The air was alive and the energy palpable during BCNA’s 2nd National Breast Cancer Conference for Women in Melbourne from August 27 to 29.

Six hundred breast cancer survivors came together to hear progress reports from leading doctors, researchers, health professionals and advocates, and to use their own voices to raise issues and identify recommendations in order to keep the momentum moving in breast cancer.

The women came from far and wide – from Darwin and Cairns in the north, from Byron Bay and Norfolk Island in the east, from Hobart and Mt Gambier in the south, and from the Pilbara and Broome in the west – all full of beans and ready to absorb the new knowledge, in order to take it back to their respective groups at home.

It was indeed timely to come together again; after all it had been almost six years since our first National Conference in Canberra, way back in October 1998. This second Conference was an important opportunity to revisit the strategies identified as being needed to make a difference for women back then, consider progress made since that time, identify emerging needs and make new recommendations this time round.

This special issue of The Beacon concerns itself primarily with the Conference. It is arriving to you later than usual, as we have held it over in order to report back to our readers about Conference happenings.

To those of you who joined us, I’m confident that, like me, you will always cherish our three days together. Standing together arm in arm in that final session to sing ‘I am Woman’ was an emotional and empowering experience that I will personally never forget.

The major challenge for us all as we move forward is to keep breast cancer a major issue on the national agenda. Among some circles, there is a real push to ‘tick breast cancer off’, to say it’s had enough attention and funding, to shift the focus and broaden the cancer agenda. This new and dangerous move is being reported in several States and on a national basis in the run-up to the election. Yes, it is important that other cancers receive funding and attention – but this must not come at the expense of breast cancer. Yes, we have made improvements, but there is also much more that needs to be done. Unless we maintain and increase our efforts, we stand to lose all the gains we have made. After all, we must never lose sight of the fact that 30 women are diagnosed with breast cancer EVERY day in Australia.

Lyn Swinburne, Chief Executive Officer
My Journey Kit was launched in Perth on July 5, 2004, against the beautiful backdrop of the Swan River. Those attending the launch were inspired by stories from Raelene Boyle, who spent her childhood holidays in Perth, and Luisa Giuffre, a young breast cancer survivor from Perth. You can read her story on page 5.

Following the morning launch, we invited members to a public forum – an update on BCNA’s activities and an informative presentation by Professor Christobel Saunders. We were delighted with the turnout – more than 120 women from across the metropolitan area.

This was a fabulous opportunity for us to meet some of our Western Australian members. It was also an opportunity to discuss, share information and support one another, while enjoying an afternoon tea supplied by our wonderful sponsors, Bakers Delight.

We have been delighted to receive feedback that the My Journey Kit has been well received in the West, and that the launch and forum helped raise BCNA's profile there.

My Journey Kit update

In the first four months, we've distributed 3519 My Journey Kits to women newly diagnosed with breast cancer!

The feedback has been just fantastic from those who have received it and makes us more determined to ensure all women receive a copy.

As one woman from South Australia wrote: “I thank God that I was diagnosed after the My Journey Kit was created. I continually refer to it as my journey progresses”.

We'd like to thank you all for helping us spread the word and letting others know about the Kit and the 1300 785 562 My Journey Kit request line.

If you haven't done so already, you might like to take some My Journey Kit posters and postcards to your GP, surgeon or oncologist, so that they can help us promote this to future women.

Phone us on 1800 500 258 and we'll gladly send them to you.

Thank you

BCNA would like to thank the following supporters who have raised funds on our behalf in recent months:

- KitchenAid, for its Mothers’ Day Promotion
- Sydney Business Women’s Luncheon held in July
- Harriet Moore, Prue Troedel and The Pink Ladies golfers
- The Society of Folk and Decorative Artists, Victoria
- The women members of the Peninsula Country Golf Club, Victoria
- The women of Kew Golf Club, Victoria
- Divers Tavern Broome, WA
- Pascoe Vale Girls’ College, Victoria
- The staff of Aviva and the Guiding Star Program
- Sue James from Canterbury, Victoria, who requested donations to BCNA rather than gifts on the occasion of a very ‘special’ birthday
- Steven Monks, Flying Duck Restaurant, Armidale, NSW
- The Elliott and Burley families for again organising Kidspace, a family fun night in Victoria.

Most importantly we thank all the wonderful readers of The Beacon, who have donated $47,588, so far, in response to our insert in the previous issue.

Thank you all for your amazing generosity, and the encouraging and uplifting feedback.
Sally’s our 10,000th reader

In July, The Beacon reached a milestone - the 10,000th reader was added to our national database.

We contacted Sally Hardy, who lives in Cavendish, Victoria, to explain that she was a special person to us and asked her if she would write a small article about her own story.

You look so good!

I’m the 10,000th subscriber to The Beacon. I feel somewhat humble to achieve that tag as I’ve only recently become involved with breast cancer. I was diagnosed in May and then had hook wire surgery followed by a mastectomy in June. I am new to the game and have one question I desperately need answered, ‘How am I meant to look?’.

I’ve lost track over the past eight weeks of the number of people who have told me, ‘You look so good!’ Perhaps they haven’t really looked at me before and now I look different. I certainly know I feel a lot different.

