Festive wishes to all our members and supporters for a happy holiday season and a healthy 2003.

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In the pink in Sydney

On Sunday October 27, more than 5000 people joined the Network’s Silent Walk, from Customs House at Circular Quay, up Macquarie Street to Sydney’s Domain.

Each person was there for their own reason – some remembering a loved one lost, some supporting family and friends, others celebrating life after breast cancer.

The Silent Walk was led by prominent Australians from many walks of life – business, the arts, sport and the media.

At the front was Raelene Boyle; the Federal Minister for Health, Kay Patterson; and the Network’s Chair, Dr Patricia Edgar.

Sports identities included Australian cricketer, Glenn McGrath, and his wife, Jane, a breast cancer survivor.

Actors Carmen Duncan and Judith McGrath also showed their involvement and support.

As we walked into The Domain the sun shone on the Field of Women, which was planted in the shape of our pink lady. Silhouettes fluttered in the breeze, The Greatest Love of All was sung and then people sat on the grass to listen to inspiring speeches by Megan James, Lyn Swinburne, Raelene Boyle and Kay Patterson.

The public then walked through the silhouettes to read and leave personal messages.

These messages are now a permanent part of the Field of Women, which means so much to many people.

At the same time, Mini-Field ceremonies were held in communities around the country. See images of the Mini-Fields on pages 7 and 10.

– Wendy McClusky

The lawns of Sydney’s Domain bloomed with the 2002 Field of Women. For more images from the day, see pages 8 and 9.

Messages of Hope and Inspiration

For most women, the first days and months after a breast cancer diagnosis can be filled with uncertainty and fear. To support this year’s Field of Women theme of ‘Hope and Inspiration’, the Network developed a brochure called Messages of Hope and Inspiration.

Using messages provided by many of our members, this brochure offers an insight into the personal stories behind our pink silhouettes – stories that are full of hope and inspiration to those just embarking on their breast cancer journey.

The brochure is enclosed with this issue of The Beacon and an electronic version has been placed on our web site at www.bcna.org.au. Phone the Network 1800 500 258 for more copies.

We have also produced a brochure of Messages of Hope and Inspiration for women with advanced breast cancer. This will be available on our web site in early 2003.
**State Reports**

### Northern Territory

In September, the Network was a visible presence in the parade proceeding the Henley on Todd Regatta – a unique event where people run up a dry river bed in a bottomless boat!

On October 3, the Administrator's wife, Jeanette Anictomatis, again hosted our annual lunch at Government House. Darwin’s Mini-Field of Women was at Parliament House on October 18. It was hosted by the Chief Minister, Clare Martin, and the Speaker of the House, Loraine Braham.

The Chief Minister also launched NT Breast Cancer Voice’s poster. It was funded by the Network’s Community Grants Program and is being distributed throughout the NT.

The month ended with a breakfast at the Carlton Hotel Ballroom to celebrate Australia’s Breast Cancer Day (ABC Day). Our guest speakers included politicians Trish Crossin and Sue Carter, and Bakers Delight franchisee, Rachel Cooney.

In the past 12 months we have visited Alice Springs and Katherine twice. This has gone a long way to ensuring that breast cancer consumers across the NT become more united and focused on working together.

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

### Tasmania

Six members of the Network attended the National Convention at the Tasmanian Lymphoedema Centre at St Mary’s during August. More than 100 people attended and heard many respected speakers, including Prof. Neil Piller from Flinders University, who previewed his new interactive CD on lymphoedema.

Louise Woodruff continues in her endeavours to get a Dragons Abreast team on the water in Hobart. The group went public with a colourful pink stand at the Seafarers Festival at Bellerive on October 27.

On ABC Day, a garden party was held at the home of Network member, Jenny Littler, and it featured a Mini-Field lining the driveway. More than 250 people attended and about $3000 was raised for the Network.

In the south, there was a Mini-Field in a local shopping centre. The local Breast Cancer Support Service of the Cancer Council hosted a breast awareness display as part of this event.

Three members are involved with the Strengthening Support for Women with Breast Cancer project and their input is proving to be invaluable. As a result of this project, breast care nurses have been appointed to two hospitals in the north.

From the New Year, our branch meeting will be held at Bakers Delight’s training room in Hobart. We hope that more people will attend, as they no longer have to make the trip to Campbelltown.

Contact: Joan Williams (03) 6424 5886 or jwilliams9@vtown.com.au or Karen Forster (03) 6273 4422 or dforster@vtown.com.au

### Victoria

Our many activities during October have resulted in greater awareness and an influx of new members to our Network. We would like to extend a warm welcome to you all.

Our members hosted a number of important events including ‘The Young Ones’ afternoon tea and auction day.

Network members featured in radio interviews, newspaper articles and magazine stories, putting a voice and a face to the breast cancer statistics, and promoting the Network to the public.

There were several successful Mini-Fields in Victoria on ABC Day and the benefits of belonging to the Network were seen in the enthusiastic response of the volunteers at these events.

Dragons Abreast members are preparing to ‘hit the water’ for summer training. If anyone would like to join our paddlers, contact Pamela Williams on (03) 9592 6352 or e-mail nwilliams@arc.net.au.

The Otis Foundation Respite units in Bendigo are nearly finished. These units are the vision of Judy Burley and Andrew Barling and are in the beautiful bushland of the Mandurang valley. They will be available for anyone seeking peace and refuge from the everyday pressures of breast cancer.

For bookings inquiries and opening dates phone the Units’ Manager, Liz Martin, on (03) 5439 3220.

Victorian members were saddened by the death of Fairlie Howard in October. Fairlie was a wonderful advocate for women with advanced disease. In her friendly, unassuming way, she managed to educate many on the needs and issues of those with advanced breast cancer. Our deepest sympathy is extended to her husband, Max, and daughter, Mercia.

