for the Status of Women and $600 from various dragon boat clubs.

The 8th Australian Masters Games in Newcastle during October was a first for us – two boat loads of pink ladies.

What a powerful statement! No one could miss those hot pink lycra rashies, the fabulous wigs & boas!

The Southbank Corporation has donated two dragon boats to our Brisbane group.

Darwin is in the process of building a pink boat. This has been made possible by a generous donation from Madeline Luck.

Western Australia has managed to have a boat painted pink.

Appropriately, she's called the Amazon Lady!

Pamela Williams and an enthusiastic group of women are establishing a dragon boat team in Melbourne.

If you’d like to know more about what’s involved or are looking for adventure and fun in your life, phone Pamela on (03) 9592 6352 or 0417 147 822.

The national raffle was an outstanding success, raising more than $8500. First prize went to a Territorian, while the second and third prizes went to NSW.

Plans for 2002 include entering the Chinese New Year Races at Darling Harbour, the Moomba Festival in Melbourne and the Australian National Titles on the Gold Coast.

Remember, new paddlers are always wanted!

For more information about what’s happening in your area contact your state representatives or Michelle Hanton on (08) 8941 8923 or e-mail hanton@ozemail.com.au

The number of people I line dance with who came out of the woodwork to tell me of their own experiences with breast cancer amazed me. These people were getting on with their lives and had put their cancer behind them. I decided it was time I did the same.

For some years, I had been interested in writing and had managed to get a few short stories published, but before my breast cancer I had begun writing romantic fiction novels.

After the operation I shoved this ambition in the ‘too hard basket’ until my husband thrust me in front of the computer and said, ‘Write. I don’t care if it’s garbage. Just write!’

I’m not sure why I was reluctant to resume my writing. I think it was all tied up with feeling that the most I could expect from life was a bit more of living and that I shouldn’t expect to become a published author. I decided a publisher would not want to risk money on someone who had had breast cancer.

The fact that I was older than a lot of romantic fiction writers always bothered me too, but now I think ‘Bugger them. They can either like my work or lump it!’

I wrote several books and in 1998 I had two accepted by New Concepts Publishing for its electronic line. Since then, I have had five more accepted, three of which are in paperback. I can’t tell you what a joy it is to finally achieve status as a published author.

Cancer has become a measuring stick for all my other problems. Most things seem minor when compared with listening to that diagnosis and can be put in their proper place in life. When I see people fussing about silly things I feel like taking them aside and telling them to get a life.

So much has happened to me since I had breast cancer, not the least of which is becoming the grandmother of seven (including twins).

Rather than breast cancer being an end to the life that I knew, it became a new beginning. I can honestly say that I look forward to every day and the absolute joy I find in living.

– June Ann Monks, Queensland

An increasing number of books full of information and the personal experiences of women with breast cancer are becoming available. everycloud.com, run by breast cancer survivor, Leonie Young, deals in new and used health and lifestyle books and other resources.

A comprehensive catalogue of breast cancer titles is available online or by mail order. Leonie can also source titles on any subject and have them delivered to your door. everycloud bazaar is an on-line used bookshop for those wishing to sell books they’ve already read.

To receive a mail order catalogue, a newsletter with updates about new releases or more information, contact Leonie at everycloud.com, PO Box 426, Sunnybank, Queensland 4109, phone (07) 3341 7570 or 0414 417 570, e-mail leonie@everycloud.com or Internet www.everycloud.com

etc.etc.etc.
Moving forward for young women with breast cancer

Moving forward is exactly what Sunday 21 October 2001 at Novotel Sydney on Darling Harbour was all about … moving forward into a better tomorrow for the 205 young women, partners and health professionals who attended the Young Women and Breast Cancer MOVING FORWARD Forum and for all those young women who will inevitably follow.

The day was a recognition that we young women:
• can get breast cancer, that we exist,
• with breast cancer do have special needs which we want acknowledged and addressed, and
• with breast cancer can move forward and live enriched lives.

This truly inspirational day was opened by myself and Dr Andrew Penman, CEO The Cancer Council NSW, our key partner. Model, Sarah O’Hare, then set the scene with style.

Some of Australia’s experts, Dr Rosie King, Prof. Stewart Dunn, Dr Fran Boyle, Dr Rod Baber and Petrea King, shared their wisdom, helping us in practical ways to move forward.

