We did it!

The Field of Women – Live in 2005 was an overwhelming success.

For those who were there on the night, it was an extraordinary mixture of celebration and sadness. We raised the awareness of breast cancer across our country, reaching people who hadn’t previously known about its effect. We raised money for our ongoing work.

Thank you to those who came, wore pink, stood up and were counted, and to those who sent messages of support. We have received hundreds of letters, e-mails and photos from participants.

The best way we can communicate about the Field to those who weren’t there is to share some of the stories and photos from the night.

Lyn Swinburne
Chief Executive Officer

11,500 women and 100 men brought breast cancer statistics to life in a powerful and stunning visual display at the Field of Women – Live in 2005, Melbourne Cricket Ground, 6 May 2005.
Preparing for a live Field of Women

Volunteers handing out ponchos outside the MCG.

Be there by 4.30pm, we asked ... and they were!

Meeting up outside the MCG - friends, colleagues and family - pink and proud.

Streaming through the MCG foyer.
Words from the Field

Lyn Swinburne, a 12-year survivor of breast cancer and BCNA CEO, welcomed participants to the Field:

More than 12 months ago, Raelene Boyle and I first took our pink lady concept to the AFL. Since then, it has been an extraordinary journey to bring the Field of Women to life! Wherever we’ve gone, people’s hearts have opened to us and we have felt overwhelmed by their generosity and support.

There’s a bloody good reason for this, as we have powerfully demonstrated tonight – breast cancer touches the lives of so many.

Our BCNA team of volunteers, staff, Board members and our many supporters have worked really hard to make our dream come true.

Our partner, Bakers Delight, and sponsors, Australia Post and KAZ, have a strong and ongoing commitment to BCNA.

I am so touched that you have all rallied to our call to stand beside us tonight. You have brought our pink silhouettes to life. You highlight the fact that behind the statistics are real people – not just figures on paper.

No one seeing this sight, either in person or through the images taken here, will remain unmoved.

Many will be shocked by the numbers – and they should be!

Standing here this evening are people who have travelled long distances to be with us – from the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia. Some women left their homes in regional Victoria this morning and have picked up others by bus all along the way.

Some of you are breast cancer survivors; some husbands, partners and family members; some have come in support of a friend or workmate; some are health professionals who care for women with breast cancer; some have come to pay tribute to women lost from your lives; some are here to celebrate the beauty of life itself; others are here because you want to support us and our cause. Whatever your personal motivation, we thank you.

(Lyn asked breast cancer survivors to raise both arms. She then asked supporters to raise their arms too.)

For me, tonight is a bittersweet experience. I celebrate, with great joy, my life and the lives of those who are surviving this wretched disease, but I also remember those women and men we have lost. For me, they are the Kärens, Jills, Marcias, Janes, Moniques, Jennys, Pats, Judys, Carlenes – special women we have loved and who we so wish were standing with us tonight. These are our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our workmates and our friends.

On the other hand, Frances Reynolds, a woman who was first diagnosed with breast cancer 50 years ago, will be tossing the coin before the match tonight. She is brimming with life and vitality and is a symbol of great hope to women just beginning their journeys with breast cancer.

Just look up at that scoreboard, at the 11,500 pink ponchos and 100 blue ponchos, that represent our annual statistics. Too many – far too many! BCNA is passionate about working to make sure the women and men affected, along with their families, get the best treatment, care and support possible, no matter who they are and no matter where they live. We will not stop!

Turn now to the scoreboard for a moving tribute, followed by some moments of silence. For those of you watching from the stands, you might like to stand and join our tribute.

(As images of breast cancer survivors were shown, the Field was silent. The helicopter took photos. Everyone then dispersed, each carrying his or her own memory of the experience.)

The Field of Women – Live in 2005 was a deeply moving experience for all involved.
With this support, the Field was live in 2005

Our major sponsors supported us throughout the planning and running of the Field, as well as being there on the day. Bakers Delight held pink promotions across Australia and had registration forms in its Victorian bakeries; and provided thousands of mini pink buns to those arriving at the Field. Australia Post established and managed the free reply paid address service for registrations and provided BCNA with 10,000 postage paid envelopes. It also provided six buses to transport women from regional Victoria; supplied three vans and drivers to deliver, store and aid distribution of the 11,500 ponchos to the women at Gate 1; and made registration forms available at its Victorian outlets; and gave out pink scarves to people in corporate areas and 10,000 pink mini-footballs to people in the crowd.

KAZ Business Services donated its services, processing 6000 registrations, and mailing confirmation letters and vouchers.

The Melbourne Football Club trained in pink on the MCG in the week before the Field and willing team members were available for media opportunities. Its board room was offered for planning meetings, the Chairman’s dinner was branded pink and its cheer squad club slaved for hours over the pink banner.