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

### New South Wales

Network members in NSW were busy in recent months preparing for the major Field of Women.

An associated event was a cocktail party at the Quay Grand Aqua Restaurant, which was sponsored by new Network supporter, Yates.

Other activities in October included the National Breast Cancer Foundation’s Media Update, which presented the latest research findings.

This year’s ABC Breakfast was organised by the National Breast Cancer Centre and held at the Westin Hotel in Martin Place.

The successful NSW Breast Cancer Forum was held at the Intercontinental Hotel on the morning of the Field of Women. Plenary session presenters were Dr Fran Boyle and Stephanie Dowrick.

The Network was a proud sponsor of this event. Congratulations to all the organisers.

Mary Ward, co-ordinator of the Batemans Bay Breast Cancer Support Group, reports that members often travel further south to Bodella to meet with their Narooma counterparts.

My thanks to Mary, who ensured that...
Unfortunately, they all ended up in the water when a group from Girls’ Grammar were swept perilously close to Brendan’s crewboat 10m from the start. Why were there six silhouettes outside Parliament House? A planned Mini-Field, which was to be supported by the Breast Cancer Parliamentary Support Group, was cancelled in deference to a memorial service in the Great Hall for the families of the Bali disaster. The silhouettes represented the number of major Fields of Women already held in Australia. Crowne Plaza has included the Network in its fundraising for the next 12 months. Proceeds will enable ACT women to attend the Science & Advocacy Training Course in November. The Lymphoedema Service at Calvary Hospital was opened on November 29. Bosom Buddies have donated $22,000 to purchase a scanning laser machine for the service.

Contact: Anna Wellings Booth (02) 6247 8470 or wbfamily@ozemail.com.au or Elspeth Humphries (02) 6239 6344 or humphries44@ozemail.com.au

**Queensland**

Congratulations to Bev Cross, from Bundaberg, for being named ‘National Volunteer of the Year’ by the Cancer Patients Foundation. Bev has been a volunteer support visitor for the cause for more than 21 years. Bundaberg held a successful Mini-Field, thanks to the work of Lee Charteris and others.

At the CWA Cent Auction, decorated bras were auctioned, with proceeds going to the Network.

Judith Irvine and Cathy Apelt on the Sunshine Coast reported on the excellent morning tea and photographic exhibition, *Women Living Their Lives*. Astrid Raines helped the communities of Esk, Boonah and Laidley put on Mini-Fields. Each town had a street banner, which was funded by the communities.

Wendy King and the Redland’s Support Group held a Mini-Field at the Cleveland Library. Leisha Rule and her congregation had a mini-field at St Clement’s Anglican Church in Stafford.

Barbara Quinn, Janine Porter Steel and their volunteers at the Wesley Hospital Choices Program held a number of activities/seminars during ABC week, including a Mini-Field. Their activities culminated in a fashion parade at the Greek Club. All the models, including two men, were breast cancer survivors.

In Toowoomba, Dr Imelda O’Loughlin of St Vincent’s hospital, organised a breast cancer seminar, called *Mothers and Daughters*. Leonie Young presented at the International Clinical Trials Symposium and the Cancer Council’s Clinical Trials Forum in Sydney during the week leading up to ABC Day.

Jenny Morrison was a consumer representative at the National Breast Cancer Centre meeting to put together Summary Card Guidelines on the Psychosocial Guidelines for Breast Cancer that will be used by doctors, nurses and allied health workers.

Contact: Veronica Macaulay-Cross (07) 3269 8083 or vonphil@bigpond.net.au
Round 2 of the Network’s Grants program has been completed, with eight new successful applications, adding to the five from the first round. The total outlay on this project to date has been $62,380.

The successful applicants were:

**Meditate for Health**

- *Sheena Short, Tasmania*

A meditation workshop over two days for Tasmanian breast cancer survivors to develop meditation skills and experience the health benefits of meditation. This will be held in Hobart during February 2003 and will result in a written model.

**Promoting the message that women with advanced breast cancer can live full and productive lives**

- *Maria Waters (WA), BCNA’s Advanced Breast Cancer Working Party*

A banner will be developed to promote the message that women can live creative, productive and full lives despite having advanced breast cancer.

The banner will be available for loan to Network members for use at events and public forums.

**Mothers and Daughters seminar**

- *St Vincent’s Breast Centre Breast Cancer Support Group, Queensland*

A public seminar was held in Toowoomba during October at which the key speakers explored the issues raised for mothers and daughters by the diagnosis of breast cancer.

**Information day for rural women affected by cancer breast**

- *Young Community Health Centre and Young & District Breast Cancer Support Group, NSW*

An information day in May 2003 will give rural women the opportunity to hear and share information about treatment, management and current trends related to breast cancer.

**Lending library and information kits**

- *Caring Cancer Support Group Port Lincoln, SA*

Will develop a kit for newly diagnosed women about local services and support, and a lending library of books and videos for women in the Port Lincoln area.

**Stories from inspirational women with advanced breast cancer**

- *Maria Waters (WA), BCNA’s Advanced Breast Cancer Working Party*

The stories of 10 women with advanced breast cancer will be captured, edited and made into a booklet.

It will be published, promoted and distributed via the Network.

**Rural/remote women’s working party**

- *Judy Shepherdson (NSW/Vic. border) and Marlene Parsons (Vic.)*

Rural and remote women living with breast cancer will be invited to join a national steering committee to plan, develop and implement strategies that address the issues they face.

**Bags of Care project**

- *Valkyrie Care Group, Victoria*

Will develop a business plan and manual for others wanting to set up a Bags of Care program in their local community.

The program provides practical help, support and advice to newly diagnosed women.