I’ve usually been able to politely respond, but deep down inside me, the naughty me wants to scream such responses as:

- Actually, you get a bonus free face-lift and body enhancement with each mastectomy.
- I’ve had a breast removed, not a face-lift and contrary to popular belief having only one breast doesn’t change your appearance.
- I haven’t done my hair properly for the past four weeks because I can’t reach up that high and that’s something I can’t trust my husband to do.
- If you care to look closely under this bulky layer of clothing, you’ll see I’ve come out without my ‘fluffy duck’ and I’m rather lopsided and flat chested underneath all this disguise.
- Underneath all this make-up, you’ll see I haven’t slept all night and I’ve spent most of the night crying, prowling the house trying to find answers to the past three months and making decisions about the future.

It has been reassuring to know that my mastectomy has had a positive effect on my appearance. Luckily, I still have my right breast, in case I need to enhance my looks again in the future.

Seriously, as you know, living with breast cancer is a life-changing experience and perhaps as we look at our lives in a different way, others, too, are seeing us in new and different ways.

I feel really honoured to be such an important part of the milestone The Beacon has reached. Keep up the good work, your support, information, contacts and reports certainly empower your readers, are an immense comfort and help greatly in keeping a positive focus on all aspects of breast cancer.

Thank you for the opportunity to be involved.

Keep smiling everyone.

(S.P.You all look so good!)

Sally Hardy, Cavendish Victoria

Mini-Fields of Women – October 2004

Mini-Fields will be held in many different communities around Australia this month.

One hundred bright pink silhouettes, available for sponsorship, will be displayed at each event.

The My Journey theme will be reflected in these events, with women speaking of their own ‘journey’ with breast cancer.

Locations and contacts for each field are listed on the insert in this issue of The Beacon.

Please support your local Mini-Field. For further details, check our website, contact your local Mini-Field convenor or phone Bec Montgomery on 1800 500 258.

BCNA gratefully acknowledges our partnership with Bakers Delight.
Letters to the Editor

Wig warning
I hope other people do not have to go through what I am just going through.
I bought my wig (mono) before my hair fell out from a shop in Sydney. Now that most of my hair has fallen out, the wig does not fit and slips off.
I got in touch with the store and it was suggested I stitch it – I use Bluetack – or buy a cap for $7. After paying $298 for the wig, and thinking I went to a professional, you would think they would be more helpful.
Of course, there is no exchange or refund, so I am stuck with a wig that I cannot wear.
I cannot believe they can get away with things like that!
Please print this letter in the Beacon, as I don't want anyone else to be put through this.

Name supplied
We were able to help this woman and have included advice about this in the 'Hair Loss Fact Sheet' on BCNA's website – Editor.

DES information
My name is Carol Devine. I am co-ordinator of DES Action Australia-N SW and wish to submit a brief notice for your newsletter.
Do you know about DES? DES (diethylstilboestrol or 'stilboestrol') was a synthetic oestrogen given in pregnancy to prevent miscarriage from 1938 to the 1980s in many countries, including Australia.
We now know that DES mothers (the women given DES in pregnancy) have a slightly higher risk for breast cancer, DES daughters for a rare vaginal cancer, and both DES daughters and sons for infertility and reproductive problems.
For information about DES, visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/des or phone me on (02) 9875 4820. Carol Devine, NSW

Looking for similar experiences
I am 50 years of age and was diagnosed with breast cancer 2½ years ago. My husband had left me about 15 months before, so I was on my own.
I noticed my breast change and the GP advised a mammogram. The ultrasound reported back a cyst. The GP was not happy with this diagnosis, so I was sent off to see a surgeon.
The surgeon did a needle biopsy and said he was almost positive it was a tumour. He told me to go home and consider that I would need a mastectomy and wait for his phone call the next day.
I walked out of his surgery so angry – I thought I had been through enough!
The news the next day was as he thought and he wanted to operate within a few days.
My sister was away on holidays, but flew home to Brisbane and came to the Sunshine Coast to be with me.
This was happening so fast! The news was I had three separate tumours measuring nearly 5cm.
The tests revealed 20 out of 20 for my lymph nodes. I have never achieved 20 out 20 for anything before, so why now? I had to joke to cope!
The oncologist called to see me and said I had six months of chemotherapy ahead for me and six weeks of radium. He said to think about it, but my decision was made, as I had a lot of living to do yet!
Here I am 2½ years later and I'm doing fine. I'm on Tamoxifen.
I am writing because I really would like someone who has had as many lymph nodes as myself involved, and who has not had a secondary, to contact me, or write. It is just that a lot of people go into surprise when I mention how bad I was.
I have met a wonderful man who is so supportive and proud of me. We don't live together, however, because it is always in the back of my mind 'W hat if I got sick again?', plus I enjoy devoting time to myself.

Robyn, Queensland
We have Robyn's phone number and address if you are able to help – Editor.

Of mothers and daughters and breasts
Powerful pieces pulled in the prizes for BCNA women at the Cancer Council Victoria’s Daffodil Day Arts Awards 2004.
Nicole Sumner from Melbourne (daughter of BCNA member, Noel Sumner) won first prize in the visual arts section for a photograph of her mother called Calm before the Storm.
Nicole wrote of her work, “I shaved her head in preparation of what lies ahead. We have been there before and I am left considering why. The courage, grace and dignity exhibited by my mother as she battles breast cancer for the second time are the reasons why she is my inspiration”.
Daughter of mine, a short story by Judy Shepherdson from Echuca, about the shared fears of mothers and daughters around diagnosis, was short listed and awarded a high commendation.
Marlene Parsons from Loch Sport received a high commendation for her powerful work, The Unveiling, about the emotional experience of viewing her mastectomy for the first time after the surgery and getting acquainted with her new body. BCNA congratulates them all.
My Story

Luisa Giuffre

Thirty! What a wonderful age! I was a settled, happily married, mother of two beautiful sons, 3½-year-old Carmelo and my new addition, 4½-month-old Daniel. It was the most fulfilling phase of my life. Little did I know how my life was going to take an unexpected turn!