Comedian, Gretel Killeen’s ‘hubub’ was an hilarious end to an amazing day.

Everything was kept on track by our brilliant MC, Cyndi Kaplan, a Breast Cancer Action Group NSW member and breast cancer survivor.

The day’s program was specifically developed to look at, and to talk about, the issues and needs of young women affected by breast cancer.

Equally important, participants had a chance to meet other young women and partners going through similar experiences.

Moving Forward was the initiative of Young Breast Cancer Action Group NSW. We are all young volunteers at different stages of our breast cancer journey and share a passion to bring about change to help all young women with breast cancer.

My inspirational Young BCAG team mates, Eli Faktor, Kirsty Simmonds, Sarah Crompton, Anita Phillips and Sandra Tanner, made the forum a reality, under the guiding hand of Sally Crossing of BCAG NSW. Thank you!

Thanks also to our partners, particularly The Cancer Council NSW. Pfizer, Novotel, Avant Card and Breast Cancer Network Australia also deserve a special mention – their sponsorship enabled our day to be a free event.

The special needs of young women with breast cancer are many and varied – the young women reiterated that throughout the day. Fertility, children, relationship and coping issues are just some of the issues raised.

Many more will be highlighted by the questionnaire responses that we will soon share.

We at Young BCAG will champion these issues with the key stakeholders in the breast cancer world, now with a louder voice and many more members.

Some inroads have been made to help young women. To celebrate our successes, we have established an annual award for outstanding contribution to young women with breast cancer. The inaugural Young BCAG Award was presented to the deserving Prof. Michael Friedlander and Belinda Thewes for creating support programs specifically for young women.

But there is so much more that can and should be done for us. If the various cancer organisations, researchers, governments and we young women really work together, we can achieve so much more.

Clearly, our young issues know no geographic boundaries and Moving Forward convincing showed that such a forum is needed and wanted by young women.

Which cancer organisation will organise the inaugural national or perhaps various state-based young women and breast cancer forums in 2002? This would truly allow us to move forward in leaps and bounds!

– Rosanna Martinello, convenor, Young Breast Cancer Action Group NSW

Editor’s note: The Network is keen to develop this concept, which began last year with the Young Women’s Awareness Forum in Melbourne. We are considering ways to make this into a national program in the future.
Letters to the editor

Your article, *New Risk Management Clinic in Melbourne*, on the back page of the latest issue of *The Beacon* prompted me to write to you with my story.

My mother, who was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 49, died at 52. Her only sister was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at age 49 and died several weeks later.

For myself, I had breast cancer at 66. I have always felt that there must be an hereditary factor somewhere in our family, so when my oncologist referred me to the Familial Cancer Centre of Peter MacCallum Institute, Melbourne, I knew that he must have felt the same. I am so glad that he did.

The women who counselled me were caring and helpful – I cannot speak highly enough of them. The blood test results took some months, as it is a time-consuming and exacting task. I was found to have a mutation in the BRCA2 gene.

I am one of a family of six children, all of whom are living. Genetic testing was offered to my five siblings, all of whom accepted. My young sister was the only one of the five who was found to carry the same fault.

My husband and I have two sons – they both carry the BRCA2 gene fault. They each have a son and a daughter, my grandchildren.

To date, one grandson tested negative and a granddaughter has tested positive. My other granddaughter has indicated that she is thinking seriously about the test.

The granddaughter who has tested positive will be watched carefully.

I have been told that I have a fairly high risk of breast cancer returning, but I have an excellent GP, specialist and oncologist who watch me regularly. Also, I try to keep positive and learn all I can.

The cancer support group I belong to has been a great help and inspiration. I have made some wonderful friends, all with a story to tell.

– Noreen Nye, Bridgewater on Loddon, Victoria

I’m a six-year survivor of breast cancer, having been diagnosed just after my 40th birthday.

The Spring issue of *The Beacon* is my first, and I think it’s full of helpful and positive information and articles, and the producers of this newsletter should be proud of their results.

I liked Kathy Kuipers’ page, and would like to add a couple of items to her article, *Helping a friend with the ‘Big C’*.

A wonderful friend gave me a feet massage. The day after my surgery, she came to the hospital with some aromatic oils and massaged my feet, and it felt ooooh so good and relaxing.