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**Thank You**

- All our volunteers who helped in a variety of ways during our busy month of October.
- The Glitter Club – especially Leanne Bradford, for organising the charity ball in Melbourne on September 6, raising $45,936.
- Harriet Moore – for organising the Ladies Golf Classic on the Sunshine Coast from August 11 to 16 which raised $1,780.
- PMP Print – for printing The Beacon for the past 12 months.
- Spotlight Midland (WA) fundraisers – Margaret Baxter for making the patchwork quilt and Phillipa Lawn for organising the raffle that raised $850 for the Network.
- National Australia Bank volunteers – for helping in our office on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- ANZ Bank volunteers – for assisting at busy mailout times.
- Iron Ladies Golf Network – for a donation of $2,000.
- Elaine Marriner – for the tickets that allowed some of our lucky members to attend The Witches of Eastwick and the opening night of Oliver! in Melbourne.
- Kate Read from Campbelltown (SA) – for baking 2,640 biscuits during October and raising $1,250.
- Tim Swanton at Mailing Solutions – for his help with our printing needs.
- Network members who took part in media interviews during October.
- Qantas – for allowing the Network to set up two tables at Melbourne Airport to sell merchandise and provide information to travellers on Australia’s Breast Cancer Day.
- Bennison Mackinnon Real Estate volunteers – who helped staff the merchandise tables at Melbourne Airport.
- Multi Wall Storage, Dandenong – for providing storage at no cost.
If you were in a Bakers Delight bakery anywhere in Australia between October 21 and 28, you could not have missed ‘the pink’. For that week, 20¢ from each $2.50 block loaf sold was donated to the Network. Each bakery also supported the promotion in its own special way.

We have been told of head shaving, while the not quite so game sprayed their hair pink. Then there was pink icing, pink fairy floss, face painting, pink aprons, balloons, pink ladies, etc.

We would like to thank everyone at Bakers Delight, the franchisees, the staff and their customers for supporting the Network during this promotion. Bakers Delight has raised more than $170,000 so far for Breast Cancer Network Australia through this promotion – we thank them for their continued and amazing support.

The Network would also like to thank Bakers Delight for our wonderful new headquarters in Camberwell, Victoria. We are no longer tripping over one another!

The Network moved into its rent-free, fully equipped office space in August. It is part of Bakers Delight’s national office.

There cannot possibly be another business in Australia which works so closely with, and supports so totally, a community organisation.

Thank you!

An example of the serious fun had on behalf of the Network at Bakers Delight stores during October. These are some of the girls decked out in pink at the Patterson Lakes store in Victoria.

The Network’s head office team, outside its new home in Camberwell, Victoria, courtesy of Bakers Delight.

The amazing Bakers Delight

The SNAC Trial, being conducted by the Royal College of Surgeons, with the support of the Network, is progressing rapidly, with the NHMRC allocating $1.4 million to the trial over the next five years.

The trial is comparing two operations for detecting cancer cells in the lymph nodes of women with early breast cancer.

- Axillary clearance – removing most of the lymph nodes in the armpit.
- Sentinel Node Biopsy – removing only the node(s) most closely related to the tumour.

Results from the first 150 patients show that surgeons participating in the trial have achieved a 100% success rate in identifying and locating the sentinel node.

Surgeons and hospitals involved in the trial that have already recruited women are listed in the table on the right. This will be updated regularly and posted on the Network’s web site.

As our representative on the Management Committee, Avis Macphee reminds us, “The faster we can recruit women to this trial, the sooner we’ll have the findings that will give women the information they need about whether sentinel node biopsy is safe and effective”.

If you have any trial questions, phone Adam Ray (study co-ordinator) on (02) 9562 5080 or 1800 027 928, or e-mail adam@ctc.usyd.edu.au

The Network moved into its rent-free, fully equipped office space in August. It is part of Bakers Delight’s national office.

There cannot possibly be another business in Australia which works so closely with, and supports so totally, a community organisation.

Thank you!

More funding for SNAC trial

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<tr>
<th>Surgeon</th>
<th>Hospital site</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew Spillane</td>
<td>Prince Alfred Hospital (NSW)</td>
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<td>Bruce Mann</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Hospital (Vic.)</td>
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<td>Chris Pyke</td>
<td>Mater Adult Hospital (Qld)</td>
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<td>Craig Murphy</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Hospital / Royal Women’s Hospital (Vic.)</td>
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<td>David Gillett</td>
<td>Concord Hospital / Strathfield Breast Centre (NSW)</td>
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<td>David Oliver</td>
<td>Sir Charles Gairdner (WA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Walsh</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth Hospital / Western Breast Clinic (SA)</td>
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<td>David Wilkinson</td>
<td>Princess Alexandra Hospital / Mater Private Hospital (Qld)</td>
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<td>Di Hastrich</td>
<td>Sir Charles Gairdner (WA)</td>
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<td>Bill Ross</td>
<td>Coffs Harbour Base Hospital / Baringa Private Hospital (NSW)</td>
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<td>Justin D’Arcy</td>
<td>Nambour General Hospital (Qld)</td>
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<td>Margaret Pooley</td>
<td>St Vincent’s Mater Health (NSW)</td>
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<td>Gail Molland</td>
<td>Concord Hospital / Strathfield Breast Centre (NSW)</td>
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<td>Granthley Gill</td>
<td>Royal Adelaide Hospital / St Andrew’s Hospital (SA)</td>
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<td>Ian Bennett</td>
<td>Princess Alexandra Hospital (Qld)</td>
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<td>Ian Campbell</td>
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<td>James Kollias</td>
<td>Royal Adelaide Hospital / St Andrew’s Hospital (SA)</td>
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<td>John Collins</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Hospital / Royal Women’s Hospital (Vic.)</td>
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<td>Melissa Bochner</td>
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<td>Michael Donovan</td>
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<td>Neil Wetzig</td>
<td>Princess Alexandra Hospital / Mater Private Hospital / Wesley Medical Centre (Qld)</td>
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<td>Paul Kitchen</td>
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<td>Richard Harmen</td>
<td>North Shore Hospital (NZ)</td>
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<td>Suzanne Moore</td>
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<td>Vladimir Humeniuk</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth Hospital / Western Breast Clinic (SA)</td>
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The National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) held its inaugural Annual Breast Cancer Research Update Forum at the Sebel Hotel, Sydney, on October 14.