The support we received was phenomenal and cannot all be listed here, but our thanks to everyone who helped.

We’ve been given some of the amazing footage captured on the night by Channel 9, SBS and Stadia Media’s big screen and hope to collate it. We’ll let readers know, via The Beacon and our website, when it is available.

Professional photographers David Loram and Jeremy Hefferman provided their services free of charge on the night and took many of the photos reproduced here and on our website.

Bakers Delight’s mascot, Breadhead, at the Field.

Our thanks and gratitude especially go to the Field’s project manager, Ruth Sowden, and project officer, Rita Marigliani.

Putting the money raised to good use

Not only did the Field raise the profile of breast cancer and, therefore, increase the support for women with breast cancer in ways immeasureable, it also raised money directly from the registration fees. Sponsorship helped enormously to defray costs, so we are pleased to announce that the Field raised $230,000. These funds will be used to support our core projects, specifically:

• publishing and distributing The Beacon
• providing free telephone contact through our toll-free 1800 number
• producing information brochures
• developing and updating our website
• operating our Rural and Remote, Advanced Breast Cancer and Young Women Working Parties
• conducting our Seat at the Table program, which ensures that women affected by breast cancer have effective input into the way breast cancer services are provided across Australia.

Thanks to everyone for their support.
“Big hearts filled with an abundance of support and passion”

I really loved volunteering at the Field of Women event. I have been on a high ever since the wonderful experience.

It was an absolute pleasure to hand over pink ponchos to the eager, excited and passionate people who united to make this amazing experience happen.

From feather boas and pink wigs, to tiaras and big smiles, these women all arrived with something in common ... a high level of positive energy and big hearts filled with an abundance of support and passion.

As I walked onto the huge open field, I felt a sense of lightness and vulnerability, as it was such an open space. But as it quickly filled with a sea of pink, the vibe shifted to a strong sense of unity and strength, as we all gathered so closely together.

The presentation on the big screen was beautiful and moving, and reflected the way that breast cancer touches such a variety of women. They all go through their own individual journey, however, I am sure they could all relate to the many touching images displayed in various ways.

My mother, Helen, had breast cancer and passed away eight years ago, when I was 17. She was an incredible woman and the eldest of nine children. Many of her sisters, family and friends all gathered together on the field that special night.

I cannot express the tingles I felt as I held onto my two sisters’ hands, ever so tightly. During the minute of silence, I looked up in the sky and truly felt my mother was watching the whole event with great pride and joy.

Growing up, I never recalled there being a great deal of support or awareness about breast cancer for my mother, which is ironic and a shame considering the number of people who are affected by it every year. That is why I congratulate people who have brought this issue to the forefront and offered women support and a chance to feel that they are not alone.

Lyn Swinburne has shared her story with others and her efforts have touched and helped more women than she perhaps will ever know. Through sharing her story, she has given others hope and perhaps taught people new and positive ways to approach the experience.

Thank you again for the wonderful opportunity to reflect and support this important cause. Your wonderful efforts have touched the hearts of many in a beautiful and positive way.

Andrea

“Do you want to highlight the effect of breast cancer on the community? Are you keen to promote the availability of the My Journey Kit? Do you want to promote your local breast cancer group? Do you want to raise BCNA’s profile and increase our membership? If so, a Mini-Field of Women is the event for you!

This year’s Mini-Fields will be held on October 24, to coincide with Australia’s Breast Cancer Day. It will require you to plant 100 pink lady silhouettes and give people in your community a chance to sponsor one displaying their message. Any other activities are organised by you.

BCNA will provide you with simple, yet detailed, guidelines including invaluable marketing tips and suggestions, along with an ‘Event in a Box’!

This year’s Mini-Fields follow in the footsteps of our Field of Women – Live in 2005.

If you or your breast cancer support group would like to hold one of these memorable events or you would like more information, phone 1800 500 258.”

Andrea
My Journey Kit goes north

BCNA Board Members, Raelene Boyle and Jocelyn Newman, joined other high-profile Queensland breast cancer survivors, Lisa Backhouse, Ann Hollingworth, Lexie Warren, Anne Marie White and Gail Wiltshire at the Brisbane Powerhouse for the Queensland launch of our My Journey Kit.

The launch received strong coverage on all the major Queensland television programs, as well as live crosses to various local radio stations. This heightened media activity saw calls to the My Journey Kit request line more than doubling and there was a similar increase in the number of kits distributed in Queensland.

Following the media launch, more than 150 Queensland members attended a forum. They heard Dr Jane Turner speak about supportive care for women with breast cancer, Lyn Swinburne on the outcomes of the Still Making a Difference Conference 2004 and its recommendations (available as a summary), and an update on our key programs by Terri Smith, our National Programs Manager. Jocelyn Newman was the MC. Similar events are scheduled for Adelaide, Darwin, Alice Springs, Sydney and Hobart throughout 2005.