In May 1999, I discovered a lump in my right breast while scratching an itch. I couldn’t believe the size of the lump, as I had never noticed it previously. There was no family history of breast cancer.

Three days later I visited my doctor and was sent for an ultrasound, in the hope of hearing the lump was only a cyst. After the ultrasound, I was told I needed a needle biopsy. The results confirmed my worst thoughts, a malignant tumour. I was shocked, disbelieving, not really knowing what to think.

Suddenly, my life drew to a halt and the doctor left the room to let me spend a few moments with my husband, Michael. We just held each other, stunned.

On the way home, I decided it best if we visited both sets of parents to break the news. It would be a difficult task and I was dreading it, especially my own parents. Finally, I broke down in tears.

As the days went on, I was so worried and emotional, I decided it was important for me to ring my closest friends and tell them of my diagnosis. It helped me deal and face up to how I was actually going to get through this and the next time I saw them it would hopefully make it easier for them and me. I didn’t want the word cancer to be taboo. I didn’t want to be scared and I didn’t want my family and friends to be scared for me either.

On my own, though, it was a different story. I was angry and bitter. I did not want my children and Michael to be denied the chance of a normal family life. I wondered whether I would see my sons grow up and I was so scared of the unknown ... the chemotherapy, the loss of hair and illness from the treatment. But I didn’t show these emotions to my family and friends. I was determined that no one would see me crumble and fall apart. I prepared myself as well as one can for my radical mastectomy, which was to take place within one week of my diagnosis.

When I was admitted to the hospital, it did not sadden me to lose a breast, as it was going to make me well again. My lymph nodes were going to be removed as well. This was done as a precautionary measure. A muscle from my back was used for the breast reconstruction.

My results were GREAT! No chemo was required and I was given a temporary prosthesis. The next day I went home. The following week I visited my breast surgeon for my check-up. Further results returned from pathology said they had found extensive cancer. I was to be on Tamoxifen for five years.

Although the worst was over physically, mentally I still had a long journey.

Twelve months after my operation I went for a mammogram on my left breast. There was a small spot, but nothing to worry about, so I opted to go and have my reconstruction on my right side.

Six months down the track, following my instincts, I opted for another mammogram. They found a small spot. Once again I was told not to be concerned.

However, I felt that, although there was nothing to worry about for the moment, down the track it could change.

I wanted another radical mastectomy and this time I would have my reconstruction done at the same time.

Once again everything went well. I felt like a complete woman. I started exercising, watching my diet and trying to live a healthier lifestyle. I was finally enjoying life to the full.

Breast cancer was the most frightening experience. The thought of not being here to raise my sons was my driving force to beat it! All the anger, bitterness and heartache has turned into inner peace, fulfilment and unconditional love. I am so relieved that I have a chance to grow old!

Luisa Giuffre, WA
Government House reception sees the presentation of BCNA Awards

The Victorian Governor, John Landy, and his wife, Lynne, held a special reception at Government House in Melbourne to welcome speakers, BCNA Board members, State Representatives, staff and key supporters on the occasion of the National Conference. This also afforded the opportunity to present 2004 BCNA Awards to three recipients who have made a significant contribution to BCNA this year. They are:

- **Le Rêve** – Le Rêve’s Sydney-based founder, Jenny Hobby, accepted an award for raising more than $50,000 for BCNA this year via sales of its perfume ‘Charity’.

- **KAZ** – This national company has established, without charge, a call centre and database for our My Journey Kit. KAZ sends the kits out to newly diagnosed women in Australia Post PostPaks.

- **Bill May** – In recognition of his generosity in providing Number 12 Elizabeth Street, the fabulous venue, without cost, for our Conference’s Tickled Pink Party.

We appreciate the generous gesture of the Governor and Mrs Landy, both great supporters of BCNA and of our cause, in marking the occasion with this very special reception.

2004 Conference Report

Your feedback

“W hen I left yesterday at 3pm, facing a six-hour drive home, I felt emotionally wrecked. Yesterday had been an emotional day and I was dreading the drive home. However, once I negotiated the traffic out of the city, I found that a few loud renditions of I am Woman in the car helped me on my way. As I continued to drive, the thoughts just raced through my brain. The ideas that were shared, the possibilities for the future and the ideas about what we could do locally kept me awake until 2am!”

Bronwyn, NSW

“I arrived on Friday morning on my own in tears and fears. I left on Sunday night surrounded by new friends in tears of joy.”

Marie, Victoria

“What a wonderful three days of important information, sharing of ideas, entertainment, friendship and fun.”

Karen, Tasmania

“With a mixture of sadness and exhilaration as the conference ended, I arrived at Melbourne airport to find my plane was delayed, so moving around to pass the time I noticed a pink boa feather on the moving stairs and a great big smile came over my face, then another in the toilets and one sticking to my boots and by this time I was giggling away to myself with memories of the 2nd BCNA National Conference – of humility and joy, of inspiration and new-found friends, of laughter and tears, and most of all with hope in my heart. Thank you.”