The idea for the forum arose from national consultations held in mid-2002 by the NBCF to inform its future research funding strategy.

The consultation process identified a need to circulate information about breast cancer research initiatives and results to the media, health professionals, researchers and the community at large.

The Network's State Representatives, along with Lyn Swinburne, joined representatives from the print and visual media, and health professionals, at this half-day forum, chaired by media personality, Julie McCrossin.

International guests, Prof. Valerie Beral of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in Oxford, and Prof. Graham Colditz from Harvard University, joined Australian experts to present the latest findings in breast cancer research and to discuss the emerging issues facing researchers.

Key findings about breast cancer risk reported at the forum included:

- An increased risk among women on hormone replacement therapy (HRT), with the risk increasing with the number of years on HRT.
- A small increase in the risk for women taking the combined oral contraceptive pill or, if they have stopped taking it within the past 10 years. Ten or more years after stopping there is no increase in risk.
- An increased risk linked to alcohol consumption – the more drinks per day, the higher the risk.
- Exercise seems to reduce risk, with the recommendation of at least 30 minutes exercise a day.
- Folate also reduces risk – high levels are found in leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach and sprouts, wholegrain breads and cereals, and fruits such as oranges, strawberries and bananas.

Other presentations were about advances in genetics and breast cancer surgery, and systemic therapy (chemotherapy and hormone therapy).

The value of research is demonstrated in the improved survival rates since 1994, which shows the importance of women participating in clinical trials.

The media's role in providing accurate and timely information to avoid confusion among women and health professionals was emphasised.

So, too, was the responsibility researchers have in reporting their work in a way that is meaningful to the general community, in the context of existing research.

Many thanks to the Foundation for including the Network in this important and informative day.

More information is contained in Fact Sheets available on the Foundation’s web site – www.nbcf.org.au

— Deb Martin (SA)

Genetic testing … watch this space

The Network is concerned that genetic testing for breast cancer may soon become too expensive for many people.

Genetic Technologies has been granted the exclusive rights to these genetic tests in Australia. Under the terms of the agreement, it will be the exclusive marketing agent for US patent holder, Myriad Genetics, in Australia and New Zealand.

Genetic counselling is a vital component of the testing process and we wonder whether this will occur within the new arrangement.

The Network has written to the Federal Health Minister, Kay Patterson, seeking clarification.

We will let you know of any developments in the next issue of The Beacon.

— Lyn Swinburne

Our latest Seats at the Table

As part of the Network’s A Seat at the Table program, these are the latest women appointed to represent us:

- Victorian Breast Health Seminar presenter – Gerda Evans (Vic.).
- Development of information materials for women about Arimidex – Margot Case, Rosemary Davies, Maryanne Maher, Nedra Orme, Hilda Valenzuela and Robyn Williams (NSW); Denice Bassanelli (SA);
- Dianne Wilson (Vic.); and Edith Cooper (Qld).
- National Breast Cancer Centre’s Interim Prevention and Risk in Perspective Advisory Group – Sally Crossing (NSW).
- National Breast Cancer Foundation’s Research Update Day – Susan Tulley (NT); Maria Waters (WA); Karen Forster (Tas.); Deb Martin (SA); Veronica Macaulay-Cross (Qld); Gerda Evans (Vic.); Elspeth Humphries (ACT); and Pam Bell (NSW).
- National Breast Cancer Centre’s Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Advanced Breast Cancer Seminars – Tessa Mallos (NSW); Diane Shore (Qld); and Maria Waters (WA).
- Research study into longer term effects of breast cancer diagnosis, Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute – Mary Macheras-Magias (Vic.)
Mini-Fields of Women were held in more than 40 communities and all capital cities around Australia, and this year’s theme was ‘hope’ for those diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Network Australia’s new Messages of Hope & Inspiration brochure was launched at the Mini-Fields.

The week preceding Australia's Breast Cancer Day were a time of great sadness, due to the bombing in Bali and the difficulties being experienced as the result of the nation-wide drought. However, our Network members rallied and the Mini-Fields went ahead, with the exception of one in Canberra, which was cancelled due to the Bali Memorial Service at Parliament House.

Every Mini-Field was different and each reflected the community and member group which staged the event. However, they all helped raise awareness of the extent of breast cancer in Australia and were a focus for people who wanted to mark Australia’s Breast Cancer Day.

Silhouettes sponsored at this year’s Mini-Fields will be collected and will then become a part of future major Fields of Women.

It is impossible to mention all the Mini-Fields here, but they varied from large events in the capital cities to smaller, but equally important, days in remote communities in other parts of Australia.

We are pleased to report that many groups held their second Mini-Field this year and have spoken positively of their plans for next year.

If your group is interested please phone the Network on 1800 500 258 (free call).

For more coverage of the Mini-Fields, visit the Network’s web site at www.bcna.org.au

More images from the Mini-Fields are on page 10.
An aerial shot of the 2002 pink lady in Sydney’s Domain. She was made up of 10,000 pink, 2500 white and 100 blue silhouettes, many featuring messages of love, support and remembrance (insert).

The Field of Women 2002, Sydney

Macquarie Street, Sydney – an amazing and moving scene as an estimated 5000 people walked in silence to The Domain.

