Up there
Pink Lady!

What a powerful vision to have our Field of Women LIVE display beamed across Australia and the world! In Sydney, 13,000 Australians stood together in pink and 100 in blue to show the human face of our annual breast cancer statistics.

With BCNA’s work focusing on those affected by this disease, rather than on raising money for research or in scientific study, our Pink Lady made a bold statement about the impact on an individual woman and those closest to her. Our mission is to make sure that those affected get the best information, treatment, care and support.

Not only does this issue of The Beacon cover our Sydney event, importantly it also considers the personal issues faced by women with the disease. For some of us, many issues remain even though we are long-term survivors.

Lyn Swinburne, CEO
Volunteers hand out the ponchos.

On the march to Telstra Stadium.

The crowd waits patiently to enter the stadium.

A sea of pink flows onto the Field.

The Pink Lady begins to take shape.

Survivors and supporters proudly raise their hands.

Colleen McKay, breast cancer survivor, has the honour of tossing the coin.
What an extraordinary night we shared! Participants came from the length and breadth of Australia. They came for a range of reasons: friends and workmates to support a loved one undergoing treatment; families paid tribute to someone close whom they had lost; others came simply because they cared and wanted to stand beside other women in a show of solidarity and strength. There were bald heads in force as women discarded their wigs, and many hugs, smiles and tears were in evidence on the arena. We were thrilled to see a large number of men had come to show us their support.

It was a magical, balmy evening in Sydney. Such huge numbers meant that people had to stand around for long periods of time, and yet the mood was buoyant as participants were in total support of our efforts to present a breathtaking image to the world. People frequently remarked, “There’s so many of us!” and of course that is the most shocking part of the display; to realise that each person there represented a real Australian diagnosed this year.

As well as the power of the evening, the Field of Women LIVE event brings so much to BCNA, especially helping people to know we are here. Importantly, we have managed to raise $660,000. This money will support BCNA’s programs, especially providing My Journey Kits to the 36 women who are diagnosed every day, and our Hope & Hurdles Packs to women with secondaries. It will also help us to present information forums around the country and to run our Seat at the Table Program, where our breast cancer advocates make a real difference on the ground.

We thank all of you who rallied to our call. We hope that the memory of our special evening together will stay with you forever and provide inspiration and strength along your breast cancer journey.

Our www.fieldofwomen.org.au website has a complete coverage of the event, including moving testimonials from participants, a summary of the ceremony, wonderful photos of individuals and the forming of our Pink Lady shape, and a moving tribute to the evening. If you were not able to join us, a visit to the site is the next best thing.


Up there Pink Lady!

In a tribute to his mother, who died of breast cancer, Mike Brody reworked his football anthem ‘Up there Cazaly’ to share with us at the Field of Women LIVE. Without a doubt this song will become BCNA’s new anthem.

Well we’re all here for a reason and it’s not hard to understand it’s why we’re here together it’s why this day is planned it’s not complicated, it’s just that we care so have a look around you that thought is everywhere Up there Pink Lady in there and fight out there and at ‘em show ‘em your might up there Pink Lady don’t let ‘em in fly like an angel you’re out there to win There’s a lot more things to sharing than really meets the eye there’s the loving and the giving and a shoulder for a cry it’s why we stand together so take a look around we’re strong and we’re united the Pink Lady’s in town Up there Pink Lady you’re out there to win in there and at ‘em don’t let ‘em in up there Pink Lady show ‘em your might fight like the devil the crowd’s on your side.
I am so proud to have been a participant in such a great cause and all night I had a sense that something special was taking place and that I was part of something really important.

When all survivors of breast cancer were asked to hold their hands in the air, I could barely look in my mum’s direction for fear of bursting into tears and completely losing it. But there she stood, proud and defiant as ever, smiling, with her hands raised along with all those women and men around her.

The experience will stay with me forever. In memory of my grandmother and my mother, for myself and my friends who are now survivors. It was peaceful to be in a place where women all knew how you felt. The emotions and strength of everyone on the field at that time was exhilarating.

I participated in the first Field of Women in Canberra and thought that was moving, but this was amazing. This time I was standing in the right armpit of our pink lady – a lymph node – a very important part of a person.

Our thanks to BCNA’s Sydney Field of Women LIVE Project Manager, Patricia Stewart (left), who was our ‘woman on the ground’ in Sydney. Patricia worked tirelessly on the community and corporate strategies and with our many wonderful Ambassadors. Our thanks also to Bakers Delight, which provided Patricia and her assistant, Jane Betts, with an office in its NSW Headquarters.

My mum and I travelled along with a bus full of other supporters from Orange, NSW. It was especially important to me as my mum is a survivor and I often struggle with the words to show my support. Standing alongside my mum in the pink poncho was the best way to show her.

When I raised my hands as a survivor, I felt the energy and support that welled up in the Field of Women.