The Queensland My Journey Kit launch and members’ forum were held in conjunction with the Warrior Women’s exhibition, organised by State Reps Veronica Macaulay-Cross and Lyn Moore.

Warrior Women, which was on display for two weeks at the Brisbane Powerhouse Museum in March, is a travelling art exhibition that provides an insight into the experience of breast cancer by women who have been affected by this disease.

The exhibition, which is made up of more than 100 pieces of art, is a collaboration by women artists of all ages, cultural and social backgrounds.

Warrior Women Queensland was sponsored by Suncorp, The Wesley Hospital, BreastScreen Queensland, the Queensland Investment Corporation and the Brisbane City Council.

An evening with a star

More than 130 women attended BCNA’s An Evening with a Star in February, to hear Israeli author, actress and cancer advocate, Gila Almagor, speak about the issues facing Jewish women diagnosed with breast cancer in today’s society.

The event, hosted at the home of Ros and David Smorgon in Melbourne, aimed to educate Jewish women about breast cancer and inbirm them of the resources that are available free-of-charge through BCNA, most importantly our My Journey Kit.

From left to right: Patricia Edgar (BCNA Chair), Terry Bracks (BCNA Board Member), Gila Almagor, Roslyn Smorgon and Lyn Swinburne (BCNA CEO).

My Journey Kit’s 1st birthday

It is now more than a year since we launched the My Journey Kit and we have distributed more than 7700 kits to women newly diagnosed with breast cancer and 1400 to health professionals. The kit is available free to anyone diagnosed within the past 12 months. Phone the My Journey Kit request line on 1300 785 562.

A warrior rests

Former BCNA Tasmanian Rep and breast cancer advocate, Pat Mathew, died on April 30. She was known to – and loved by – many and will be missed.

Pat lived by and was inspired by this quote:

“Women with breast cancer are warriors, I have been to war and I still am. I refuse to be reduced in my own eyes or in the eyes of others from warrior to mere victim simply because it might render me a fraction more acceptable … to those who believe if you cover up a problem, it ceases to exist.”

New on our website

We are adding to our website all the time. We have sections specifically for certain groups, eg rural and remote women, women with advanced breast cancer, and men. Our shop is up and running and you can also see more photos and read quotes from the Field of Women – Live in 2005.

Presenting to the Senate cancer inquiry

We have been extremely busy in the lead-up to the Field of Women – Live in 2005, however our other important work continues. In April, Sue Timbs and Lyn Swinburne made a formal presentation in Melbourne on behalf of BCNA and Australians personally affected by breast cancer to the Senate Community Affairs Committee’s Inquiry into services and treatment options for persons with cancer. The presentation followed on from BCNA’s written submission to the Inquiry.

We tabled our Still Making a Difference Report from the National Conference and highlighted the 61 recommendations as identified by the 600 delegates. In answering a question from one of the Senators, we mentioned the My Journey Kit. Senator Sue Knowles remarked that she knew of the kit and she spoke glowingly of its value to women. We have since sent a copy to Senator Meg Lees at her request.

It was extremely challenging for us to identify the major issues for our members, as there are so many. We did, however, focus in our presentation and submission on BCNA’s priority action areas for 2005–06. In particular, we stressed the need for the National Breast Cancer Centre’s (NBCC) clinical practice guidelines to be implemented nationally and for psychosocial supports to be in place.

Our presentation time was short, but we felt that we presented our case strongly. The Senators congratulated BCNA on its fine work for the community.

Our 2005–06 priority action areas

After reviewing the recommendations from BCNA’s Second National Breast Cancer Conference for Women 2004, we have determined that our priority areas for action in 2005 and 2006 are to:

- improve psychosocial care of women diagnosed with breast cancer
- standardise the delivery of breast cancer services across Australia
- implement the NBCC clinical practice guidelines nationally and evaluate implementation
- eliminate discrimination on the basis of a diagnosis of breast cancer or genetic information.

BCNA gratefully acknowledges our partnership with Bakers Delight.
Clinical Update

Aromatase inhibitors under the spotlight

Thank you to everyone who sent us questions for our medical oncologist about aromatase inhibitors, following our article in the last issue of The Beacon. We forwarded the most frequently asked questions to Associate Professor Richard Bell, the Director of the Andrew Love Cancer Centre in Geelong.