Frances, NSW
Our international speakers

We were very fortunate to be joined by two outstanding international speakers. **Susan Love** is a US breast physician, advocate and author of *Dr Susan Love’s Breast Book* and *Dr Susan Love’s Menopause and Hormone Book*. She is also an enthralling public speaker, who has the rare ability to describe complex pieces of information in a way that is easily understandable. Susan’s Plenary Session, The Hormones are Jumping!, was voted one of the most popular. It addressed an area of concern to women with breast cancer – the role of hormones in the development of breast cancer, the HRT debate and strategies that women might consider to reduce their risk of recurrence.

**Stella Kyriakides**, from Cyprus, the President of Europa Donna, the umbrella organisation representing women with breast cancer across 32 European countries, spoke about the role of breast cancer advocates across Europe. Europa Donna has been successfully advocating ‘big picture’ issues, such as the need for women to have access to screening and quality care and services. Much has been achieved by Europa Donna, despite huge challenges, such as language and cultural differences, and a myriad of differing health services in each country.

Opening honours

**Trish Worth** (above), Parliamentary Secretary to the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing; and **Bronwyn Pike** (below), the Victorian Health Minister, welcomed delegates and officially launched the conference.

Making a Difference workshops

Two lots of eight concurrent workshop sessions addressed the major issues considered in the 1998 Conference and included some newly emerging issues.

**Topics discussed**
- Complementary therapies
- Improving early detection
- Metastatic breast cancer – treating the body
- Prostheses
- Insurance
- Young women
- Breast care nurses
- Multi-disciplinary care
- Doctor/patient relationship – improving communication
- Metastatic breast cancer – practical, emotional and spiritual support
- Reconstructive surgery
- Reconstruction.

Each interactive workshop involved a number of panelists, who reported back on progress, and then women had the opportunity to raise their issues and concerns.

The major task for each of the workshop participants was to identify and agree to three key recommendations that would make a significant improvement for women with breast cancer. These will be included in a comprehensive Still Making a Difference Report, which is now being compiled and will be distributed widely later this year.

Details for obtaining a copy of the report will be in the Summer issue of *The Beacon*.

Testing Times

An intriguing hypothetical session was facilitated by Sydney’s **Julie McCrossin**, from Radio National and Good News Week fame.

It explored the implications of genetic testing for the individual, the family and the community.

The session probably raised more questions than it answered, but this highlighted the complexities and sensitivities around this issue.
The Lord of the Rings analogy in Dr Fran Boyle's presentation was a hit with delegates and speakers, who wanted to pick up the sword and carry on the fight. Left: BCNA Chair, Patricia Edgar, receives the 'sword' from Fran Boyle. Right: The Conference speakers included Dr Cherrell Hirst, Dr Fran Boyle, Dr Melissa Bochner, Dr Helen Zorbas and Dr Liz Kenny, photographed here with BCNA CEO, Lyn Swinburne.

Fortunately, it wasn’t all hard work. There was time for a spot of belly dancing (left) and POW (Performing Older Women’s Circus) (right) showed us that age is no barrier.

Left: Some of the Northern Territory women who were able to attend the conference assisted by BCNA scholarships. Right: Professor Don Iverson and David Oliver discuss complementary therapies.

Faces from the Conference

Your feedback

“An opportunity to meet old and new friends was really appreciated. Wasn’t there a happy buzz the whole time!”

Vivienne, NSW

“I, as a clinician, felt very privileged to have been able to be a part of it. The first morning I will not forget because of the impact that 600 women in one place all of whom have/had breast cancer had on me. The impact was huge to me and it has made me only the more determined to go out there and hopefully make more of a difference to the women that I see in my region and those whom I don’t. I hope I can somehow get the message out there that there is support here in this community and the external support that you all can give too.”

Allison, WA

“It was quite unlike any conference I have been to before (especially the amazing conference dinner) and I came home filled with energy and a deep sense of the commitment to stopping breast cancer that is carried by so many women and men around the world.”

Sue, New Zealand

The comments I heard (and am still hearing) were very positive such as: “Best conference ever”; “Fantastic speakers”; “So well organised”; “Informal, but full of gutsy stuff”; “Not enough time for questions”; “We had a party”; “I laughed and cried until it hurt”; “So many courageous women” and “When’s the next one?”

Anna, ACT
The Tickled Pink Party

“Our party at No. 12 in Kensington was amazing, more like a dream.
“The visual opulence and feminine inspiration left me in awe. I loved the bountiful floral decor and the vivid expression of PINK – pink champagne, pink grapefruit juice, pink chocolates, fairy floss and more pink indulgence.
“But it was the great music and dancing that really made me feel like a dancing queen and I will always cherish those special memories.
“As a woman who has taken a journey through breast cancer, the party celebration gave me the opportunity to enjoy the vibrance and feel the wonderful connectedness with other women who have travelled a similar path. In unison, we were liberated, we kicked up our heels and on a high note sang and celebrated life.”

Marcelle, Victoria

Below: The ‘Breastettes’ stole the show.
Women’s experiences remain our most powerful advocacy tool

Importantly, women who'd experienced breast cancer firsthand were highlighted in the opening and closing sessions of the Conference.

Twelve women took to the stage on Day 1 to remind delegates of the range of women affected, and of the experiences and challenges they encounter.