As my daughter said, “the whole night was totally awesome”. Walking on to the ground at Telstra Stadium was electrifying and full of meaning. I was not alone and I have made it through a tough journey with the support of my loving family and friends. We stood united and I cried with total strangers. I remembered my friends who had lost their courageous battle. Together we will continue to fight this disease.

I can safely say that this event was the most moving thing I have ever been to. Standing arm to arm...
next to brave women who are survivors of breast cancer moved me to tears.

Tristen

Every woman who has ever had cancer should have the opportunity to participate in this event. Its power to heal, unite and envelope a person with love and support is immeasurable.

Hayley

Nothing could prepare me for all of the emotions felt on the night: proud of how my darling wife fought to the end and the strength of our children; sorrow for our loss; excited to a part of such a big event and joy to see so many people fighting for the same cause and knowing there is hope.

Ray

Being one of the younger women diagnosed with breast cancer I always felt I coped well with it, but on Saturday night I was amazed at how emotional I became as I stepped onto the field with my mum, sister and nephew. I did not expect that. I even hesitated to put up my arms as a survivor, but I did, and I felt so much support and love ... It was a fantastic night. Thank you so much for giving my family and me an opportunity to be a part of it!

Sallie-Ann

Thanks to Mike Brady for his rendition of ‘Up There Pink Lady’. I’m currently undergoing treatment for breast cancer and the words of Mike’s song really hit home.

Karen

To all the survivors of breast cancer, you are truly inspirational! To everyone that participated, I am in awe of your spirit, thank you for reminding me of what generosity is.

Ann

To those who helped make it happen

It takes many people and organisations to make such a big event happen.

Our sponsors and event supporters ensured that 100% of every person’s registration has come to BCNA, so we can continue our crucial work to inform, empower, represent and link together Australians affected by breast cancer.

We received support from so many people to help make this happen.

Unfortunately we cannot list them all, but we do say a very big thank you to everyone who helped us:

Major Sponsors

Bakers Delight

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Daily Telegraph

www.bcna.org.au
So what happens now?
Surviving breast cancer

Right through my treatment for breast cancer, I was given support from medical practitioners and other support workers. The hardest part for me was when treatment stopped. I was left thinking, so what happens now?

This issue of *The Beacon* focuses on survivorship. It explores just some of the issues faced in life after the upheaval and chaos of breast cancer treatment.

Finishing breast cancer treatment is a great achievement and cause for celebration. Yet this point in time generally does not mean that life is back to normal. Although for most it is a relief not to have to attend endless medical appointments, it can also be a little scary to suddenly be without the regular support, information and reassurance that comes from this contact with our medical team. It can be a time of reflection, change, uncertainty or even fear. ‘Will my cancer come back?’ ‘Do I want to live my life the way I always have or do I want to make changes?’ ‘Why am I feeling so flat?’ These are common questions.

I thought it was strange when I heard people refer to me as a ‘breast cancer survivor’ – yet I suppose I am. That makes me sound strong and able to cope – and I suppose I have coped in my own way. It is much better than being called a breast cancer victim.

While the term ‘survivorship’ means different things to different women, we use it broadly to refer to any time from diagnosis onwards. Regardless of what term you use, we know for sure that surviving breast cancer is about more than just making it through the initial treatment. For better or worse, nobody’s life is exactly the same after breast cancer.

Some women will have ongoing physical issues resulting from their treatment (lymphoedema, reconstruction, fatigue). Many women take some extended treatment once they have completed any required surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment. Treatments include aromatase inhibitors, tamoxifen and Herceptin®. Unfortunately, these might cause side effects such as hot flushes, vaginal dryness, insomnia or aching joints. Younger women might have to deal with fertility issues or early menopause.

Once active treatment finishes, it is often time to deal with complex emotional, spiritual and perhaps existential issues. It is not uncommon for women to feel depressed, anxious or scared. Relationships with loved ones can seem changed as you wonder: Who am I now and what does this mean about everything I have believed in? Intimacy and sex can be a concern.

I have finished my dreadful treatment, my hair is starting to grow back, I only have occasional medical appointments and my oncologist tells me my outlook is good. Yet something is not right. I just don’t seem to be able to get back to life as it was.

All your emotions are affected after breast cancer. I am a very positive person, but now my confidence is lacking. I feel my life is not my own anymore.

And then there are the practical issues. For some, breast cancer can be a significant financial burden – with time off work and extra bills to pay. There may be superannuation or insurance to sort through. Returning to work can be a challenge. Some women may have chosen to resign during or after their treatment. Others face discrimination in the workplace. At a practical level, issues about protheses, bras and swimwear add a further complication to many women’s lives.

Speaking of survivors – did you know that 18% of our members were initially diagnosed with breast cancer more than 10 years ago? One member was diagnosed as far back as 1940!

The history of the term ‘survivorship’

The term was coined in 1985 by US doctor Fitzhugh Mullan, who wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine* about his cancer. At the time, there were two ways to think about cancer patients – they were either ‘cured’ or ‘living with disease’. Dr Mullan felt that ‘survivorship’ covered a cancer continuum. He also introduced the notion of ‘survivorship seasons’: acute, extended and permanent.