Just a reminder to everyone about the difference between aromatase inhibitors and Tamoxifen. There are two main ways that oestrogen is produced in a woman’s body. The ovaries are the main source of oestrogen production in pre-menopausal women. In post-menopausal women, oestrogen is converted from another hormone, called androgen. Tamoxifen works to block oestrogen from any of these sources. Aromatase inhibitors stop the conversion of androgen to oestrogen, but do not suppress oestrogen that is produced by the ovaries. That is why aromatase inhibitors are only effective in post-menopausal women.

Are there some women with early breast cancer who you consider would benefit from ongoing hormonal treatment at the end of five years of Tamoxifen? What is currently available for these women? What is on the horizon for them?

A recent Canadian study tested the strategy of starting post-menopausal women with hormone receptor positive early breast cancer on an aromatase inhibitor, letrozole (Femara), after they had completed around five years of taking Tamoxifen. These women were compared with similar women who underwent no further hormonal treatment after finishing their five years of Tamoxifen.

This study demonstrated an advantage in terms of a lower rate of breast cancer recurrence for the women taking letrozole in the first 2–3 years, with no overall survival benefit. The study data shows the greatest benefit for women with node-positive tumours. However, the benefits were modest and women and their doctors will need to balance the benefit against the side effects and risks, predominantly those of thinning bones, and the risk of fractures and elevated blood cholesterol.

Unfortunately, this trial was stopped following early positive results. That means longer-term evaluation and follow-up of the strategy will not be possible.

What criteria do you use to determine who you would recommend to take aromatase inhibitors instead of Tamoxifen?

To be suitable for aromatase inhibitors, women must be post-menopausal or, if pre-menopausal, have had their ovarian function suppressed by medical, surgical or radiotherapeutic means. Their tumours must be hormone-receptor positive.

The aromatase inhibitor studies have shown modest benefits in terms of the reduced risk of recurrence when compared to Tamoxifen, however these benefits are associated with trade-offs between side effects. Tamoxifen is associated with more vaginal discharge and an

STOP PRESS

Promising results from Herceptin trials in HER2-positive early breast cancer

Information from three international trials on the drug Herceptin was released at the American Society of Clinical Oncology scientific meeting in Florida last month.

In 2001, BCNA was instrumental in achieving access to the drug Herceptin for women with advanced breast cancer.

Now, results from these new trials provide evidence that Herceptin has the potential to significantly reduce the risk of recurrence following early breast cancer for women with HER2-positive breast cancer. This is promising news for the estimated 20% of women who have this form of breast cancer. However, there is still more research to be done on the optimal length of time women should stay on the drug, as well as the impact of Herceptin’s side effects.

Herceptin is an example of trends in breast cancer treatments which will target the characteristics of each individual’s cancer profile.

As always, BCNA stresses that it is essential that women work with their clinicians to make decisions about the best breast cancer treatment for them as individuals.

We will bring you further information about Herceptin and other treatments as it becomes available.
increase in post-menopausal uterine bleeding, hysterectomy and uterine cancer, as well as increases in blood clots (thromboembolism). The aromatase inhibitors are associated with the increased occurrence of vaginal dryness, musculoskeletal aches, fractures and bone mineral loss. Letrozole has also been linked to the elevation of blood cholesterol.

Are there any women who should not take aromatase inhibitors?

In women with functioning ovaries, aromatase inhibitors will not suppress oestrogen levels and, therefore, are ineffective. They will also be ineffective if the breast tumour is hormone-receptor negative. Women with significant osteoporosis or osteopenia (thin bones) risk worsening their bone problems, as aromatase inhibitors lead to bone mineral loss. Currently, strategies using bisphosphonate drugs are being evaluated to deal with this problem. In contrast, Tamoxifen tends to strengthen the bones of post-menopausal women (but does not protect the bones of pre-menopausal women). In women taking aromatase inhibitors, bone density should be monitored and where bone mineral loss occurs, treatment should be given.

However, there are currently no financial subsidies for bone density testing, nor for the use of bisphosphonate drugs when they are prescribed for this reason.

One other group of women who should be cautious about taking aromatase inhibitors is those with high cholesterol. Letrozole has been shown to increase cholesterol more than Tamoxifen.

High cholesterol has the potential to increase the risk of events such as heart attacks and strokes, although no statistically significant increased risk was seen in these studies.

We don’t know what effect other aromatase inhibitors will have on cholesterol, as this has not been measured in all of the studies.

Women, particularly those with known high cholesterol levels, should discuss these effects with their doctor.

Given that aromatase inhibitors are only suitable for women who are post-menopausal, how does a woman - or her doctor - determine whether she is post-menopausal?

In the clinical trials that show benefits from aromatase inhibitors, women were defined as being post-menopausal if they fitted any of the following criteria:

- They were older than 55 and their menstrual periods had stopped.
- They were younger than 55, but had had no spontaneous periods within the previous year.
- They were younger than 55, had had periods within the previous year, but had post-menopausal levels of pituitary hormones. The last part of this definition is used in those women who have had a hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) and, therefore, have no periods to indicate their menopausal status.