Each woman presented a brief cameo highlighting her individual perspective:

- Major city centre - Janelle Gamble, Brisbane, Qld.
- Non-English speaking background women - Hadas Hailselassie, Canberra.
- Lesbians - Jo Parry, Carindale, Qld.
- Younger women - Molly Stacey, Sydney, N SW.
- Older women - Judith Maher, Braddon, ACT.
- Recently diagnosed - Wave Hayden, Alice Springs, N T.
- Large regional centre - Robin Gregory, Wollongong, N SW.
- Remote area - Sheila Grimshaw, Norfolk Island.
- Women with advanced disease - Jill Lee, Largs Bay, SA.
- Women’s experiences remain our most powerful advocacy tool

Women have their say.

In the final session, we heard from Melbourne woman, Frances Reynolds, who was diagnosed 50 years ago, in 1954! Frances, with a six-month old baby at the time, faced an uncertain future. She shared her experiences with us all, including her news of a second diagnosis seven years ago.

Afterwards, we heard many women, especially young women, comment how Frances’s feisty story of long-term survival has inspired them.

Frances also showed that you're never too old to be an effective and powerful advocate!

Thank you to the conference supporters

BCNA gratefully acknowledges the support of the following people and organisations in making our National Conference such a success:

- Our Conference’s corporate supporters: AstraZeneca, Novartis, Pfizer and Roche.
- BCNA staff members for their dedication, cheerfulness and hours of hard work, especially Felicia Busuttil, our Conference Project Manager, and Terri Smith, our National Programs Manager.
- The Tickled Pink Party’s Organising Committee members.
- The performers, entertainers and massage therapists who kept us entranced during breaks and in Plenary Sessions, especially Jayne Lilford and Amanda and Ruth Muir.
- The women who came from far and wide, for their energy, commitment and enthusiasm, and for their willingness to listen, learn, speak up, laugh and cry.
The Conference anthem

'I am Woman', the wonderfully empowering and life-affirming song, written and made famous many years ago by Australian Helen Reddy, became our Conference anthem.

We have included a copy of the words here in case you should ever need reminding of the power of women.

As was proven in our final Conference session together, it’s best sung standing up and at the tops of one’s lungs!

I am woman
I am woman, hear me roar
In numbers too big to ignore
And I know too much to go back an’ pretend
’cause I’ve heard it all before
And I’ve been down there on the floor
No one’s ever gonna keep me down again

CHORUS
Oh yes I am wise
But it’s wisdom born of pain

I am strong (strong)
I am invincible (invincible)
I am woman
You can bend but never break me
’cause it only serves to make me
More determined to achieve my final goal
And I come back even stronger
N o t a novice any longer
’cause you’ve deepened the conviction in my soul

CHORUS
I am woman watch me grow
See me standing toe to toe
As I spread my lovin’ arms across the land
But I’m still an embryo
W ith a long long way to go
Until I make my brother understand

CHORUS
I am woman!

Conference CDs and videos

For those readers unable to make the Conference, these sessions are available on CD:

- The Hormones are Jumping! The role of hormones with breast cancer (Dr Susan Love).
- The Emotional Journey (six cameos from a range of perspectives – husband, son, daughter, mother, woman with early breast cancer, woman with metastatic breast cancer).
- Metastatic breast cancer workshop 1 - Treating the body.
- Metastatic breast cancer workshop 2 - Practical, emotional and spiritual support.

Each CD is approximately 70 minutes long and costs $15 (includes postage).

- The Clinical Update (Dr Melissa Bochner - surgery, Dr Liz Kenny - radiation oncology, Dr Fran Boyle - medical oncology, Dr Helen Zorbas - supportive care)

This session is on two CDs and the cost is $25 (includes postage).

For those who want to relive the Tickled Pink Party, there is a six-minute video available for $15 (includes postage).

To order any of the CDs and/or the video, phone BCNA on 1800 500 258 or send a list of your selections and a cheque made out to ‘Breast Cancer Network Australia’, to 293 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124. We will get these to you as soon as possible.

Conference in summary

- 596 delegates (all States and Territories represented)
- 109 invited speakers and panelists
- 32 papers presented by breast cancer survivors
- 16 workshops
- 8 New Zealand women delegates
- 33 scholarships awarded
- 80 volunteers
- Most popular plenary sessions – Dr Fran Boyle’s The Lord of the Rings multi-disciplinary care model and Dr Susan Love’s The Hormones are Jumping!
- Most popular workshops - Metastatic Breast Cancer, Complementary Therapies.

“For sum up, it was the best conference I have ever attended; such positive vibes amid such a serious subject, brilliant guest speakers, great facilities/food and an amazing pink party on Friday night.”

Gabrielle, Victoria
BCNA’s Working Groups

How to get involved
1. Let us know what issues and concerns you and your family face as you deal with breast cancer.
2. Write your story, which might be included in The Beacon or on the relevant section of our website.
3. Become an associate member of one of the Working Groups. We hope that as an associate member you will tell us what you think the issues are, the things you’ve found helpful, or events or programs happening in your part of the world that might be of interest to others.
4. Become a full member of the Working Group. From time to time, we have need additional representatives.

Being an associate member also means that BCNA will periodically contact you for comment on issues that arise, when we need to get a broader understanding of the views around Australia. Some associate members may want to get more involved in helping out at a State level with their Working Group Representatives.

Please phone Mary Harvey on 1800 500 258 for further details.

A swinging time on the Gold Coast!

The overall winner was Libby Jackson from the Peninsula Golf Club, Victoria.

Beautiful sunshine and great camaraderie made it a most enjoyable time for everyone.

BCNA and the Pink Ladies would like to thank the many sponsors that helped to make the trip happen, including Australia Post, Minter Ellison Lawyers and the Malvern Nursing Agency. Club Med, The Chedi and The Legian in Bali and The Chedi in Phuket contributed sensational prizes for the event.