Around this time, Nancy Brinker substituted the word ‘survivor’ for ‘victim’ in memory of her sister, Susan Komen, who died from breast cancer. Nancy founded the Susan G. Komen Foundation in the US.

The term has been around for 20+ years, at least in the US context. BCNA likes the empowering idea of being a survivor rather than a victim (although we know that some days are tough to get through!). It is also a term we can use to make sure that researchers, policy makers and health providers know that there are still issues to address after women have finished their active treatment.

Survivorship is just a word, but it represents many, many different experiences. The following contributions from our readers highlight experiences faced by some women after breast cancer treatment and remind us that every woman’s journey is unique.
I smile wryly when I think of the reality show *Survivor*. What would any of those survivors know about survival? Their struggle begins from a point of good health and wellbeing to a fierce competition for material wealth. How different is the struggle of a cancer survivor: it begins from a point of sudden, shattered health to a simple desire just to be alive. It is not a competition and material wealth does not rate.

Two years on I remember and reflect on how breast cancer changed my life. Having cancer has taught me that I have a choice: to be or not to be. I have learnt from this valuable experience what is important and what is not, who is important and who is not. I have learnt that there is no point nurturing that which is not conducive to life, but to focus on that which is. That is what survival is all about.

The experience of cancer has been a gift. I am a survivor and I am grateful, but I do not go out and smell the flowers, instead I ponder within the stillness of my heart just how precious life is simply because it is life – unencumbered, nurturing and free!

Jeanette Sullivan, Tasmania

When I was diagnosed in 2005 I went into total meltdown. I was sure it was the worst thing that could ever happen. I had been a nurse for 15 years, and then studied to become a naturopath because I could not handle the drug regimes we gave to patients. Now my worst nightmare had come true.

My treatment included a mastectomy, axillary clearance and chemotherapy. My god! Chemotherapy! Not me, no way, I would never yield. However, yield I did, out of sheer fear and my determination to survive for my gorgeous family. I was also really scared of dying.

Now I am a survivor. How things have changed. I no longer fear treatments. I am strong and happy – a little too happy, which

and smell the flowers, instead I ponder within the stillness of my heart just how precious life is simply because it is life – unencumbered, nurturing and free!

Jeanette Sullivan, Tasmania

Will it come back?

For most survivors this question lurks sometimes, often or always in their thoughts.

Every headache and every muscle twinge had me thinking the cancer had come back. I wanted some answers about what to watch for and what to do if I was worried about these aches and pains.

Women who have experienced breast cancer get normal aches and pains from time to time, or develop asthma, arthritis or migraines, just like women who have not had breast cancer. That does not mean the breast cancer has come back. We also know that side effects from ongoing treatment, particularly aromatase inhibitors, can include aches, pains and other discomforts. It can be hard to sort out what’s what. Like so many parts of the breast cancer journey, this will be different for everyone. If you have symptoms that have not settled in a few days, it is important to have them checked by a doctor. Of course you should make sure your doctor knows you have had breast cancer.

The important thing is not to let fear of the cancer’s return get in the way of living life now.

Breast cancer really rattled me. I no longer felt sure that my body was not going to let me down again. I found that I was worrying about cancer coming back and just could not get these thoughts out of my head, particularly at night. In the end I saw a psychologist, who helped me manage my fears and change some of the negative thoughts that seemed to overwhelm me.

Pamela Brand-Charteris
Bobby

There is never a perfect time for breast cancer to enter your life; 26 weeks pregnant with our fourth child certainly was not ideal. Amid the miracle of this new life we had created, we faced the paradox of death.

I attended the maternity unit to have them oversee the baby’s health while I had a mastectomy. It was strange hearing all the babies cry; harder still that I had left my three other babies with our friends not knowing what might happen. Because I was pregnant, the scoping tests were pretty limited. They would have to wait to check the lymph nodes after the operation and then wait until we induced the baby to have the normal scans.

We decided to induce our baby at 36 weeks – the safest option. After an eventful induction, our little man, Robert Alexander (Bobby) came into our world.

He was sick and put straight into special care. After a sleep I was sent for a bone scan and the other tests they could not do before. I could not bring myself to visit my new son. I had to wait for the scan results first.

Robert came home after three weeks, but I continued to have treatment, sometimes staying in hospital and later on as a day patient. Bobby and Patrick (my other son) were pretty well known at the radiology department; the nurses would hold them while I was zapped.

Last December I had my five-year check up with my surgeon. It was fitting that kindergarten was cancelled that day and my little man was able to come with me. This was the first time he had been back in the hospital since he was born.

I never regard myself as a ‘survivor’. I did not choose cancer. It certainly did not enhance my life. It simply made it hell for a while. I was never scared of cancer, just scared of death. My advice is to look forward and do not stop until there is something worth looking back at.