Do aromatase inhibitors lead to changes in sexual function or sexual enjoyment for some women who take them? If so, what proportion of women who take aromatase inhibitors might expect to experience these side effects?

In one study of aromatase inhibitors, the ATAC study, one researcher – Lesley Fallowfield - investigated quality-of-life issues in detail. She found that reduced libido was common in women taking anastrozole (Arimidex) and was greater than that seen in women taking Tamoxifen. Despite this, there was no overall difference in quality of life for women taking either drug.

Some women have been recommended to take exemestane (Aromasin) by their clinicians, but it is not available under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Is there a difference between Arimidex and Aromasin? If not, could those women receive the same benefit from taking Aromidex as Aromasin?

Exemestane (Aromasin) has a slightly different chemical structure to anastrozole (Arimidex) and letrozole (Femara). Exemestane has a steroid-like chemical structure, that is, it is a modified hormone-like drug. Anastrozole and letrozole are non-steroidal, that is, they do not have structures resembling the natural hormones. With advanced cancer, exemestane may sometimes work if there is a demonstrated resistance to the non-steroidal drugs. However, we do not have enough data to suggest that any of these drugs are superior to any others in terms of their effectiveness or their side effects when used in early breast cancer.

Other side effects

Other side effects that might be experienced by women taking aromatase inhibitors include:

- hot flushes
- vaginal discharge
- raised cholesterol
- musculoskeletal aches and pains
- fractures
- bone mineral loss
- a non-statistically significant increase in heart disease and stroke.

However, these must be balanced against the side-effects of Tamoxifen, which include:

- hot flushes
- vaginal discharge
- post-menopausal bleeding
- increased rates of hysterectomy
- increased rates of endometrial cancer
- an increased risk of blood clots.

Most women in the studies were able to continue their treatment for five years. Discontinuation rates were higher for Tamoxifen than for aromatase inhibitors. Significant bone mineral loss is likely to require drug therapy with bisphosphonate drugs (used for osteoporosis) and raised blood cholesterol may require the use of diet and/or drugs (statins).

These must be balanced against the risk of serious or fatal thromboembolism and the need for anti-coagulant (blood thinning) treatment, the risk of post-menopausal bleeding with associated investigations, including curettage, hysterectomy and the risk of endometrial cancer.
Changing Gears

Changing Gears, a global motorcycle relay, is an event created for and by young women living with breast cancer. Young breast cancer survivors from across the world will take part in one-week rides in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. The event’s goal is to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer advocacy and support programs in all three countries.

The final leg of the run will take place in Australia between October 23 and 30, 2005. It will start in Sydney and finish in Brisbane, with all proceeds raised going to BCNA.

Twenty-one survivors will take part in this event, each riding motorcycles generously donated by Harley-Davidson.

The route is available at www.changinggears.org and we invite all BCNA members located along it to go out and welcome the riders as they travel through each town. Perhaps you would even like to hold a Mini-Field of Women or another event to show your support for the riders? Bakers Delight stores have generously offered to provide morning tea and lunch for all the riders each day. People can also sponsor a rider through the shop on our website.

GlobalStarr Golf

Having experienced the trauma of breast cancer in their own families, the partners of GlobalStarr Golf decided to help raise money for women diagnosed with breast cancer by creating the Pink Lady range of women’s golf products.

In coming months, Pink Lady branded golf balls, followed by gloves, bags and other golf products displaying the BCNA logo, will be available to golfers across Australia via their local pro-shop and online at www.globalstarrgolf.com.

GlobalStarr Golf will donate 7.5% of the revenue from sales of all Pink Lady products to BCNA. In addition, it will offer discounts of up to 10% on its large range of golf products to BCNA supporters who buy online. The website is also available as a link from our website - www.bcna.org.au.

Who are you proud of?

Nominations are open for Australian of the Year. Nominate anyone you believe makes our country a better place. Nominations close on August 21, 2005. Contact Christy Collier at the National Australia Day Council on telephone (02) 6120 0600 or e-mail christy.collier@australiaday.gov.au, or visit www.australianoftheyear.gov.au.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sharing their experiences

In 2002, BCNA provided funding, through its Community Grants program, for the development of a story board that told of the breast cancer experience of individual Aboriginal women.

We are delighted to report that the story board has now been produced into a DVD/video and a booklet.

The Indigenous Women’s Breast Cancer Project provided an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait women from North Queensland to share their stories of diagnosis and breast cancer treatment.

The DVD/video highlights the strengths and human spirit of the women, whose personal experiences provide encouragement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to take control of their own health.