For details of next year’s tournament, phone Harriet Moore on (03) 9822 5021.

Otis units

The Otis Foundation Retreat Units, just outside Bendigo, Victoria, have now been up and running for 18 months.

During this time, they have been enjoyed by more than 100 women and partners, mothers, children and friends.

The units are a haven from a world of medical treatment and provide time for women with breast cancer to regain perspective.

There are no on-site staff, but the units will allow you to “breathe slower and stop to think and relax and escape all the normal things expected of me”.

They are available for a week or weekend and are free of charge.

Contact: Units Manager, Liz, (03) 5439 3220 or www.otisfoundation.org.au

Seeking shelter

BCNA welcomes the:
• Breast Intentions (Mornington Peninsula, Victoria); and
• Byron Bay Breast Cancer Support Group (NSW), under its national umbrella.

This brings our total to 112 member groups and 6 associate member groups.

Otis units

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A swinging time on the Gold Coast!

The Pink Ladies Golf Classic 2004, organised by Harriet Moore, has again been a fantastic success.

Sixty women spent a week at Sanctuary Cove playing golf on several of the Gold Coast’s top golf courses, including Lakeland and Hope Island.

The overall winner was Libby Jackson from the Peninsula Golf Club, Victoria.

Beautiful sunshine and great camaraderie made it a most enjoyable time for everyone.

BCNA and the Pink Ladies would like to thank the many sponsors that helped to make the trip happen, including Australia Post, Minter Ellison Lawyers and the Malvern Nursing Agency. Club Med, The Chedi and The Legian in Bali and The Chedi in Phuket contributed sensational prizes for the event.

For details of next year’s tournament, phone Harriet Moore on (03) 9822 5021.
Dragons Abreast

Several members of Dragons Abreast Queensland and NT took part on the mighty Ord River Marathon – a 55km paddle in the Kimberley, ending at Kununurra township.

We were followed by an ABC film crew and featured in an episode of Australian Story, called In the Pink, that aired on June 14.

The interest generated across the country has been amazing, with a constant stream of inquiries and many new paddlers joining us around Australia. We are also delighted to hear that this program has aired in Canada, the US and South-East Asia – what a wonderful promotion for the breast cancer cause!

Dragons Abreast were ‘cover girls’ on the Aussie Backpacker Guide for July-August 2004. This guide is seen by thousands of tourists in Australia and is a wonderful promotion for our pink ladies teams. The cover caption reads “Join in the fun in the Northern Territory” and itemises the Alice Springs Rodeo and the Henley on Todd Regatta. Closer inspection reveals that our team has swapped its paddles for running shoes, but the logos of both Dragons Abreast Australia and BCNA are prominently featured.

This September, we again participated in the ASSA ABLOY Henley on Todd – and were joined by paddlers from Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Our AGM was recently held in Melbourne and we thank BCNA for its support and assistance with a meeting room. Thanks,

too, to Pru Menzies for organising a wonderful dinner at the Dragon Boat Restaurant, where 63 Dragons Abreast members enjoyed a night of catching up and team-building activities, including origami lessons led by Elspeth and instruction in the way ‘ladies’ should peel bananas, as demonstrated by a very practised Jan. We are fortunate to have such diverse expertise among our members.

Dragons Abreast groups have recently formed in Geelong, Port Macquarie and Townsville. It was pleasing to meet so many fellow paddlers at the National Conference and encouraging to hear so many speakers mention dragon boating and exercise. I am sure all our members have returned home totally inspired.

Michelle Hanton, National Co-ordinator, nationalcoordinator@dragonsabreast.com.au or www.dragonsabreast.com.au

All decked out and on the way to the Ord Paddle. Notice the BCNA pink lady on the side of the plane! She goes everywhere that woman!

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, 293 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124.

Name: ............................................................................................................................................................................................

Address:..................................................................................................................................................................................................................

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State: .....................................  Postcode:............................

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Have you had a diagnosis of breast cancer? □Yes □No

www.bcna.org.au
ACT

We are delighted to report that we have been joined by a small, enthusiastic, extremely active group of women to form a BCNACTion group.

Geraldine Robertson has organised an ‘Adopt a Library’ scheme to ensure that all libraries in the ACT are aware of the BCNA Essential Book List and checking that all books are accessible. Audrey Guy is available to draft lobbying letters and review papers from relevant organisations.

Lorraine Eckerman is the Bosom Buddies representative and Jan Skorich represents Dragons Abreast. This, together with other members, ensures a better flow of information between the groups.

Bernadette Brady is masterminding this year’s Mini-Field of Women.

Anna and Elspeth have met with BreastScreen ACT to raise a number of concerns, especially that women aged between 40 and 50 have been turned away from a screening mammogram. We will be following this up with letters and visits to politicians.

Various BCNA members have spoken to groups in the area, including the Cancer Council’s and Goulburn’s Breast Cancer Support Groups, Encore and Probus.

AnnaWells Boh, (02) 6247 8470 or wwfamily@ homemail.com.au, and Elspeth Humphries, (02) 6239 6344 or humphries44@ ozemail.com.au

Northern Territory

Nerys Evans the partner of NT Administrator, Ted Egan, has become the Patron of NT Breast Cancer Voice (NTBCV).

Having our new office has proved to be the beginning of a new era for us.

A successful grant application has allowed us to buy furniture and a printer. Minolta Darwin donated our copier and fax and Cut Price Stationery a computer.