Anne Marie Glanford, Victoria

My hair

On 22 June 2005, I turned 39. The countdown to the big ‘4-0’ had just begun. Life was going well. Days later, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and my world was turned upside down. Tests revealed a 2.5cm tumour in my left breast, as well as several smaller tumours scattered around the breast. Those first few weeks following diagnosis are all a bit of a blur now. My life was suddenly out of control and revolving entirely around my cancer treatment.

I decided on the day of my diagnosis to have a breast reconstruction in conjunction with the mastectomy, but the decision to have chemotherapy was the hardest one. I was told that the surgery was likely to have removed all of the cancer, so why put myself through the trauma of chemotherapy? My hair had been long since childhood (almost reaching my knees). The thought of losing it was very distressing, as I had always taken great pride in it and it was a distinct part of my identity.

My cancer journey gave me the opportunity to re-assess my life and what is important. My partner and I took the huge step of selling our home in Melbourne and relocating to mid-coast NSW. This has given us the opportunity to live a simpler, more relaxed life, with time to focus on my wellbeing. Unfortunately, it also meant leaving behind some wonderful friends who supported me during my treatment.

I feel as though I have been given a second chance at life, so I want to make the most of every day. I am trying to stop worrying about the little things and only focus on what is really important. Anything can happen to change your life in an instant, so I want to live my life to the full and take advantage of every opportunity.

Kerry Weldon, NSW
I did it!

In February 2006, I found out I had breast cancer. I had a lumpectomy and began my chemotherapy, followed by radiotherapy. This treatment meant I needed to be in Brisbane every three weeks, so we decided to live a ‘mini-dream’. We would go away in our van, but stay within a three-hour radius of the hospital.

I had always had an urge to see Bald Rock, just across the border in NSW, so in October (wildflower season) we stayed in Tenterfield for the walk to this landmark. Lovely sunny weather welcomed the day. Taking in the signs at the beginning of the walk, we decided to take the gentler 3km return route. Slow and steady, the track climbed up through beautiful open forest dotted here and there with flowering rock lilies (very like the King Orchid) on the ever-present granite rocks and lots of flowering shrubs.

We came to a huge, very sloping rock. A quick glance told me it was one huge surface with beautiful views and a long way above the forest down below.

It was very, very scary but, with lots of encouragement and almost squeezing hubby’s hand to bits, I managed to edge up and up.

I kept thinking to myself all the time, just follow those white dots and do not, whatever you do, look down. Before I knew it, the trig station appeared. It was the summit. With very shaky writing I proudly wrote my name in the visitors’ book there with the comment, “Hard walk but worth it. Think Pink. I DID IT!”

Since then, I’ve visited lots of other beautiful places and met more challenges. I know now that I can do it. We hope to be able to take many longer trips. Breast cancer is not a sentence, but a diagnosis. Live life to the fullest each day, day by day.

Roberta Edes, Queensland

Putting ourselves first

Apart from turning our whole lives upside down, cancer has been a blessing in many ways. Without it, we would have never met and forged this truly amazing friendship! Life is never the same, nor should it be! Cancer happens without it, we would have never been a blessing in many ways. Apart from turning our whole world and everyone in it.

We became involved with dragonboating in October 2006. Little did we know that we would become totally hooked. It is amazing how the mind and body respond to training. Our muscles were shaping up, energy levels increased and finding the time for training suddenly did not present a challenge anymore.

In December we took part in our first regatta. After that, nothing could stop us. Since our ‘virgin’ regatta we have attended two more and even found the courage to train with the sports team because we love it so much. Our pink team on the Sunshine Coast is called ‘Titty Titty Bang Bang’ and our members range in age from 40 to women in their 70s. We train twice a week and have a ball. Each of us has her own different story to tell, yet our stories are all so similar. Each of us has an understanding of the road that has been travelled.

Michele Rowland (left) and Carol Stadelman (right)

It is called ‘Titty Titty Bang Bang’ and our members range in age from 40 to women in their 70s. We train twice a week and have a ball. Each of us has her own different story to tell, yet our stories are all so similar. Each of us has an understanding of the road that has been travelled.

Carol Stadelman and Michele Rowland, Queensland

The dreaded annual check-up

I get so worried before my annual check-ups. I cannot sleep for weeks. I get cranky. I snap at my husband. It is like I am some other person altogether – and as soon as the doctor tells me I am fine, I revert to my old self.

Women often tell us that their check-ups are a cause of great stress. It is hard to put aside the ‘worst case scenario’, even when you know in your head that it is not really likely. You might want to develop strategies to help you deal with check-up stress. The following tips have been suggested by readers of The Beacon:

• Plan something exciting to look forward to the day after your check-up.
• Take a friend with you to the appointment.
• Relaxation, yoga or guided visualisation might help.
• Do not forget to keep breathing – it always helps!
• Take a walk around the block and notice the trees and flowers.

Life After Cancer booklet

The Cancer Council Victoria has produced a booklet called Life After Cancer. Victorian residents should phone 13 11 20 to order their copy. People in other states should phone 03 9635 5110 or go to www.cancervic.org.au.
Issues of Concern

High cost of follow-up mammograms

In response to concerns raised by individual members, BCNA undertook a quick random email survey to gauge how many women were paying for annual mammographic screening after their breast cancer diagnosis.

