Our Pink Lady sparkles on the MCG

Photo courtesy of The Herald Sun.
Thank you to photographer Jeremy Heffernan and his team at Conception Design.
Our Pink Lady comes alive on the MCG

As the ‘Pink army’ arrived at the MCG, the excitement was palpable. Flights from interstate had arrived and buses and trains from regional and metropolitan Victoria had brought thousands of us together – our friends, family, colleagues and the community who wanted to show they cared.

From the air our Pink Lady symbol, made up of 14,000 women and men representing the number of Australians who will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010, was taking shape. It was hard not to be blown away by its size. Down on the ground, faces showed how breast cancer affects every Australian.

Once the initial excitement had dissipated, it was time to reflect, celebrate and honour all those affected by breast cancer.

No-one could have expected the spectacular view as the MCG lights were turned off and 14,000 women and men switched on their individual pink flashing lights. Our Pink Lady sparkled to the words of You’ll never walk alone, sung so poignantly by Kate Ceberano (below left).

Connected through a shared experience, united in a powerful image, seen by hundreds of thousands around Australia – once again our Field of Women LIVE linked us together and helped to ensure no-one would feel alone.

Event Ambassador Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, along with Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon (below right) and Victorian Health Minister Daniel Andrews, said they felt honoured to be part of this powerful symbol that sent a message of support to so many in the community.

Thank you to everyone who joined us. We hope this was a memorable event for you. We certainly stopped the public in their tracks and ensured the community understands that behind the statistics, there is a ‘real’ woman and a whole support team around her.

Thanks to the generous support of those who joined us on the night, our sponsors and the community we have raised significant funds. With this we can continue to provide quality programs and support to you and those who will be diagnosed in the future.

Our website has a complete coverage of the event and many moving testimonials. Visit www.b INA.org.au

To mark the Field of Women LIVE 2010, the Herald Sun newspaper is offering this beautiful commemorative photograph (featured on our front cover) for sale to our Beacon readers, with $5 donated to BCNA from each purchase. The A4 photograph is $15 plus $3 postage.

For credit card orders, visit www.heraldsun.com.au/shop or call 1300 306 107. For mail order, post a cheque/money order to Field of Women, PO Box 14730, Melbourne, Vic 8001. BCNA appreciates the Herald Sun’s assistance in making the photo available.
Many women and men from rural and remote Australia joined us at the MCG to take part in the Field of Women LIVE. This issue of The Beacon explores the particular challenges faced by them during and after their breast cancer diagnosis.
Issue of concern

Challenges of distance

Other women choose to travel to cities or regional centres where they can access expert care and a full range of treatments, but they then feel isolated and lonely without a support network nearby. "Six to seven weeks away from family is a long time. If at all possible, have a family member or friend with you. I would also say: thank goodness for the phone."

We know from many women that being away from home for long periods, especially for weeks of daily radiotherapy treatment, is a major challenge, both emotionally and logistically. While some may be able to arrange to have family with them, many women have to leave them at home. Finding ways to stay in touch is important: phone calls, letters, emails and the computer program Skype, which allows families to talk over the internet and to see each other if the computers have cameras, can all play a role.

The National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre (NBOCC) is currently exploring ways to connect women from rural areas with their families through regular online video communication when significant periods of time away from home are required for radiotherapy treatment. The project is part of the Supporting Women in Rural Areas Diagnosed with Breast Cancer Program, funded by the Australian Government and delivered by NBOCC and BCNA. The logistics of setting up support for families staying at home can also be daunting. Breast care nurses and hospital social workers may be able to suggest ways to help manage the household while women are away. Local councils will sometimes provide practical assistance, such as child care or home help. We encourage women not to be afraid to ask those around them for help. We often hear stories about the benefits of living in a small community, where friends, family and support groups pitch in to support others in times of need.

There may also be added financial implications for rural women. On top of the cost of travel, accommodation and living expenses while away from home, they may have to take time off work for treatment and appointments, or even give up work altogether. For those with young children, the cost and availability of child care can be an issue.