We were delighted to receive a $2000 scholarship from BCNA to help NT women attend the National Conference. Ten Territory women attended, with equal representation from both the northern and southern regions of NT.

NTBCV are hosting public forums to report back on the conference to our local communities.

The breast care nurse project continues to occupy a lot of our time, as both Alice Springs and Darwin consumers feel strongly that the hours for this position need to be extended. Together we are lobbying government for additional funding.

Although this has been an ongoing project we have come back from the conference more determined than ever to make a difference for Territorians!

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

Tasmania

Twenty Tasmanian women attended the National Conference. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet women from our State brave enough to venture to the conference without having previously known a great deal about BCNA. We sincerely hope they will continue their involvement with BCNA and become supporters of our local group.

We will shortly be distributing a bookmark highlighting the work of BCNA, how women can be involved and also source information locally. This will be distributed to all GPs surgeries, pharmacies and health centres in Tasmania.

In May, sadly we farewelled Jenny Littler of Forth. She was well known for her fabulous garden parties, which raised significant funds for both BCNA and the Cancer Council Tasmania over the years. We miss her dearly.

In Tasmania, it is crucial that we meet as a State group, travelling to all GP surgeries, pharmacies and health centres in the northern and southern regions of NT.

NTBCV are holding public forums to report back on the conference to our local communities.

The breast care nurse project continues to occupy a lot of our time, as both Alice Springs and Darwin consumers feel strongly that the hours for this position need to be extended. Together we are lobbying government for additional funding.

Although this has been an ongoing project we have come back from the conference more determined than ever to make a difference for Territorians!

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

NSW

BCNA members continue their busy round of events in NSW. The Illawarra BC Support Group has completed its biannual rural trip, with a bus full of members and a trailer full of resources. Also active are the women from the Armidale area, capably led by Vivienne Greig.

The Milton/UILadulla group met in July to hear Dot Beaupre talk about her experiences with the Fenceliners.

Members of the Dragons Abreast Sydney are working hard to help Dragonboats NSW after a fire that destroyed all 12 boats.

Maryanne Maher and Pam Bell have returned, inspired and invigorated, from Madrid, where they participated in an international advocacy training course. The five-day course was intensive but excellent and they were gratified to realise the good standing of Australia, and BCNA in particular, within the international arena.

In June, BCAG NSW helped BCAG VIC celebrate its 10th anniversary. It also successfully raised funds to ensure a national roll-out of the Directory of Breast Cancer Specialists to all Australian women.

Pam Bell (02) 9955 9313 or bellpc@ bigpond.net.au, and Megan James, (02) 9440 0373 or mjames@ globalswitch.com
These reports are extracts of comprehensive quarterly reports written by our State Representatives. The complete reports can be found on our website – www.bcna.org.au. Our State Representatives are always happy to hear from readers or to promote activities within the state. Just give them a call!

Western Australia

We were delighted to launch the My Journey Kit in Perth during July and to be active in presenting the BCNA breast cancer forum which followed the launch. WA was well represented at the National Conference, with women from as far north as Broome and down south to Collie.

This year Mini-Fields of Women will be displayed at major hospitals in Perth (SCGH, RPH, SJOG), as well as in other WA locations further afield. Please refer to the insert and support these events where you can.

Recently, two of our Action on Breast Cancer (AoBC) members where invited to speak to Year 12 students about their experiences, while raising awareness about the appropriate care and information on breast cancer. Our members will also be presenting at the Women’s Breast Cancer Awareness Day in October at Murdoch University.

If you would like to help raise funds so that AoBC can continue to sponsor nurses to attend the AoBC National Conference, you may want to help raise funds by holding a ‘Casual Dress Day’ at your workplace. If you would like to help raise funds so that AoBC can continue to sponsor nurses to attend the AoBC National Conference, you may want to help raise funds by holding a ‘Casual Dress Day’ at your workplace.

Queensland

BCNA’s Queensland committee is organising to bring the Warrior Women mixed media exhibition to Brisbane in October. This 93-piece exhibition explores the affect of breast cancer on the lives of women of all ages, cultures and backgrounds.

Lyn Moore saw this powerful and evocative exhibition in Canberra last year and determined to bring it to Brisbane. With the help of our excellent committee it is happening! We encourage everyone to spread the word and come along. Log onto Upcoming Events on the BCNA website (www.bcna.org.au) for more details closer to the event.

It will be exciting!

We ran an information stand and enrolled many new readers for The Beacon at the Petrae King Workshop run by the Choices program at Wesley Hospital.

It was wonderful to see so many Queenslanders at the National Conference in Melbourne, including women from Cairns, Bundaberg and Rockhampton, as well as those from the more southern parts of the State.

A number of Mini-Fields will be held around the State this year. Many will be held on the Saturday or Sunday, to enable as many people as possible to attend.

Please show your support.

Veronica Macaulay-Cross, (07) 3269 8083 or vonphil@ bigpond.net.au, and Lyn Moore, (07) 3822 5468 or lyn.moore@bigpond.com

Victoria

BCNA wishes to announce that the inaugural – and final – performance of The Breastettes was held on Friday, August 27, at the ‘Tickled Pink’ celebration as part of our National Conference. Those 12 Victorian survivors looked amazing in their tasteful and creative pink tulle costumes (thanks to Spotlight) and the joy and spirit in their faces lit the entire room.