We received 194 responses to the survey and hope you will be interested in the results. It is clear from comments returned with the surveys that there is a substantial level of dissatisfaction with having to pay for mammograms, particularly because they are free within the BreastScreen age range for women who have not had breast cancer.

Paying for mammograms

64% of those who responded are currently paying for annual mammograms. The responses show significantly smaller percentages of women in Tasmania (30%) and Queensland (42.1%) paying for annual mammograms than in all other states or territories. The ACT shows the highest percentage of women (92.8%) paying for their mammograms.

Women paid anywhere between $10 and $375 for their mammogram, although it is unclear whether this included the Medicare rebate. For many women, the added burden of paying an account then seeking reimbursement – whether from Medicare and/or their private insurer – adds to the already difficult job of managing breast cancer.

Additional surveillance

While we only asked about mammograms, just over 17% of respondents reported that they have an annual ultrasound in addition to their mammogram. This was most commonly reported in WA (33.3%) and the ACT (28.6%). Some younger women were also having MRI screening. One young woman reported paying more than $900 for an MRI, which is the recommended screening for her.

We have written to the National Breast Cancer Centre about these survey results and are keen to work with them on this issue. BCNA wants to see the option of free follow-up mammograms available to women who require them after their breast cancer diagnosis. While annual mammogram surveillance is recommended for most women following their diagnosis, a smaller group of women are referred for annual ultrasound and/or MRI. We would also like to see the option of free ultrasound or MRI where these are recommended as the appropriate surveillance tool.

You can call our office on 1800 500 250 or check www.bcna.org.au for the full report of our survey.

Cancer is an expensive business

The Cancer Council NSW commissioned Access Economics to review the real cost of cancer treatment.

The report considers the costs of treatment, lost income, lost productivity and carer costs. It estimates that when a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, her household can expect it to cost an average of $40,300 for women under 65 and $9,100 for those over 65. These figures will vary significantly depending on the life stage of the person with cancer and their income level.

The report highlights that there is little government support to assist with these costs. It also notes the high non-financial costs associated with pain, suffering and loss of quality of life.

For a copy of the summary or full report, email healthpolicy@nswcc.org.au

New BCNA pins

BCNA’s new, bigger Pink Lady pins are now available for $5 from Sussan stores nation-wide.

To find your local store, visit www.sussan.com.au
Hope & Hurdles – our new resource for women with secondary breast cancer

“There is lots of information about early breast cancer, but there is very little for those of us living with secondary breast cancer. It is so hard to find really accessible, easily understood information.”

This quote is typical of the voices of women living with secondary breast cancer. They drove our commitment and determination to develop a much-needed information resource – the Hope & Hurdles Pack. Over the years many have told us they have found it difficult to find accurate, current, comprehensive information in the one place.

After 18 months in development, and lots of input from women and those who treat and care for them, we proudly launched Hope & Hurdles in Melbourne in July. The title emerged after many women told us that HOPe is vital in getting through the journey ahead, and how important it is to have key information to help overcome the HURdLES that may come and go. Our Hope & Hurdles Pack is dedicated to the memory of Veronica Macaulay-Cross, our former Queensland State Representative, whose influence and drive to ensure the pack was produced was relentless.

In conjunction with the Melbourne launch, BCNA ran a forum for women with secondary breast cancer, and their husbands, partners and friends. Members of the public were invited to view the Hope & Hurdles photographic exhibition, featuring beautiful portraits of women from across Australia living their lives with secondary breast cancer.

Similar Hope & Hurdles launch events will be held in every state and territory over the next 18 months.

Read more about what is in the Hope & Hurdles Pack, and the launch event, in The Inside Story, our supplement in The Beacon about issues related to secondary breast cancer or visit our website www.bcna.org.au. Phone 1800 500 258 to receive The Inside Story.

Based on the My Journey Kit model, the Hope & Hurdles Pack is a unique, multifaceted, high-quality resource for women living with breast cancer – the first of its kind in Australia. Please spread the word among your friends and networks.

The Hope & Hurdles Pack is now available free of cost for any woman living with secondary breast cancer in Australia. Women can order their Hope & Hurdles Pack via the automated phone service 1300 887 340 or www.bcna.org.au. It will be delivered by mail within 10 working days, depending on where they live in Australia.

We thank the Australian Government for its $100,000 support for our new Pack, announced by Senator the Hon. Helen Coonan, when she attended our Field of Women LIVE event.