It also points out the need for early detection, encouraging women to have any changes checked out, and shows that there is life after breast cancer.

The final project has been made possible with additional support from James Cook University and the Queensland Cancer Fund.

For more information, contact Valerie Alberts on (07) 4781 5048 or valerie.alberts@jcu.edu.au.

Water for a cause

When breast cancer survivor, Jane Farrelly, a Director of Cre8tvt Solutions, was diagnosed early last year, at the age of 32, she and business partner, Veney Bognar, came up with the idea of producing a fundraising brand of bottled water to raise money for breast cancer support.

BeCause Water, a new brand of bottled water, has been developed to raise money for BCNA - we receive 10¢ from every bottle sold.

BeCause Water is available in cartons of 12 and the minimum order is four cartons, which will be shipped to your door. It is available to buy now.

To order, phone Cre8tvt on 1300 139 004.

Jane Farrelly and Veney Bognar
Breast Cancer Husband
by Marc Silver


This book is published overseas and your local bookstore will probably have to order it in. The online bookstore, everycloud, has stock, visit www.everycloud.com or phone (07) 3341 7570.

Breast Cancer Husband is a well-planned, factual and carefully composed book, written by American editor Marc Silver, a long-time contributor to the US News and World Report.

In 2001, Marc Silver’s wife was diagnosed with breast cancer, and her treatment included surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. As a husband, Marc partnered her through the many and varied stages of her breast cancer journey.

He acknowledges there are many books on this topic, but found that his basic need was for a manual, guide and cues as to his role in his wife’s diagnosis, treatment and life with breast cancer.

He thought that the breast cancer was not his wife’s burden alone – he sought insight into the medical, psychological and social aspects of a breast cancer diagnosis.

There are ‘tips’ throughout the book, anecdotal contributions, and the true story of Marc Silver, Marsha Dale, their children, families and friends, and the doctors and specialists who attended Marsha. There is also a host of medical/scientific data, all attributed to experts, so that it is accurate in content.

This book is encyclopaedic in content, with a thorough glossary, a list of the experts consulted during the writing process and a comprehensive index. It is the sort of book that can be picked up, a reference sought and the appropriate pages easily located. That means, should the reader be eager to know about hair loss, the impact of a mastectomy or what to tell the children, there is a relevant chapter.

When delving into a book of this type, the reader will realise that a person’s needs, thoughts and comprehension of breast cancer are invariably that person’s alone. Yes, Marc Silver’s imagery and his suggestions will be helpful, but there should always be the awareness that each journey is individual, and that is because each person’s emotional, physical and mental needs are essentially their own.

In summary, Breast Cancer Husband is an asset to the shelves of books on the topic of breast cancer, because of its emphasis on the carer’s role, when the carer wishes to be completely informed and aware.

Vivienne Gregg
Consumer Rep, Armidale, NSW

Breast cancer study seeks sisters

Women diagnosed with breast cancer and their unaffected sister(s) aged 40 to 70 years are being invited to participate in the Australian Twins and Sisters Breast Density Study.

This research is part of a large international study of breast density. The Centre for Genetic Epidemiology at The University of Melbourne is one of the groups conducting the research.

For more information, phone 1800 882 844.

Letter to the Editor

I have recently been diagnosed with a rare type of breast cancer - inflammatory breast cancer. I have researched this diagnosis and found that only 6% of women diagnosed have this form of breast cancer.

I would really appreciate the opportunity to talk to someone in Australia who has had a similar diagnosis. Until recently, the only people I have found with this disease are in the US (found on a US breast cancer website).

My contact details have been left with BCNA. I look forward to hearing back from any woman who has also been diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer.

Beverley
Look Good ... Feel Better

Look Good ... Feel Better is a free community service program dedicated to helping women undergoing treatment for cancer. The program helps women manage the appearance-related side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy, thereby helping with self image.

It does this through a hands-on workshop where women can try out different cosmetics, techniques and head scarves. It is a chance to explore and restore their looks and confidence in a fun and safe group. All participants receive a complimentary make-up kit.

Look Good ... Feel Better workshops are held in every State and are being run at more than 120 locations. Look Good ... Feel Better relies on the support of the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association and its member companies to provide the make-up, materials and financial support for the program. Volunteers and program participants do not promote any cosmetic product line or manufacturer.

All Look Good ... Feel Better volunteers are trained and certified before participating in the workshops. Currently more than 1000 volunteers assist the program.

To learn more about Look Good ... Feel Better telephone 1800 650 960 or visit www.lgfb.org.au.