Thank you to our Field of Women sponsors for 2002 ...
There are many people and groups the Network needs to thank for their support for the Sydney Field of Women:

• Megan James, Chair of the Organising Committee.
• The Organising Committee, which, through its hard work, helped make it such a special day.
• Project Manager, Dianne Logan, for co-ordinating the event.
• The volunteers who helped in a variety of ways, such as planting the silhouettes, photocopying, selling merchandise and marshalling the Silent Walk.
• The Performing Arts Students who sang so beautifully at the launch in The Domain.
• The Silent Walk participants, for showing their support for friends, family and all Australians affected.
• Local businesses that contributed to the event.

Sydney’s Organising Committee post-event – and having a well-earned rest!
Robyn Wicks, Simone Kennedy, Jenny Male, Jill Buttel, Pam Bell, Cathy Park, Megan James, Jebby Phillips, Cyndi Kaplan-Freiman, Anne Weeden, Dianne Logan, Angela Cotroneo and Claire Treadgold.

Above: Australian cricketer, Glenn McGrath, and his wife, Jane, a breast cancer survivor, walked in the Silent Walk with their two children.
Below: Staff from the Sydney Institute of TAFE surveyed the Field in readiness for planting by school students.

Above: Friends enjoy a special moment.
Left: Families in pink come together.
Below: Local secondary school children helped plant the Field.
They came from Cranbrook School, Monte Sant’Angelo Mercy College and the Sydney Self Defence Centre.

Thank you all for bringing the Field of Women to life
2002 Mini-Fields

Thank you to all the Mini-Field convenors and their committees. Your work is greatly appreciated.

**ACT**

Canberra: Anna Wellings Booth and Leona Furstenburg

**NEW SOUTH WALES**

Wagga: Janice Jones
Armidale: Vivienne Gregg
Griffith: Jan Newman
Port Macquarie: Kellie Mills
Gloucester: Sandra Blanch
Parkes/Forbes: Christine Gorton
Tweed-Brunswick: Lyn Laws

**NORTHERN TERRITORY**

Darwin: Michelle Hanton and Susan Tulley

**QUEENSLAND**

Cleveland: Wendy King
Bundaberg: Lee Charteris
Toowoomba: Imelda O’Loughlin
Brisbane-Toowong: Barbara Quinn
Esk/Laidley/Boonah(3): Astrid Raines
Brisbane-Stafford: Leisha Rule
Gladstone: Lesley King
Mackay: Diane Shore
Dysart: Dale Redden
Moranbah: Annette Henry

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Henley Beach: Lilliana Patane
Wbyalla: Maria Hall
Port Lincoln: Maxine Barker
Minlaton: Dianne Read
Mt Gambier: Janet Williams
Millicent: Vicki Warner
Kingston SE: Merilyn Harrington
Robe: Freda Cockburn

**TASMANIA**

Hobart-Glenorchy: Karen Forster
Devonport 1: Joan Williams
(with thanks to the Littler Family)
Devonport 2: Robyn Glen

**VICTORIA**

Melbourne: Gerda Evans
San Remo: Annie Bailey
Ararat: Judy Gleeson
Waverley: Mary Macheras-Magias
Warrnambool: Phyllis McLeish
Traralgon: Maree Scanlan
Ringwood: Maggie Stowers
Bayside/Brighton: Pamela Williams
Ferntree Gully: Sue Freestun and Lyle Turner
Epping: Genevieve Cahir and Kathy Wallace

**WEST AUSTRALIA**

Perth: Yvette Libregts & Maria Waters
Geraldton: Kaye Street
It has been an amazing year for Dragons Abreast. We have experienced phenomenal growth, with new teams forming in Bendigo, Illawarra, the NSW Central Coast and Tasmania, as well as women from Alice Springs and Port Lincoln becoming involved in various ways.

Thirty-five members of Dragons Abreast travelled to Rome in September for the World Club Crew Championship and participated in the special breast cancer survivors racing division.

The teams competed as SA Dragons Abreast and Internationally Abreast – a combined Australian/Canadian crew.

SA Dragons Abreast returned from Italy with gold and silver medals in the breast cancer survivor racing division and were invited to Government House in Adelaide for afternoon tea. Internationally Abreast took home bronze medals.

Rome was a wonderful networking experience, with members meeting with the President of the Susan Komen Foundation in Italy, as well as a local support group and breast surgeon in Como.

We were thrilled that BCNA Board member, Andrew Barling, was able to join us in Rome and experience the magic of the races.

The Assa Abloy Henley on Todd Regatta was another first for Dragons Abreast – a unique event now in its 40th year. Members of Bosom Buddies joined with Dragons Abreast from Darwin and the Central Coast to make a mad dash up the dry riverbed. The girls managed a second in the Oxford Tubs division.

The ACT had a fantastic race day with a special Dragons Abreast fundraising race section that included a boat load of politicians paddling for the cause – the highlight was the boat capsizing. The photos were ‘splashed’ across The Canberra Times!

Queensland Dragons Abreast have turned to modelling and proved a huge hit. Several members, including the male survivor paddler – Otto Buchel – featured in a fashion parade with proceeds going to the Kim Walters Choices Program.

SA started the new race season with a champagne and nibbles session, and welcomed 65 women keen to have a go at paddling.

Dragons Abreast have also been involved in two weddings! In the NT, the bride and groom left the wedding ceremony in style in ‘Sunshine’, a hot pink dragon boat, while ACT paddlers formed a ceremonial paddle guard of honour at the wedding of one of their paddlers.

Major events already on Dragons Abreast’s 2003 calendar:

• New Zealand in March for the Inaugural South Pacific Breast Cancer Regatta;
• Adelaide in April for the Australian National Titles;
• Shanghai in August for the World Dragon Boat Championships;
• Canberra in November for the Australian Masters Games; and
• local regattas will also be happening around the country.