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Thank you

We appreciate the financial support given to us by individuals, clubs, organisations and companies around Australia. We would especially like to acknowledge the help of the following recent outstanding supporters:

- Aviva
- Breastcancer In City/Country (Younger Women’s Group) Ballarat
- Country Road Clothing Pty Ltd
- Delaware North Companies
- Diamond Valley Archers
- Enzo Palmieri
- Green Acres Golf Club
- Griffith Ex-Servicemen’s Club
- Heritage Finance Golf Day
- Huon Management Services
- J Abbott Constructions
- Jill Bonighton
- Kitchen Aid
- Lauriston Girls’ School
- Lillian Moroney
- Manildra Group, Dick Honan
- Margaret Illman
- Marilyn Salter
- Mary Stewart
- Merwic Schrank Pty Ltd
- Moama Bowling Club
- Nazio Pty Ltd
- Panton Hill Football Club
- Preejays Developments, Peter and Anita Weinert
- Penrith Swans Junior AFL Club
- Peter McLInnes Pty Ltd
- Phuong Tran
- Premium Floors Pty Ltd
- Robert Treloar
- Roost Homewares
- Sport Star
- Susy Varveri
- Terrace Tearooms
- Yarra Bend Ladies Golf Club
- Yates, a Division of Orica

Tontine’s recent promotional campaign supporting women with breast cancer was celebrated this month with a Tontine morning tea presentation of a cheque for $19,527.60 raised for BCNA. Tontine is a Pacific Brands company. Pictured at the presentation are: Gayle Caudry (Tontine), Geoff Reader (Kmart), Antoinette Azzopardi (BCNA) and Ian Shannon (Tontine).

In Memory

We pay tribute to the lives of Giuseppa Costantino, Judith Russo, Jan Pummeroy, Jenny Chaston, Isabelle Cloughton, Karen Jones, Liz Gannon and Gladys Monnox. We are most grateful to their families who requested donations to BCNA in their memory.

I will survive

Gloria Gaynor

It took all the strength I had, not to fall apart,
Just trying hard to mend the pieces of my broken heart,
And I spent oh so many nights just feeling sorry for myself,
I used to cry, but now I hold my head up high.

I, I will survive,
Oh as long as I know how to love, I know I’ll stay alive
I’ve got all my life to live, I’ve got all my love to give
And I’ll survive, I will survive!

Celebrations

Happy birthday to Denise Hamilton, Anne S. Walker and Sabina Van Rooy, who asked to have money donated to BCNA in lieu of gifts to celebrate their special day.

Canterbury Girls' Secondary College (Vic.) ‘busted out’ with dozens of busts individually decorated and auctioned in a fundraiser for Breast Cancer Network Australia. To see more of the girls’ efforts, visit the BCNA website.

Seeking shelter

BCNA welcomes:
- Support Junction, Frankston & Surrounds, Vic.
- Stawell Breast Cancer Support Group, Vic.
- Active Women Touched By Cancer Celebrating Life, North Sydney, NSW
- Titivators Inc., Coffs Harbour, NSW

We now have 183 member groups and more than 23,000 individual members!
My Story

Something I’ve learned to live with

My name is Sue Thomson and I am 37 years old. I lost my mum to leukaemia when I was 25 and my dad to bowel cancer when I turned 31, so when I was diagnosed with breast cancer in August 2005 I thought my time was up. Having a five-year-old daughter, Danielle, made it even harder to accept.

We had moved to Darwin in May 2005. Breast cancer was all over the news because of Kylie Minogue. I had joined a badminton group and learnt three members had survived breast cancer. I thought I had better check myself – and there it was, a marble-sized lump in my right breast.

I found a local GP and he sent me for scans and biopsies. The results were not good. I was booked into surgery the following Monday. I had a lumpectomy and an auxiliary clearance. My surgeon was great and made the smallest of scars, but I hated having the drains and IVs attached. I did not want Danielle to see them when she visited.

After a few days I felt fine, but it was not over yet. I was not looking forward to chemotherapy, as I had seen both my parents go through it. I felt okay for the first few days after each chemo session, but by the fourth day I would get pretty sick. Knowing that I had more sessions to go was the worst feeling. Luckily, my chemo appointments always fell on a weekend so my partner, Ian, was home to look after Danielle. During my third session, my step-mum flew out to look after us.

Radiotherapy had to be done in Brisbane. It was tiring driving back and forth for the treatment, but well worth it. One weekend, Danielle and Ian’s mum flew to the Gold Coast and we went to the theme parks. Ian had a surprise for me too – he had arranged for me to be photographed with a tiger at Dreamworld.

I am now on tamoxifen, which gives me a few side effects. My life is getting back to normal slowly, but it will never be as it was.

Having cancer plays on my mind: thinking the worst and knowing that it could return is something I have learnt to live with. But surviving breast cancer gets easier with time. At first, I checked myself every hour for more lumps and then every day. Now I probably check once or twice a month. When I have had my yearly scans I breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that I have survived another year.

Because I am on tamoxifen, I am reminded most days of the cancer, but I try not to be controlled by a tiny pill. Knowing that it is helping to prevent the cancer from returning, I take it and put up with the side effects.