There are some financial assistance programs available to help people in rural areas, including Patient Assisted Travel Schemes (PATS). We know, however, that the financial assistance available through PATS is often inadequate. We suggest women talk to a health professional, such as a breast care nurse or social worker, or the Cancer Helpline (phone 13 11 20) to find out what is available in their area.

A list of resources for women living in rural areas is available on our website at www.brna.org.au.

Keeping families in touch

A pilot project funded by Polo Ralph Lauren Pink Pony Campaign, helping women in regional Victoria stay in touch with their families while away from home for treatment, has been a huge success.

The Barwon South Western Regional Integrated Cancer Service, based in Geelong, provided seven laptop computers to women with breast cancer and their families, allowing them to make free video calls using the internet program Skype. While the women were away from home for radiotherapy, they were able to keep in touch with their families with a nightly chat over the Internet.

"Some women told us they didn't think the video connection would be so important and that a phone call would do," project coordinator Maggie Stowers said. However, they found that being able to see their children's faces and know they were okay was a great relief to them.

Another benefit was that children could see gradual changes in their mother's appearance.

"The children were so excited to see their mums," Maggie said. "One mother had to have them line up and take turns to stop them all speaking at once."

The program will now be expanded to four towns in Barwon south-western Victoria.

"We found the program to be a great support to families," Maggie said.
Living on a cattle station

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2008, at age 43.

While in Brisbane for our eldest daughter’s end of Year 12 celebrations I had my mammogram, which came back clear, and an ultrasound that picked up a tumour.

I was lucky; I was referred to a good surgeon who fitted me into his busy operating schedule for a mastectomy of my right breast the following week. My chemotherapy started at the end of December and consisted of six trips of about 2300 km return, at three-weekly intervals, to Brisbane for treatment.

My oncologist tried to organise treatments around our air services. I think we only managed to catch the plane from our nearest town once. Floods and other complications meant we had to drive to either Charleville, 410 km away, or Longreach, 320 km, to catch a plane. My husband accompanied me to all my treatments and surgery, which required us having to get someone to look after our cattle property. We were lucky a friend from town came out every time we had to go to Brisbane. We couldn’t have done it without him.

Living on a fairly remote property, with my closest neighbour about 20 km away meant I didn’t have the regular face-to-face support of family or friends dropping in during my treatment. However, I had lots of support over the phone and by email, and my husband was absolutely wonderful.

I have to travel to Brisbane for check-ups every six months, which I try to coincide with other trips, such as picking up or dropping off our daughters at boarding school or university. Fifteen months and thousands of kilometres later, I’m feeling great and looking forward to a very bright and long future.

Maureen, QLD

BCNA out of the ‘big smoke’

About 30% of women diagnosed with breast cancer live outside a major metropolitan city. This can limit their access to information and support services.

In 2009, the Australian Government gave BCNA and the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre funding over three years to develop projects to better support women in rural Australia.

We are using this funding for a number of projects, including our recently relaunched website and our new online network.

The website (www.bcna.org.au) has had a makeover, with a fresh look and improved navigation for easier access to quality information, including material specifically for women living in rural and regional areas.

Our new social networking site allows women around Australia to connect with others and participate in online discussions. Others affected by breast cancer, including family members and friends, are also encouraged to join our online network.

We are also taking our information forums to the country, hosting 15 forums in regional areas over two years. Open to all affected by breast cancer, our forums provide information about the latest advances in breast cancer treatment and care, and ways to enhance emotional wellbeing.

They are a great opportunity to meet other women with breast cancer from within the area.

‘I would like to thank all who were involved in the Tamworth Forum. It was a very informative and enjoyable day. I know that I speak on behalf of all from rural areas when I say it was lovely and a rare treat for us to be included.’

For information about our Forums, visit www.bcna.org.au or see our ‘Dates for your diary’ on page 16.

Maureen (right) and her friend Bub at a cancer fundraiser.