Supporters and non-paddlers are welcome to join our trips. Dragons Abreast has received lots of media coverage, both print and television, nationally and internationally. All the media clippings, and lots of photos and reports, are on the web site, including a 12-page newsletter dedicated to the Rome competition.

Thanks to Paspaley Pearls for donating the pearl pendant for our dragon boat fundraiser.

Thanks also to Robyn Marginson and Sydney’s Kings School Quilters for making the beautiful ‘Rosebuds for Recovery’ quilt for our dragon boat raffle.

For more information on any of the above items, to receive a copy of our weekly electronic bulletin about Dragons Abreast, or if the new year inspires you to take up dragon boating, contact your local area co-ordinator or myself.

– Michelle Hanton,
Dragons Abreast National Co-ordinator,
phone (08) 8941 8923 or
e-mail hanton@ozemail.com.au
Introducing our member groups

Moree Breast Cancer Support Group

After being diagnosed with breast cancer in August 1991, I seemed to go on a roller-coaster ride.

Within a week I was in Sydney for a lumpectomy. Then I was back home for two weeks, before returning to Sydney for seven weeks’ treatment. It was a scary time, as I hadn’t been given any information.

While I had plenty of help from family and friends, I felt they had no idea what I was going through.

After making some inquiries, I found that there were many ladies around Moree who had had breast cancer. I rang them to ask about forming a support group that could get information to people in the country.

After getting some advice from the NSW Cancer Council, a group was formed in April 1996.

At the moment we have 52 women from around Moree in our group – not all are active but they know who to turn to if need be.

We are a self-help group as we haven’t had any grants, and we meet every second month, often to hear a guest speaker.

Between meetings, I send out a newsletter. I feel this is a ‘must’, so that everyone gets the latest information.

Over the years, we have also built up a collection of good and helpful information that has helped many women being treated for breast cancer, as well as other people with cancer.

Among the members, there is always someone who is happy to talk to new women before or after their operation.

We decided to support Daffodil Day and Pink Ribbon Day, and have been pleased with our efforts considering we are mainly a support group.

Many of our members actively raise funds for research and charity. For example, one entered the City to Surf this year, another drove a car in the Variety Club bash and another put her garden in the Open Garden scheme.

We are happy with the money we have raised, as we are a group to help people.

In August 2001 and 2002 we were invited to co-ordinate the Forum from Westmead Hospital in Sydney. They have been interesting and helpful experiences.

Remarks from some of our active group members are:

“In meeting with women who have suffered the horror of breast cancer, we learn it is not the end of the world.”

“The value of the support group is in sharing information and experiences with women who have a common story.”

Our members value the knowledge gained through discussions, supporting each other and helping new members cope with their problems.

– Marie Onus, NSW

Advanced Breast Cancer Working Party

The Advanced Breast Cancer Working Party was formed at the BCNA National Summit in February when a group of women with advanced breast cancer met to ‘network’ and discuss issues relevant to them.

The working party (seen in the picture on the right), made up of members from around Australia, link via teleconference and e-mail to identify and prioritise issues that affect women with advanced breast cancer and their families, and to identify strategies to address these issues.

This group is an important resource for the Network regarding issues related to advanced breast cancer.

For details of how you can contribute to this group, phone the Network on 1800 500 258 for a fact sheet or visit our web site at www.bcna.org.au
Crazy about kayaking

It was two years after my mastectomy before I took my kayak off the rack and put it in the river again. I had been competing in paddling marathons before my breast cancer diagnosis in October 1998, but hadn’t been on the water since.

Although I missed it terribly, I had become preoccupied with other exciting adventures that left no opportunity to kayak.

Over time, I occasionally wondered if the removal of a breast would affect my ability to paddle. Breast cancer had not stopped me from doing anything so far, but I began to question whether I would be able to regain the technique and endurance needed to compete in gruelling marathons again.

Last year, I bit the bullet, nervously joined a small squad of kayakers and began training regularly after work and at weekends.

The right side of my chest ached terribly after a hard session, but I was delighted to discover that so did every other part of my body!

The surgery hadn’t caused any weaknesses and, much to my relief, I didn’t paddle around in circles! I just had to get fit again and improve my style and strength. The only way to do that, I knew, was to put in the hard grunt.

I have been competing again for about a year now and am stoked to find that I’m achieving better results than ever.

I’ve learnt a lot since returning to the river, particularly the importance of a good post-mastectomy bra. Four kilometres into one of my first races, I happened to glance down and discovered that my prosthesis had travelled in my lycra crop top. Both of my breasts were on the same side of my body! It was another 46km before I reached the finish line and I could regain my dignity.

In September, I won the Women’s Open TK2 Marathon State Title and then a gold medal in the World Masters Games for the same event.

What is more important to me, though, is the satisfaction of knowing that a diagnosis of breast cancer doesn’t have to mean the end of life as I knew it. I believe more strongly than ever that I can do anything I want – I know that I just have to focus intently and never, ever give up.

— Yvonne Claypole, Victoria

A new partnership blooms for the Network

The Network is delighted to announce that Arthur Yates and Company has entered a three-year contract with us for a seed packet promotion.

The seeds grow into gorgeous flowers called Dianthus Blush Pink, which start their lives white and then turn pink.

Yates will donate 40¢ a seed packet to the Network, and another 10¢ cents per packet for a seed label contained inside.

Yates launched Dianthus Blush Pink as its ‘Seed of the Month’ in October.

The Yates team also sponsored our Field of Women Cocktail Party in Sydney on October 24.

New on our website

Take a peek at the Network’s new-look web site at www.bcna.org.au.

Select the refresh button to update all our changes.