“Most of all I loved thinking that despite cancer, with or without makeup, I am still beautiful and still me, there is more to cancer than the treatment.” – Shanti

BCNA’s State Representatives

BCNA has two local, voluntary representatives in each State or Territory of Australia. Our State Representatives help us keep an ear out for news across the country and make sure information from our national office is effectively distributed. They also provide a local contact for women with specific inquiries. Their contact details are:

**ACT**
Anna Wellings Booth  
T: (02) 6247 8470  
wbfamily@homemail.com.au

Elspeth Humphries  
T: (02) 6239 6344  
humphries44@ozemail.com.au

**NSW**
Pam Bell  
T: (02) 9955 9313  
bellpc@bigpond.net.au

Megan James  
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mjames@globalswitch.com

**Northern Territory**
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Michelle Hanton  
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**Queensland**
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Lyn Moore  
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**Victoria**
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**Western Australia**
Maria Waters  
T: (08) 9344 7362  
alma.waters@bigpond.com

Ann Revell  
T: 0403 020 531
Dragons Abreast

The 2005 Xanadu Wines AusDBF National Titles were held in April. We met many newer member groups and renewed old friendships.

Jan Skorich and the ACT group gave us a delightfully warm welcome, a fabulous dinner in the Botanical Gardens and scrumptious morning teas.

Robyne Kellett from Canberra and Penny Dudding from Newcastle were presented with our inaugural ‘Supporter of the Year’ awards.

The Flowers on the Water remembrance ceremony was the highlight. Thanks to the support of the Australian Dragon Boat Federation, this has been held each year since 2001.

This ceremony touches everyone present; grown men weep, sports crew paddlers form paddle guards of honour and many make special requests to be included in the boats. It is an emotional, but reaffirming, time for the breast cancer cause.

The 5th anniversary of Flowers on the Water took place on Sunday, April 9, in Canberra and was the biggest ceremony to date. Virginia Hausegger from ABC television provided the commentary. Dr Linda Reaby and Senator Kate Lundy joined us in the boats.

There were 12 boats, flower petals floating on the water and a minute of silence broken by the sound of Erica Simmons beautiful voice, singing Wind Beneath My Wings.

The ceremony demonstrates that, despite having a great time on the water, we do have a serious message – breast cancer is a disease which, if left undetected, kills women.

The participating boat crews were named after some special Dragons Abreast women who have sadly lost their battle and are now part of our Angels Abreast team.

Several women battling advanced breast cancer joined in all the activities, clearly demonstrating the fighting dragon spirit!

Dragons Abreast Sydney gave an outstanding performance on the water - competing against the sporting teams and winning silver and bronze medals. A number of members have also won the right to be part of Team Australia travelling to Berlin in August.

Our membership continues to grow and we welcome aboard Bunbury, WA, and Coffs Harbour, NSW.

We now have a 1300 number for general inquiries within your State. For your nearest group, phone 1300 889 566.

Michelle Hanton, National Co-ordinator, Dragons Abreast Australia, Mobile 0418 898 082; e-mail nationalcoordinator@dragonsabreast.com.au or www.dragonsabreast.com.au

The fifth Flowers on the Water ceremony in Canberra during April.

BCNA welcomes:

New Member Groups
- Bacchus Marsh Pink Silhouettes (Vic)
- Cancer Support Group Glen Innes (Glen Innes District, NSW)
- Clarence Valley Breast Cancer Support Group (Grafton, NSW)
- Nambour and District Breast Cancer Support Group (Sunshine Coast, Qld)
- Kyogle Morning Tea Group (NSW)
- BICC – Breastcancer In City Country (Ballarat, Vic.)
- Launceston Breast Cancer Support Group (Tas)
- Camden Survivors of Breast Cancer (NSW)
- Hobart Breast Cancer Support Group (Tas).

New Associate Member Groups
- Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation (NSW)
- Look Good ... Feel Better (National)
- BreaCan (Vic).

If your group is not a member of BCNA, you can find out more about the benefits of free group membership by calling 1800 500 258.
Upcoming Events

June 26 Breast Cancer Action Group NSW General meeting with speakers, 3pm, YWCA, 5–11 W entworth Avenue, Sydney.
  Contact: info@bcag.org.au.

July 5 SA Launch of My Journey Kit, 10.30am; BCNA Members’ Forum 1–3.30 pm, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide.
  Contact: 1800 500 258.

  Contact: www.anztctg.org.

  Contact: St George Newsagent, 11 Henry St, St George, (07) 4625 3197.

July 21 Lymphoedema Association of Victoria 2005 luncheon, Box Hill Golf Club, $30 per person.
  Contact: Diane Cole, (03) 9801 7636 (RSVP 7 July).

July 21 Cancer Nurses Society of Australia Winter Congress – Discussing the transition from curative to palliative care, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart, 1–5pm.
  Contact: Caroline Nehill, (02) 9036 3033 or caroline.nehill@nbcc.org.au, or visit www.nbcc.org.au/bestpractice/communication/index.html.