Having a young child while going through cancer has made me want to be strong for her, to put on a brave face and smile, and keep her life as normal as I can, and answering questions that I thought I would not have to deal with yet. Some days I just look at my daughter growing and know that we are both lucky I am still around. With each birthday she has I am grateful that I can share it with her. Having Danielle kept me strong and I WILL attend her 18th and 21st birthday parties.

Sue Thomson, Western Australia

Funding for Extended Aromatase Inhibitor

From 1 August 2007, Letrozole (Femara) has been listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for extended adjuvant therapy. It will be available for post-menopausal women who have taken tamoxifen for 4½-6 years for early breast cancer.

While several aromatase inhibitors are available in Australia, Femara is the only one listed for a PBS subsidy for use after women have taken tamoxifen for around five years.

Sign up for an e-bulletin

Would you like to receive e-mail updates on any of these topics?

• Young women
• Secondary breast cancer
• Rural and remote issues
• Family (inherited) breast cancer

The emails provide regular updates on research, emerging treatments, media reports and relevant conferences. From time to time we will also ask e-list members for feedback on relevant topics and may even include a call for action on a particularly important issue.

To sign up to an e-bulletin, email us at policy@bcna.org.au. In your email, please tell us which topic(s) you would like to receive, and include your full name and postcode.

E-bulletins are sent each month.
Letters

40 years!
The Beacon arrived today and it was a joy to read it while having a sit down and enjoying a cuppa. I found it all very interesting as usual, and always look forward to receiving it.

I noticed your request for survivor’s stories for the spring issue. This made me realise how excited I will be on 22 September this year. It will be 40 years since I had a radical mastectomy (at the age of 37) followed by radiation treatment. My husband and I are planning to celebrate.

I lead a busy life and have had no further problems. I was trained more than 30 years ago to give support to those diagnosed with breast cancer and have been a volunteer with Cancer Council NSW since then. I have supported more than 900 ladies in central west NSW in that time. It is my way of giving thanks for my survival.

I send my very best wishes to all the ladies who read this. I do hope and pray that many of your readers will be long-time survivors like me.

Gwen Coulter, NSW

Brave girls
I was really impressed by the article on women who have been on clinical trials that was featured in the winter issue of The Beacon.

Anne Siemon, Queensland

The month of March
March was a month that I used to look forward to. In the UK, before I migrated, it meant the northern spring was on its way. But in Australia, March is the start of autumn. It is also the anniversary month of my diagnosis in 2004.

I have just had my yearly mammogram and scan. Another year, all clear! Plus, March marks the start of the footy season and for me to go mad and scream for my team, the Brisbane Lions, even though stress is not good for you!

I just want to say thank you to BCNA for all the support you give us. You help me face the reality of breast cancer. I know I have to live with this for the rest of my life, but not on my own.

Jacki Jones, Queensland

Good on you, Raelene!
BCNA was delighted with Raelene Boyle’s inclusion in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List. Raelene was made a Member of the Order of Australia for her “service to the community through a range of roles with organisations that support people with cancer, particularly Breast Cancer Network Australia”.

BCNA greatly appreciates Raelene’s commitment and dedication to our work and to women and their families across Australia. Her award is well deserved.

Post-surgery clothing survey
Do you get frustrated trying to find suitable lingerie and clothing after breast cancer surgery? Breast cancer survivor Julie Kesby is conducting a survey to measure the impact of breast cancer on clothing satisfaction. Women who have had breast cancer surgery are invited to contribute to the on-line survey. Go to www.clothingsurvey.info.

You will need access to the internet and email to participate.
Get involved in BCNA’s Community Liaison Group

Would you like to represent BCNA? This might be to speak at a community fundraising event, be the face of a local media story or visit our sponsors to let them know how much we appreciate their support.

We are developing a group to act as our Community Liaisons. We often need local women to represent us. This is an expansion of BCNA’s Seat at the Table Program to allow further opportunities for our members all over the country to get involved with our work.

To be a member of our Community Liaison Group you will need to:

- have a little spare time to share with us.
- be prepared to speak about your own experience of breast cancer;
- speak about BCNA and our key programs; and
- have a little spare time to share with us.

We will provide a one-day training program at venues around the country. As well as inviting women who have had breast cancer to join our Community Liaison Group, we are keen to attract others who have been closely affected by someone else’s breast cancer, for example those with a family history of breast cancer or the partners of women affected.

If you are interested in supporting BCNA’s work in your local community, please email beacon@bcna.org.au for more information and an application form. We would love to hear from you.

Would you like to be on the mailing list for The Beacon or The Inside Story?

Telephone 1800 500 258 (freecall), email beacon@bcna.org.au or fill in this coupon and send it to: Breast Cancer Network Australia, 293 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124.

Yes, please send me:  ☐ The Beacon, BCNA’s free quarterly magazine

☐ The Inside Story, a four-page supplement on living with secondary breast cancer, mailed with The Beacon to those who request it.

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

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

State: ................................................... Postcode: .......................... Phone: (     )  ............................................................

Email: ..........................................................................................................................................................................................

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

If yes, what year were you diagnosed? ........................................... What year were you born? .................................