Recent additions to the site are:

- Prostheses – Jenny Richardson’s story of her breast cancer and reconstructive surgery.
- Sally Russell’s report about Vital Essence (by Prof. Neil Pillar in SA), an interactive learning program for patients and health professionals about diagnosing, treating and managing lymphoedema.
- Snapshot – Julie Richards writes another personal piece about her breast cancer journey.
- Hair today gone tomorrow, and back again – Ronwynne Moffitt writes about cutting off her hair before chemotherapy started and using it to make wigs for porcelain dolls she made along the way.
- Cancer Helpline and support groups – Maria Waters writes about the value of these.
- Improving Health Care – Jenny Morrison writes about the role of the health complaints organisations.
- My Story – Kristi Brown tells her story of being a BRCA1 gene carrier.
- Just Me – Sherie McGaw writes about her breast cancer journey and shares a poem that reminds us that people don’t change, it’s other people’s attitudes towards us that may change.
- Joyce Mantell – writes of her experiences following bilateral mastectomies.

Merchandise Special

Caps and t-shirts are only $20, incl. postage and handling. Merchandise is now displayed on our web site.
My breast cancer journey began four years ago, at the age of 28.

I had a lumpectomy and my lymph nodes removed, which were clear. This was followed by six weeks of radiotherapy.

I was given a lot of information on the medical side of things, but wanted more. I anxiously searched the Internet for information and life experiences. I wanted to read others’ stories and compare them to my own. I wanted reassurance that there was life after all this.

I didn’t join a support group, as my aunt had a mastectomy and was undergoing chemotherapy at the same time. She was a great support; she called me her “bosom buddy”.

After my treatment ended, I was determined to not waste any time. Three months after I finished treatment, I fell pregnant. It was a joy and gave me a new focus.

I gave birth to a beautiful girl – Alanah. Two years after Alanah’s birth I gave birth to Laura.

Things were going well. I went along to my three monthly check-ups, which eventually went to six months.

Unfortunately I didn’t make it to the magical five-year mark. When Laura was eight months old – January 2002 – I discovered a lump in the same breast. It took me a few weeks to get up the courage up to make an appointment with my doctor.

The results of the fine needle biopsy were positive. I knew it would be and feared not seeing my girls grow up.

Within the week I was booked in for a mastectomy. I didn’t dwell on the thought of losing my breast; if that was what it took to stay with my girls, that was what it took.

The surgery went well and there was not lot of pain afterwards.

The pathology results were good and there was no sign of the cancer having spread, but a six-month course of chemotherapy was recommended.

I am now towards the end of my treatment. It’s going okay – although illnesses (chicken pox, an infection and the flu) have delayed the treatment.

The girls keep me going; that’s the difference between now and when I was first diagnosed. The girls are my biggest distraction and greatest joy. I have been keeping a diary. At first I was reluctant, but I was able to begin once I told myself it was for me to look back on and say, “I got through it”. It has been a wonderful coping tool, somewhere to release my fears, worries and joys.

A support group helped. I have met some wonderful women, all with their own experiences. It helped to listen to their stories and I have been able to talk freely about my experience.

My husband, Phil, has been the best husband and friend. He never asks any questions, just gets in and helps, whether it’s looking after the girls, cleaning or being my nurse.

Being young and having a breast cancer diagnosis was hard to come to terms with and there are still issues I need to address. As the cancer was oestrogen receptor positive, I have to decide whether to have my ovaries removed.

My girls give me a new way of seeing things – children have such an honest and simple way of viewing things.

A week after surgery, I had a bath with the girls and it was the first time Alanah had seen the scar.

After a while she asked, “Why you only have one nipple mumma?” I explained that I had had to get a new one.

At times I’m scared, but I refuse to let it take over. As one of my doctors said, it’s only a “blip in the proceedings”.

– Tanya Monty, Tasmania

Many people working in oncology wards will tell you that it feels as if younger and younger women are being diagnosed with breast cancer.

A recent Victorian report found that at least two girls aged under 19 in that state have been diagnosed with breast cancer in recent times. The report also included the case of a young girl diagnosed in kindergarten at the age of four (she is now 12), which is extremely rare.

Up to 20 Victorians aged under 30 are diagnosed with breast cancer each year.

We, at the Network, are frustrated that we do not have access to recent national figures on this issue, as the latest national statistics are several years out of date.

It is time all states made their data available, so that we can get an indication of whether our suspicions are, in fact, correct.

– Lyn Swinburne, Editor

Breast cancer – Are women getting younger?
**Merchandise kits**

The Network has produced new merchandise kits, the proceeds of which will support our work. They have been developed to sell mainly through businesses, displayed at reception desks in the corporate sector, etc. Each box sells for $150, and includes a display box, 20 pens at $3, 20 fridge magnets at $2 and 10 key rings at $5. If you know of a business that would like to buy a box, or a function where they would sell well, kits can be ordered by telephoning us on 1800 500 258.

Thanks to Margaret Herrick from Victoria who has single-handedly sold more than $600 worth of items.

**New drugs on the PBS**

Women treated for metastatic (advanced) breast cancer are now able to obtain the combination treatment (Xeloda taxotere) via the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Clinical trials of this combination chemotherapy have demonstrated improved survival over treatment with Taxotere alone.

Post-menopausal women with advanced breast cancer now also have access to Letrozole (Femara), an oestrogen-blocking drug that belongs to a new class of breast cancer-controlling drugs known as aromatase inhibitors. Letrozole may be offered as an alternative to Tamoxifen for aromatase inhibitors. Letrozole may be cancer-controlling drugs known as a drug that belongs to a new class of breast cancer now also have access to treatment with Taxotere alone.