21-26 August: Pink Ladies Golf Classic, Sanctuary Cove, Queensland.
  Contact: Jacinta Moore, 0412 857 240, or Harriet Moore on 0416 094 344 or hmoore@bigpond.com.

September 24 Exploring trust in the relationship between consumers and oncologist, Marriott Hotel, Surfers Paradise, Queensland, 9–10.30 am. The Australasian Society for Breast Disease and BCNA invites consumers to attend this consumer workshop; however, numbers are limited to 80 participants. Consumers are also welcome to attend the two conference’s scientific sessions: ‘Survivorship in breast cancer/Patient outcomes’ (11am–12.30pm) and ‘Breast cancer in society’ (1.30–3pm).
  Contact: Veronica Macaulay-Cross, (07) 3269 8083. To register phone BCNA on 1800 500 258.

September 25 Breast Cancer Action Group NSW General meeting with speakers, 3pm, YWCA, 5–11 W entworth Avenue, Sydney.
  Contact: info@bcag.org.au.

October 1 Glitter Charity Ball, Plaza Ballroom, Regent Theatre, 191 Collins Street, Melbourne.
  Contact: Leanne Bradford, (03) 9844 5446, 0419 404 495 or lee.brADFORD@bigpond.com.

October 23-30 Changing Gears
  Contact: Meredith Campbell, 0412 653 202 or meredith@amazon-heart.com.

October 24 Annual service for all who are affected by breast cancer, St George’s Cathedral, Perth, 3pm.
  Everyone is welcome to this ecumenical service of reflection and hope.

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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Phone: (     ) ...............................................  E-mail: ...................................................................................................................

Have you had a diagnosis of breast cancer? □ Yes □ No
It was the first time I’ve acknowledged, ‘Yes, I’m a survivor’

I was diagnosed in 2000 and haven’t ever got involved in any of the events run by BCNA, really because it’s been ‘too close to home’ and I haven’t wanted to open the floodgates of emotion. This time some girls from work said, ‘Let’s do it’, and so I did. It was awesome.

It was 4.30pm and the eight of us left work and got on a tram at Flinders Street Station. When we got to the Hilton tram stop, the tram emptied out and we were in a sea of women all heading to the same spot – the MCG. This was the first glimpse of the enormity of Friday, 6 May.

As we walked down, everyone laughing and chatting, the vision of a virtually solid mass of women in hot pink struck us. We moved to the tables for our ponchos and became part of that sea.

En masse the ladies moved in to the MCG. It was surprising how there was no crush, no rush, just a progression of women all with expectant, almost awestruck, looks and certainly smiles on their faces.

Participating in the ‘Mexican wave’ was such fun and helped those of us who were feeling a little overwhelmed (me) unwind and enjoy the occasion.

I then watched as row by row the MCG stands emptied and the field took shape. It was quite simply magical. Our turn came and we wandered amid the pink in a world of our own.

Standing amid the ladies, I listened to the stories around me. The hum of voices from the field drowned out most of what the speakers were saying, but the voice of one speaker, the man who spoke of his wife’s experience with breast cancer was clear and the story enthralled me.

Then the atmosphere changed and the crowd was hushed as we were asked to raise our hands if we were a survivor. It was the very first time I’ve acknowledged – yes, I’m a survivor! A survivor of this horrendous thing that affects so many people, both those suffering from it and their family and friends around them.

Tears welled in my eyes as I looked around at all the hands and the faces, the faces filled with emotion and wonder at the numbers around them. Then all the hands went up and the Field of Women became truly alive.

We waved at the helicopter, swayed to the music, watched the big screen and the vision of ladies in pink. Then it was over.

We paraded out into the street to confused football goers, while smiling police people ensured everything outside went smoothly.

Idling down the street, I watched as hundreds of pink-clad figures headed back into the MCG and chatted to new-found friendly strangers on the way to Richmond Station and home. The sea of pink swept onto the platforms and then onto a train filled with workers in their dark outfits. There was me, proud and smiling in pink.

I spent the weekend telling everyone I could find how wonderful, moving and amazing the experience had been. I told them how each one of us represented someone who was being, had been or was going to be diagnosed this year alone and how huge that was.

Thank you everyone for organising, so well, such a wonderful, moving and healing event. I’m not one, I’m one of thousands and that’s very sad, horrifying really, but also reassuring that we, as a collective force, surely can beat this thing.

Judy
Awash in a sea of pink (and some blue)

Young and old, survivors and supporters, waiting in the stand for the Field to form.

Row by row, we left the stands and formed the pink lady.

In good company.

One of the men in pink who supported the Field.

Victorian State Rep, Gerda Evans, with her men in blue.