Anne Cameron and her daughters Kellie Walker (left) and Katie Dudman at the BCNA Forum in Burnie, Tasmania.
Ask the Expert

Amanda Finlay BCN

Amanda Finlay is a McGrath Breast Care Nurse (BCN) based in Dalby, south-east Queensland. McGrath BCNs are funded by the McGrath Foundation, which uses Australian Government funds and public donations to place BCNs in hospitals across rural and regional Australia. Amanda is one of 55 BCNs funded by the McGrath Foundation. There are also hundreds of other specialist BCNs in hospitals around the country.

What are the main aspects of your role as a breast care nurse?

There are no specialist cancer treatment centres in Dalby, so women from this area have to travel to larger centres such as Toowoomba and Brisbane for their surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. My role is to support them when they are at home. I coordinate their care from diagnosis, through treatment to follow-up. Continuous support from one person can help reduce the stress and trauma of their breast cancer experience.

What are some of the ways you help women?

I can help women with information about their treatment by linking them to support services in their local area and by providing emotional support. A woman may have questions after seeing her specialist, so I try to answer those and get information so she can make an informed decision about what’s best for her.

I explain the treatments women are receiving – often you can’t absorb everything the surgeon or oncologist tells you, so when women get home they, and their families, can come to me with their questions. I also help manage side effects of chemotherapy and treat radiotherapy burns. Often women come to me looking for information. I can give them advice about prostheses – where and how to purchase them and how to claim the cost under the Medicare program – and about breast reconstruction. I always ask if they’ve received their My Journey Kit and My Care Kit* and can order these if they haven’t. I can also arrange their physiotherapy in their home town and, sometimes, someone to come in to help with housework. Providing emotional support throughout a woman’s breast cancer experience is another important part of my role. If they’re having a bad day, they can come to me for a chat and a cry.

Do you provide support to families as well as women?

I work with families to help them understand what is happening to Mum. For instance, I had a couple who were having a lot of trouble telling their young children about the diagnosis. We got a copy of Cancer Council Queensland’s book “What is Happening to My Mummy?” and discussed it with the children. Everyone was happier afterwards, especially the children who had been scared because they knew something was happening to their mother but nobody was explaining what it was.

Is there anything you would like to see done differently in the way we care for women in rural areas?

I think having the support of a BCN close to home makes a big difference. There are probably a lot of rural women without a BCN who feel isolated and unsupported. I would like to see every woman diagnosed with breast cancer have access to a BCN.

How can women find out if there is a breast care nurse in their area?

The McGrath Foundation’s website (www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au) has a map showing the location of McGrath BCNs. Any woman can contact a McGrath BCN at any stage of her breast cancer experience, even if her treatment has finished, through the hospital or community health centre where she is based.

Where there is no McGrath BCN nearby, women can ring the Cancer Helpline (13 11 20) or their local hospital to ask the location of their nearest BCN.

How would you sum up your role as a breast care nurse?

I can provide you and your family with one consistent source of information and support throughout your breast cancer experience.

*A The My Care Kit is distributed to women undergoing breast cancer surgery. It contains important information on services provided by BCNA, as well as a specially designed post-surgery bra, provided with compliments of Berlei, in partnership with BCNA.

Additional post-surgery bras can be bought from participating retail outlets across Australia for $49.95, with $5 from each sale going directly to BCNA.

To find a local stockist, phone Berlei Customer Service on 1800 645 045 and quote bra style number Y130W, or find the style at www.berlei.com.au
A round trip of 1400 km

I live in a small town in Queensland’s central west, 600 km west of Rockhampton. It’s a great, friendly community, one of the reasons I am so happy living here.

I needed that friendship and support when I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, especially as my family lives 700 km away in Mackay.

Living out here, it’s a given that people have to go away for medical treatment. I had an ultrasound in Emerald, 300 km away; then a mammogram and biopsy in Rockhampton. I chose to have my treatment in Mackay so I could have the support of my family. I had surgery, went home to recover, then drove in six times for chemotherapy, a round trip of 1400 km each time.

Six weeks of radiation treatment followed. We decided to have this in Brisbane (2100 km from home) as we would have the support of extended family and friends there.

For most of my chemo doses, we decided it was best for our children to stay with friends out here and keep to their usual routine. Each time we left them behind it was a wrench.