**What’s happening to my Mummy?**

What's Happening to my Mummy? is a concise and informative book by Noela Moran. Short and sweet, and written in uncomplicated language, it will hold the attention of children aged 3-10 years.

However, it tends to assume that all cancer treatments will involve hair loss. The story could be easily modified to suit the treatment regime of different women. The dream section will be easily identifiable to us all. There are no surprises. The black and white pictures are designed to be coloured in after the story is read. The final page is heart warming and something that we should all hope to achieve.

I don’t think the book would hold the interest of most children over the age of 10 years, but, for the younger ones, it is a great introduction to the changes that are about to take place in their life and that of their mum.

What’s happening to my Mummy? is available, free of charge, from the Queensland Cancer Fund. Phone the Fund’s helpline on (07) 3258 2200 or e-mail helpline@qldcancer.com.au

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**A man’s grief**

Just wanted to let you know about a book, A Man’s Grief – Death of a Spouse, written by Colin Thatcher and published by Brolga Publishing.

My support group recently bought this book for the husband of a member who passed away recently.

It tells Colin’s story of losing his wife and his two-year journey of emotional healing. It is a powerful book, especially as it is written by a man with the courage to share his emotions and experiences of losing a wife, and the process of coming to terms with the grief.

It is a valuable resource, but not a book I would recommend to women who have been newly diagnosed.

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**Quest for Life**

The Quest for Life Centre was established by Petrea King in 1990. The centre runs programs to help people cope with cancer illness, grief, loss or trauma. They are designed to complement and support people’s medical treatment.

Visit www.questforlife.com.au or phone (02) 4883 6599.

**Swimwear**

A specialised range of mastectomy swimwear was launched in Australia in October. The Aquabella Australia range is available from www.aquabella.com.au or phone (02) 9957 1437.

**A new signpost for NSW**

A Directory of Breast Cancer Treatment and Services in NSW has been a major project for the Breast Cancer Action Group (BCAG) NSW.

The directory is organised so that clinicians may be found by speciality – breast surgeons, radiation oncologists and medical oncologists, by public and private hospital, and by postcode. Each of the 170 clinical entries has a page of information detailing what you need to know, when looking for the treatment which may be best for you. As well as to GPs, free copies are going to specialists, libraries, women’s health centres, the Cancer Helpline, CancerConnect, treatment centres and BreastScreen.

An electronic version will be accessible at the end of this year on the NSW Breast Cancer Institute’s web site at www.bci.org.au under the title BreastCancerDirectory. It will be regularly updated, and linked to the BCAG NSW web site, along with the web sites of the Network, The Cancer Council NSW, The Cancer Council Australia’s Find a Specialist service and the National Breast Cancer Centre.
Letters to the Editor

I am interested in contacting readers of *The Beacon* who share my experience of developing another primary cancer shortly after breast cancer.

In 2000, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, which resulted in a partial mastectomy, chemotherapy (CMF) and radiotherapy.

This year I have been diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. Apparently, this is unusual and my oncologists feel the cancers are unrelated.

Talking with someone who has a shared experience is supportive and often informative.

I’d be happy for any of your readers in this or a similar situation to contact me for a chat

– Judy Margolis, Hawthorn, Vic.

Please phone the Network on 1800 500 258 (free call) for Judy’s contact details – Ed.

After reading the Spring issue of *The Beacon*, I would like to share my experience regarding prostheses.

In October 2001, my local health centre referred me to PADP, as, being on a pension, I was eligible for support.

After ringing the PADP, I spoke to a Raelene. She told me that people without limbs, etc, took preference, but that she would send me the relevant paper work.

I have still not received any forms and had to save for a new replacement prosthesis, after rupturing my first one.

Your continuing challenge is to rectify this matter, not just for people such as myself whose self-esteem is deflated enough, but for women across the board.

– Sandra Kanze, Umina, NSW

I just wanted to share my prosthesis story. I never wear it at the beach, where I swim laps in the pool, sunbake and bodysurf.

I live at the beach and I guess everyone knows me, but I feel much more comfortable with my one breast.

I wear a black costume (like a Speedo) and have a 14C bra size. I don’t like the costumes with a ‘shell’ bra.

I don’t get many ‘looks’ from people and must say I am proud to be a Warrior Woman and a six-year breast cancer survivor (I am 48 years old).

I want to let everyone know that it is okay to be one breasted at the beach.

If you feel comfortable about it, go for it!

I think people admire me for looking so healthy and positive.

– Di Nash, Newport Beach, NSW

After reading the latest issue of *The Beacon*, I wanted to tell you that the NSW Teachers Health Federation allows me $350 a year (90% refund) to buy either bras (ordinary and/or mastectomy types) or a prosthesis.

I spin this out a bit and usually buy the bras for a couple of years, then get a new prosthesis.

On a couple of occasions, I have written to the Health Fund about swim wear and the cost of prostheses (I usually have to pay a little more) but so far they do not seem at all interested.

I am able to get this refund as I have a full ancillary benefit attached to the hospital one. My monthly payment is $77.31 ($927 a year) – a lot to pay when I do not claim for much else!

I have found that, as the years go on, the ‘size’ of my prosthesis gets bigger, so I am left with one that is not used. What if people sent in their old/unused prostheses for recycling? After all, recycling is big in clothes!

Sorry, but sometimes my sense of humour gets the better of me.

– Margot Case, Sydney, NSW

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**THE BEACON**

*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.

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**YOU’RE NOT YET ON OUR MAILING LIST?**

Phone (03) 9805 2500 or 1800 500 258 (free call), or 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

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**Stop press!**

The Network is delighted to announce that *Mercedes Waratah Press* is to print *The Beacon* at no cost to us. K.W. Doggett is donating the paper it is printed on. Thank you.

We would also like to thank *Bakers Delight* for making it happen!

K.W. DOGGETT Fine Paper