Many thanks to those Melbourne women and families who billeted interstate and country women attending the National Conference. Special thanks to Heather Beanland and Alison Greenland for co-ordinating this service.

Monday, October 25, is Australia’s Breast Cancer Day. It is around this day each year that we hold our Mini-Field of Women events to support those living with breast cancer and remember those who have died from it.

This year will see many pink silhouettes across Victoria. We hope to see lots of Melburnians at the Federation Square Mini-Field on Sunday, October 24.

Our Geelong women are really fired up this year and the busy and committed Organising Committee is planning a high-profile Mini-Field on the same day.

We urge our members, families and friends to support these events. Do come along! Wear a touch of pink and enjoy a sunny Sunday (fingers crossed).

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

South Australia

A fantastic time was had by the 20 women who travelled from South Australia to Melbourne for the recent National Conference.

“Being able to put faces to names was just one of the benefits of attending,” said Maxine Barker, who is actively involved in breast cancer activities, both in her local community, Port Lincoln, and for BCNA.

Women across the State are busy gearing up for their local Mini-Field events in October.

There will be a range of activities in communities from Ceduna to Mount Gambier.

In Adelaide, the Mini-Field of Women will be held on Sunday, October 24, from 11.30am. The venue will again be Henley Beach Square, Henley Beach. Please join us with your family and friends.

For more information, or to volunteer for a task on the day, contact Deb Martin.

South Australia’s big screen ‘live’ link-up with the national breast cancer public forum from Sydney on November 14 will be at the O’akbank Racing Club, in the Adelaide Hills from 3pm.

Everyone is invited to attend and there is no cost. For more information, contact Jan Davies.

Deb Martin, (08) 8241 1804 (home), and Jan Davies, (08) 8388 4825 (home) or jandavies@adam.com.au

Maria Waters, (08) 9344 7362 or alma.waters@bigpond.com, and Carol Bishop, (08) 9205 1018 or carolbishop@inet.net.au.
Upcoming Events

October 22: ACT Pink Ribbon Breakfast, Hotel Kurrajong, hosted by Cancer Council ACT, 7-8.30am, $35pp. Guest Speaker, Professor Don Iverson.
   Contact: Nicole Campbell or Danielle Finney, (02) 6262 2222.

October 24: Women's International Motor Cycle Association's Pink Ribbon Ride from Old Parliament House, Canberra, 10am.
   Contact: Caroline Bosher, 0418 399 213.

October 24: Annual Service at St George's Cathedral, Perth, for people affected by breast cancer, followed by a light lunch, midday. Everyone is welcome.
   Contact: Theresa, (08) 9325 5766 or theresa@perthcathedral.org (to help with catering)

October 24: Canberra Southern Cross Yacht Club's Dragons Abreast Regatta and Challenge for the Pink Lady Shield, 8.30am-1pm. Contact: Jan Skorich, (02) 6241 8061 (ah).

October 25: Morning Tea Convention Centre, Canberra, 10.30am.
   Contact: Anna Wellings Booth, (02) 6247 8470.

October 25: Australia's Breast Cancer Day
   Mini-Fields of Women 2004 nation-wide.
   Contact: Bec Montgomery, 1800 500 258, or check locations on BCNA's website, www.bcna.org.au

October 25: Launch of ABC Day and Bosom Buddies floral display opposite Woden Business Interchange, Canberra, 11.30am.

   Contact: (02) 6283 7200.

October 26: Darwin breakfast hosted by the Lord Mayor of Palmerston, Annette Bourke.
   Contact: (08) 8981 9625.


November 6: South Australian launch of 'Vicki's Pride' Dragon Boat, Murray Bridge.
   Contact: Jan Davies, (08) 8388 4825 or jandavies@adam.com.au

November 10: Feel Good gentle exercise program for women with breast cancer 10.30-11.30am and 'Lymphoedema: What it is, how it's treated and what's available', 12.00-1.30pm. BreaCan, 123 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.
   Contact: (03) 9664 9333 or breacan@whv.org.au

   Contact: www.bci.org.au

November 12: Pink Ladies Open Garden Tour of Mornington Peninsula Gardens and lunch. All proceeds to BCNA.
   Contact: Harriet Moore (03) 9622 5021.

November 14: Breast Cancer Public Forum 2004. Live satellite broadcast across Australia and NZ on Sky Channel, organised by the NSW Breast Cancer Institute. International clinicians from the Leura V Conference will share their expertise and answer questions on the diagnosis, treatment and management of breast cancer. Panel will include BCNA's Lyn Swinburne.
   Contact: (02) 9845 8468 or e-mail dsextra@bci.org.au

November 16: Victorian Breast Cancer Research Consortium's Australian Breast Cancer Public Lecture - Update on Her2 Therapy, with speaker Dennis Slamon. RMIT Capital Theatre, Swanston St, Melbourne, 6.30pm.
   Contact: Clare Riglar, (03) 9635 5277 or Clare.Riglar@cancervic.org.au

November 23: Consumer Forum as part of the COSA (Clinical Oncological Society of Australia) Annual Scientific Meeting, Canberra.
   Contact: www.cosa.org.au or e-mail cosa@pharmaevents.com.au

November 24: How to Decide; Tough Decision! - Dr Narine Efe will talk about clinical decision making when considering treatment options, BreaCan, 123 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, 12-1.30pm.
   Contact: (03) 9664 9333 or breacan@whv.org.au

There are other locally based events happening around Australia, but there too many to list here. Readers can learn about these by logging onto Upcoming Events on our website, www.bcna.org.au.