Every three weeks we would organise for them to stay with someone, let the school know what was happening, and get someone to feed the cat and collect the mail.

I felt quite concerned when I first came home after surgery, being so far away from my doctors, but when I found out that there was a breast care nurse nearby, I felt better. Her support has been outstanding and she is the driving force behind our fledgling support group, which covers the entire central west region. We meet quarterly because of the distances involved in getting together.

My story is not unique; there are many others who have been through the same. I love living in this part of the country; the benefits outweigh the disadvantages every time.

Sue
Barcaldine, QLD

The beautiful, good, bad and ugly

Living in rural South Australia I am lucky we live only 1½ hours from Adelaide. After I found a lump my doctor sent me to have a mammogram and ultrasound. The results didn’t show anything sinister, but luckily I was sent to have further checks. As I was low risk I was put on a six-week waiting list, and after three trips to Adelaide, and finally a biopsy, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy and lymph node clearance.

It was such a shock as I was a healthy, active person.

The travelling was bearable until my last visit, when I suffered from the side effects of chemotherapy and had to travel for intravenous treatment. On this occasion I was carsick, as well as sick during the treatment, and then had to endure the trip home.

Since then I have worked with my oncologist so that my local GP can now administer chemotherapy.

I then had six weeks of radiotherapy. Luckily this was at a new unit at a hospital only 40 minutes away, so I didn’t have to travel to Adelaide every day.

Breast cancer has certainly shown me the beautiful, the good, the bad and the ugly sides of this disease.

I am keeping positive. With a holiday planned at the end of my treatment, I have something to look forward to.

Mandy
Kapunda, SA
Delays and challenges

Four years ago, when I was 24 and pregnant with our first child, I found a lump in my left breast. I live in Mount Gambier, SA. My GP thought it was probably a cyst, but wanted me to get it checked and have an ultrasound and fine needle biopsy. When she went to make my appointments I could only get in for an ultrasound in two weeks time. There was an extra wait for the biopsy.

The ultrasound result was inconclusive so I had to wait another couple of weeks for a biopsy. The biopsy news wasn’t good and I saw a surgeon in Adelaide the following day. All up, it was about six to eight weeks between discovering the lump and being diagnosed. I think if I lived in the city it would have been diagnosed earlier as I wouldn’t have had to wait so long for appointments. The health system here is crazy – not enough services!

Mind you, I wouldn’t have received the amazing support from the community and friends that I did if I lived in the city. When I returned home from hospital our house was full of flowers and cards. I was induced two weeks early so I could start chemo a week after giving birth.

Bonnie and her husband Luke, with their boys Bailey and Tyler.

I had to travel to Adelaide every three weeks for six rounds of chemo. I am lucky that my family was able to drop everything and help me financially, emotionally and physically.

Luckily my surgeon comes to our area once a month so I don’t have to travel to Adelaide whenever I need to see him, but I do have to travel to Adelaide to have MRIs as the service isn’t available here yet. We get a reimbursement from PATS, but it is only a percentage. I am fine now and we have two beautiful boys. I will do any travelling I have to do to ensure I stay that way; however I know that not everybody is in the financial position to do so.

Bonnie
Mt Gambier, SA

Exercise motivation by phone

Our Summer 2009 issue of The Beacon investigated the role of exercise during and after breast cancer treatment. Many studies have shown that regular, moderate-intensity physical activity can help reduce the symptoms and side effects of treatment, and improve quality of life.

For women living in rural and remote communities, it can be difficult to find someone to provide guidance on a safe and appropriate physical activity program.

Queensland researchers recently completed a study investigating the effectiveness of delivering exercise programs to women in rural areas by telephone. The study, the Exercise for Health program, recruited women living in regional Queensland who were newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

The women were put in touch with an exercise physiologist, who designed an exercise program to suit each woman and telephoned them at regular intervals over an eight-month period to provide advice and support. The women undertook activities such as walking, swimming and cycling that were appropriate for them and easily accessible in their area. Strength training that could be done at home was also included.