Have you had a diagnosis of secondary breast cancer?  ☐ Yes ☐ No

From Darwin to Davenport, Mini-Fields fire up

The month of October sees groups across Australia, from Darwin to Devonport, Port Pirie to Goondiwindi, and Swan Hill to Kalbarri rev up to host their Mini-Field of Women events.

From decorating a whole island pink, to breakfasts, golf days, fashion parades and everything in between, Mini-Fields are as individual as the communities organising them. One hundred pink silhouettes will be seen at each event – a powerful symbol of the women who are affected by breast cancer across the country.

We wish to thank all the Mini-Fields convenors who are hosting an event. We appreciate their invaluable support of BCNA and women with breast cancer.

For enquiries about Mini-Fields of Women, please phone BCNA on 1800 500 258 or email minifields@bcna.org.au

BCNA’s Community Liaison Jenny Hall presents Bree Brown, Franchisee of Bakers Delight Whitford with a Pink Lady Award.
Upcoming Events

September 29: BCNA Members’ Forum, in conjunction with the Australasian Society for Breast Disease annual meeting, 10.30am – 1.00pm, Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort. Guest speakers include BCNA Board Member Raelene Boyle and Medical Oncologist Nicole McCarthy. Bookings essential – phone 1800 500 258 any time and leave your name. There is no charge to attend.

September 28-30: Dragons Abreast in Australia – the first international survivors’ regatta held in Australia, at Caloundra, Queensland. A Field of Women comprising 2,800 pink lady silhouettes (the number of Queensland women who will be diagnosed this year) will be held in conjunction with the event. Dragons Abreast www.dragonsabreast.com.au.

October: Mini-Fields of Women will be held around the country. Visit www.bcna.org.au for more information.

October 5: Fashion Parade hosted by Westfield Woden (ACT), 6.00pm – 8.00pm, Woden Plaza. No charge. Champagne and canapés provided. Donations to BCNA. RSVP 28 September on 02 6283 6000.

October 13-14: Up Close and Personal – 1st National Conference for Australian Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer, Melbourne. This conference is being organised by Young Action on Breast Cancer; see www.bcna.org.au – young women’s section for more details.

October 16-26: Amazon Heart Thunder Australia. Women diagnosed with breast cancer, of any age and at any stage of the disease can participate in this motorbike ride from Melbourne, along the Great Ocean Road finishing in the Barossa Valley. To find out more or to register, visit www.amazonheartthunder.org.

October 20: Bosom Buddies (ACT) Celebration of Life – annual fundraising fashion parade and dinner, Ballroom, Hyatt Hotel Canberra. For more information, visit www.bosombuddies.com.au. RSVP 12 October to bosombuddies@shout.org.au or Melanie Godfrey 0406 376 500.

October 21: Dragons Abreast ACT Regatta, Commonwealth Place, 8.00am – 3.00pm. This colourful regatta launches the dragon boat season in Canberra with 30 social and corporate teams racing in pink. A Mini-Field of Women and Flowers on the Water ceremony will be held to acknowledge women and men affected by breast cancer. For information email Cathy Powell at cpowlil@netspeed.com.au.


October 22: Survivorship Seminar for women with breast cancer, 7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Parkview Room, Dallas Brooks Hall, Melbourne. Hosted by the Epworth Freemasons Hospital. For more information, phone Jan Cheyne on 03 9483 3711.

October 22: Bosom Buddies (ACT) Australia’s Breast Cancer Day event. Venue and time to be confirmed. For more information, email bosombuddies@shout.org.au or phone Melanie Godfrey 0406 376 500.

October 23: Harnessing Hope – Overcoming Hurdles – BCNA’s second Hope & Hurdles forum for women with secondary breast cancer, Stamford Grand Hotel, Glenelg, SA, 10.30am – 12.30pm with lunch to follow. No cost, but registration is essential. Women may bring a guest. For more information, visit www.bcna.org.au or phone 1800 500 258.

October 22-26: BCNA’s Hope & Hurdles photographic exhibition, depicting women living with secondary breast cancer, on public display at the Stamford Grand Hotel, Glenelg.

October 26-28: Breast Cancer Network New Zealand conference for women with breast cancer, Rotorua, New Zealand. For more information, visit www.bcnz.org.nz

November 21: Harnessing Hope – Overcoming Hurdles – BCNA’s third Hope & Hurdles forum for women with secondary breast cancer, Sofitel Hotel, Brisbane, 10.30am – 12.30pm with lunch to follow. No cost, but registration is essential. Women may bring a guest. For more information, visit www.bcna.org.au or phone 1800 500 258.

November 21-23: BCNA’s Hope & Hurdles photographic exhibition, depicting women living with secondary breast cancer, on public display at the Sofitel Hotel, Brisbane.

December 12: Breast Cancer Action Group NSW Annual General Meeting, NSW State Library, Macquarie St, Sydney, 5.00pm. For more information, email info@bcagnsw.org.au or visit the website www.bcagnsw.org.au.