Also, to help myself when recovering from surgery and trying to cope with chemotherapy and radiotherapy, I’d go to the bedroom, put the TV on at a low volume so that I couldn’t hear the phone, and let the answering machine take messages whenever I wanted to sleep or rest without disturbances.

My family knew that if I was prepared to accept phone calls or visitors I’d be lying on the lounge. If I was in the bedroom it was because I wanted peace and quiet. They respected that wonderfully.

A friend would put a note on her front door telling callers when she was resting, but would appreciate their visit a bit later, preferably with a phone call first.

These things might appear to be rude, but I know of other people doing the same if they were tired after a tiny baby had kept them up for half the night, recovering from any type of surgery or were shiftworkers. It’s all about looking after our health and coping with the day-to-day.

Again, thank you for a great newsletter.

– Marie Mueller, South Australia

On the move?

After mailing each issue of *The Beacon*, a number of newsletters are returned to us, as people have moved. So don’t forget to let us know if you are planning to or have moved. Phone the Network’s new toll free number, 1800 500 258.
Beautiful women

Age 3: She looks at herself and sees a queen.
Age 8: She looks at herself and sees Cinderella.
Age 15: She looks at herself and sees an ugly sister (Mum, I can’t go to school looking like this!).
Age 20: She looks at herself and sees ‘too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly’ - but decides she’s going out anyway.
Age 30: She looks at herself and sees ‘too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly’ - but decides she doesn’t have time to fix it, so she’s going out anyway.
Age 40: She looks at herself and sees ‘too fat/too thin, too short/too tall, too straight/too curly’ - but says, ‘At least, I’m clean’ and goes out anyway.
Age 50: She looks at herself and sees ‘I am’ and goes wherever she wants to.
Age 60: She looks and then reminds herself of all the people who can’t even see themselves in the mirror anymore, goes out and conquers the world.
Age 70: She looks at herself and sees wisdom, laughter and ability, goes out and enjoys life.
Age 80: Doesn’t bother to look, just puts on a purple hat and goes out to have fun with the world. Maybe we should all grab that purple hat earlier!

Upcoming Events

Contact: phone (03) 8430 8419.
December 9: BCAG NSW annual general meeting, 2.30pm, YWCA, 5-11 Wentworth Avenue, Sydney.
Contact: Sally Crossing, (02) 9436 1755.

2002

February 21: BCNA’s Annual State Representatives’ Think Tank.
February 21-22: Fourth National Breast Care Nurses Conference, Adelaide, SA.
Contact: Silvana DiMaria, (08) 8222 4618 or e-mail sdimaria@mail.rah.sa.gov.au
Contact: Deb Casey (03) 9531 1954 or www.bustout2002.com
March 15 or 16 (to be confirmed): ‘BreastCare and Your Care – Improving Outcomes for Victorian Women’, a free seminar.
Contact: BCNA (03) 9805 2500.
June 30 – July 5: 18th UICC International Cancer Congress, Oslo, Norway.
Contact: cancer@oslo2002.org
July 5-6: Fifth Australasian Conference on Familial and Genetic Aspects of Cancer, Barossa Valley, SA.

You’re not yet on our mailing list?

Contact: Gil Paulsen, phone 1800 500 258, 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: ( ).................................E-mail: ...........................................
Have you had a diagnosis of breast cancer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

The Beacon is printed with the generous support of PMP Print.

Seeking Shelter

The Network welcomes these groups under its umbrella:
• Bayside Breast Cancer Support Group, Victoria; and
• Seaside Support Group, Victoria.
During the next few months we will be contacting all our member groups. We hope that each of them will be able to identify a woman from their group willing to be their Network contact person. This should make contact between us all much easier, and allow us to involve you all much more in our projects and activities.

New on the web site

• Glenys Ruff from Gippsland had a great time at the Breast Friends weekend retreat and workshop in Bendigo during October.
• Report from the Illawarra Breast Cancer Support Group’s New Idea morning tea and fashion parade, which was hosted by the hilarious Colette Mann.
• Why would anyone want to crawl over rocks and risk being swept out to sea? Debbi Robey and Pip Cowan did just that, and all in the name of breast cancer. Read their story and enjoy the photos.
• Reports from our state and consumer representatives.
• Lisa Page’s experience with the Encore exercise program.
• Dragons Abreast newsletter.

The Beacon is the newsletter of 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.