The results of the study are currently being analysed, and early findings suggest it was successful. After six months on the program, the women who received exercise counselling by telephone showed higher levels of physical activity, and a greater increase in quality of life (including less fatigue) than those who did not receive telephone counselling.

‘Being rural, it was great to talk to someone who was prepared to listen and offer some advice.’

‘I felt that this program was a sort of lifeline for helping me keep positive and implementing the exercises.’

BCNA hopes this research may encourage the establishment of ongoing telephone-delivered physical activity programs for women in rural and remote areas.

If you are interested in getting into some physical activity, your breast care nurse or doctor may be able to advise you on any suitable programs available in your community or recommend some exercise DVDs you can use at home.

The YWCA also runs the Encore exercise program specifically for women who have experienced breast cancer. Phone Encore on 1800 305 150 (freecall) to find out if there is a program near you.

For a list of exercise programs around Australia, see our resource sheet, Living well after breast cancer, from Issue 49 in The Beacon archive section of our website, www.bcna.org.au.
Activity keeps me going

In 2007, at age 73, I discovered a lump in my breast. I travelled 43 km to my GP, who promptly sent me to Shepparton 100 km away for a mammogram, ultrasound, and biopsy. From there I was referred to a specialist in Melbourne, 350 km from Mathoura where I live. I was operated on in Melbourne and had chemo in Echuca. After a few weeks break I commenced radiation 143 km away in Bendigo. I stayed there during the week and went home on weekends. That went on for six weeks.

While I was in Bendigo I attended a gym to increase my fitness and strengthen my arm. It was a great help and I joined a similar group in Echuca when I came home.

I play golf, bowls and volunteer, walk most days and like gardening. Being involved in a small community and the wonderful support from family and friends helped me to get back to doing most things.

Elaine
Mathoura, NSW

Mary
Alice Springs, NT

Alice Springs … and decisions

I had just moved to Alice Springs and was looking for work when I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

What options does one have in a remote area? One, stay and be treated by the public system with minimal exposure to specialists, or go interstate to find specialist care. I used both private and public services. I am pleased with the choices I made, but the final outcome of follow-up care I feel has been compromised.

As soon as my GP gave me my diagnosis, the local hospital organised mammograms, biopsies and day surgery for a lumpectomy. I hadn’t really considered specialist care, however, a friend of mine took the initiative to arrange an appointment with her specialist surgeon in Adelaide, my home town, 1300 km away. I had a sentinel node biopsy and surgery to remove more nodes all through the private hospital system in Adelaide. Three weeks later I returned home to Alice Springs, where I was to start chemo immediately. The option of receiving this treatment where friends and family were was just what I wanted, but it was a horrendous two-day journey.

On arriving home I contacted the hospital to arrange an appointment for my first treatment. It took three phone calls to find anyone who would help me.

What other option did I have?

Go back to Adelaide and spend up to six months receiving chemo and radiotherapy, staying in government-provided accommodation, or remain at home with the support of family? Also, if I went to Adelaide, my husband would accompany me and have to take time off work without pay. Others I know of have chosen to fly to their place of treatment for each chemo session and return home as soon as they are feeling well enough to fly.

After chemo it was off to Adelaide again for six weeks for radiotherapy in the public sector. Some follow-ups were arranged with my private breast care specialist, as well as my oncologist who visits Alice Springs regularly in the public sector.

Travel is an issue. The risk of lymphoedema during travel either by air or road is worrying. Travelling when one is unwell and recovering from surgery is not desirable. Living in a remote area limits one’s choice considerably and has an enormous influence on one’s emotional wellbeing.

Mary
Alice Springs, NT
Eric the Echidna Has Lost His Spikes

Author Debrah Pacholke, Illustrator Mick Grace. Published by Harbed Inc., Qld, Australia. RRP: $20.

I found this book, written by breast cancer survivor Debrah Pacholke, delightful and inspirational. It is ideal for young cancer patients or the young children of cancer patients.

Captivating illustrations by Mick Grace make this picture book appealing. The pictures are large, colourful, and amusing, and will certainly hold a young child’s attention. I found myself smiling as I looked at them. The pictures alone could provide a lot of interaction between the reader and the child. It has simple, large text and not too many words, so is an ‘easy to read’ book.

Through a charming and simple story, the message of hope and support is clearly conveyed by Debrah. Eric the Echidna loses his spikes in a storm and his friends help him regain them bit by bit. This scenario clearly can be related to a cancer experience in many ways. It provides a sensitive and simple introduction to a difficult topic.

For a young child with cancer there is firstly the simple message that although they may have lost their hair, like Eric’s spikes, it will come back! Even as an adult cancer survivor I certainly found myself relating this to when I lost my hair. It all fell out in big clumps over a day, and at the end of treatment came back little by little, until it was a head full of radiant curls.

There is also the message of friendship and support. Eric’s friends all help him along the way. What a positive and valuable message this is to a young child. It reinforces that all their friends, family, doctors and people they meet along their journey are there to help them get through the tough times. It can also be used to explain how they can help someone who is close to them and has cancer, just like Eric’s friends helped him.

With an Australian bush theme, and written by Debrah to help raise awareness and funds to assist rural women, I highly recommend this enchanting book for pre-school children.

Rosie Bambery, VIC
BCNA Review and Survey Group Member

Finding ways to tackle the problem of social isolation

‘Loss of face-to-face contact with work colleagues meant a degree of social isolation. Initially (there were) lots of friends, visits, phone calls, etc., and then a gradual tapering off to almost being excluded from events and friendships.’

Many women find that friendships can be affected by their breast cancer diagnosis. Sadly, friends and colleagues sometimes don’t know how to cope with the news and respond by stepping back.

For women in small communities, this can be especially difficult, as there may be fewer opportunities to meet new people.

Staying involved with the relationships and activities that are important, such as family, work, friends, sport and hobbies, can be one way to help avoid feeling isolated.

‘I returned to my tennis group, although I no longer play. Just because you give up something, doesn’t mean you have to give up the people around you.’

Local breast cancer support groups are an excellent way to meet people and provide an opportunity to share common experiences.

Some rural support groups rotate their meetings around towns in their area, allowing more women an opportunity to join. Others, such as the groups in the Profiling Our Member Groups story on page 13, link together to support women when they are away from home for treatment. A list of support groups can be found on our website, www.bcna.org.au, or call us on 1800 500 258 for your closest group.

Some women won’t want to share news of their diagnosis and may struggle to protect their privacy in a small community. But it’s important to have someone to talk to such as a breast care nurse or doctor who can refer them to a local counsellor.

The Cancer Helpline (13 11 20) provides free, confidential emotional support to people living with cancer and their families.

Online social networking sites can also provide an opportunity to ‘meet’ people outside your usual community. BCNA is excited to have launched our own online networking site for women with breast cancer and their families. You can find it at www.bcna.org.au and clicking on the ‘Join our network’ link.

There will be more information about BCNA’s social networking site in the next issue of The Beacon. In the meantime, we would love you to join and have a look around. Please let us know what you think.

If you don’t have a computer at home, you may like to visit the local library, which will have computers available for use by the public and offer free training in basic computing and Internet skills.

Another useful resource is BCNA’s free brochure, Helping a friend or colleague with breast cancer, which includes practical tips on how to help someone who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. You can order copies to give to friends at www.bcna.org.au or by calling us
Our Townsville group, Livin’ Laughin’ Lovin’ It, was formed in October 2008. Like many groups we meet regularly to support people whose lives have been affected by breast cancer by providing information and sharing our breast cancer journeys.

Townsville is a major treatment centre for northern Queensland. Many women have to travel here from rural and remote areas when they are thrown into the tumultuous world of breast cancer. Our group was determined to offer support to these women who are dealing with not just a diagnosis but multiple appointments, surgery and ongoing treatments – all while isolated from family, friends and home.

I made contact with the North West Breast Cancer Support Group Mt Isa about our group’s desire to help in any way we could. As a result, Linda from the Mt Isa group called me about the possibility of our group providing support to a woman named Ondine. Ondine from Mt Isa had no family or connections in Townsville where she needed to be for a surgical review. I sent an email to our group members and I soon had offers of assistance. Andy picked her up from the airport, I visited her at the motel that afternoon, and Jan drove her to her appointments and took her on a shopping tour of Townsville. Ondine returned to Townsville on several occasions and we involved her in group meetings, our Christmas party and other social outings.

Ondine thanked us, saying ‘The additional burdens carried when you have to travel away from home for treatments can push you to the boundaries of your endurance. I will be forever grateful to the remarkable women of the Livin’ Laughin’ Lovin’ It group for their practical support over many months. The numerous outings we went on relieved my sense of isolation.’

We sought more opportunities for reciprocal support between groups. When a close friend of mine living further north was diagnosed with breast cancer I was able to contact Natalie Halse from the group Pink in The Tropics to ask her to make contact with her. We have also been able to help Natalie with her group’s petition to government about the Patient Assistance Travel Subsidy Scheme (PATS).

Two of our members have attended Shirley Gilmore’s Burdekin Breast Cancer Support Group meetings and some of us had the opportunity to support an Australian, now living in Spain, who was in Townsville for her treatment.

All this would not have been possible without the group members offering their unconditional support. I encourage other member groups to link together to access the wider support a reciprocal arrangement can offer and let BCNA know about your connections.

Margaret McKenzie

Over the past 10 years a key part of BCNA’s mission has been to link together Australians personally affected by breast cancer.

We welcome the following new groups to make a total of 255 BCNA Member Groups around Australia:

• Busting With Lifel, Pendle Hill, NSW
• Jacaranda Lodge Breast Cancer Support Group, Wahroonga, NSW
• Breast Friends BC Support Group – QLD, Charters Towers, QLD
• Sunraysia Cancer Resources Mildura, VIC
• Bella Donna’s Social Group, Darwin, NT
• Warnambool Social Breast Cancer Group, Warnambool, VIC
• Cessnock Breast Cancer Group, Cessnock, NSW

You can visit our website to find a Member Group, including support groups, in your state or territory at www.bcna.org.au.

BCNA also now has more than 43,000 individual members across Australia. Our members are women, men, their family members and friends who subscribe to our magazine, The Beacon.
We appreciate the financial support given to us by individuals, clubs, organisations and companies around Australia. We would especially like to acknowledge the recent help of these outstanding supporters:

- AFL Canberra, the Victorian Country Football League, Netball Victoria and all the clubs that participated in Pink Footy and Netball Day
- Pamela and Guy Agutter, VIC
- Bell Charitable Fund, VIC
- Margaret Browne, NSW
- Bunnings Moorabbin, VIC
- Sophie Clarke, VIC
- Concert for the Cure, NSW
- Colonial First State Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon organisers, participants and donors
- Wayne Crase, QLD
- Trish Frick, QLD
- Laurieton Haven Craft, NSW
- Debrah Pacholke, QLD
- Marnie Wadsworth, VIC
- Simon Watts, NT

**Celebrations**

Thank you to those who celebrated a special occasion and asked for donations to BCNA in lieu of gifts.

- Eve Chapman
- Vivienne Harkness
- Irene Hemsworth
- Trish Roberts
- Josef and Helga Ziegler

**Memorials**

We pay tribute to the lives of

- Lorraine Banks
- Christine Coward
- Noela Rogers
- Jennifer Schmidt

We are grateful for the donations we received in their memory.

**Workplace giving**

BCNA is delighted to be part of the workplace giving programs of a number of organisations where employees generously donate salary contributions to BCNA. Our thanks go to:

- Aviva Australia
- BHP Billiton
- Coles Group
- Collins Foods Group
- Macquarie Group
- National Australia Bank
- Target Australia
- The Westpac Group

More than 200 football clubs and 300 netball clubs across Victoria, ACT, SA and NSW turned ‘Pink’ in May to show support for women and their families who are affected by breast cancer.

Participating clubs bought a BCNA pink football or netball to use on game day. Many umpires wore a touch of pink, and teams held sausage sizzles with the support of their local Bakers Delight, hosted fundraising dinners, and auctioned their pink ball to raise funds for BCNA.

BCNA members were also involved in the special day, motivating their local team with stories of their breast cancer journey, or tossing the coin for the start of the game. This was also an excellent way for us to promote our My Journey Kit within the grassroots community.

‘What a sensational day! The show of strength and support from the sporting community has been overwhelming. Thank you to everyone who contributed; the players, coaches, umpires, spectators! You have certainly made a difference to BCNA members like myself and those on their breast cancer journey.’

Susan, Community Liaison ACT

Pink Footy and Netball Day 2010 was supported by the Victorian Country Football League, Netball Victoria and AFL Canberra. We would like to thank every participating club for your outstanding support!
Working hand in hand with Bakers Delight

This year marks the 10th year of Bakers Delight and BCNA working ‘hand in hand’.

Bakeries from all around Australia participated in the Pink Bun campaign by decorating their stores pink and selling delicious pink buns and tarts, as well as providing an opportunity for breast cancer survivors to educate and inform the community on such an important cause.

Thanks go to all our BCNA members who were involved in this linkup.

‘Bakers Delight is extremely proud of its association with BCNA – this year marks 10 years of our partnership. During the Pink Bun Campaign bakeries across the country formed a pink force as they united with survivors and communities to raise dough for Australians affected by breast cancer. Bakers Delight staff go all out for the Pink Bun fundraiser – as well as selling pink products, bakeries and their staff are dressed in pink and collection tins are on counters.’

Roger Gillespie, Executive Chairman, Bakers Delight

BCNA extends a huge vote of thanks and congratulations to all Bakers Delight staff throughout Australia.

At the time The Beacon went to print the money was still pouring in. Keep an eye on the website to see the final result.

‘It was so humbling to go into my local pink Bakers Delight bakery and know that all of this work and energy is for me and everyone in the BCNA Network. It brought tears to my eyes. Congratulations to all.’

Mary, BCNA member, VIC

Visit the BCNA website at www.bcna.org.au to see all the fantastic photos.

Couldn’t be at the MCG? Hold your own Mini-Field instead!

Many of you stood with us on the MCG on 7 May in a night to remember. Wasn’t it MARVELLOUS!

Now you can recreate a little of that magic in your own community by holding a Mini-Field of Women event during October.

We know that Mini-Fields of Women are a regular fixture on the calendar in many communities around Australia. These displays of silhouettes are a great opportunity for communities to come together to pay tribute to women and their families affected by breast cancer. Also they are an excellent way to let everyone know about the local support that is available for them.

‘We had a great day. There was laughter and tears, but most of all there was friendship.’

Sarah, NSW

If you would like to host a Mini-Field of Women, visit the website at www.bcna.org.au and register online. We will supply you with an event kit which contains Pink Lady Silhouettes and other items to pink up your day.

For further information, email minifields@bcna.org.au

Be inspired by what others have done in the past. Check out the case studies on our website at www.bcna.org.au

Don’t delay – register your Mini-Field today.
Dates for your diary

June 9 (Wednesday): BCNA Rockhampton Forum, Walter Reid Cultural Centre, cnr Derby and East Streets, Rockhampton, QLD, 10.30am to 3.00pm. The topic will be ‘Living Well after Breast Cancer’. The Forum is free and everyone is welcome but you must register either on our website www.bcna.org.au>Events>BCNA forums or phone 1800 500 258 (freecall).

June 10 (Thursday): BCNA Townsville Forum, Riverway Arts Centre, Village Blvd, Thuringowa, QLD, 10.30am to 3.00pm. The topic will be ‘Living Well after Breast Cancer’. The Forum is free and everyone is welcome but you must register either on our website www.bcna.org.au>Events>BCNA forums or phone 1800 500 258 (freecall).

June 15 – September 9: Well for Life: Cancer, Healing and Wellbeing Program, Suite2/35 Hume Street, Crows Nest, NSW. Tuesdays 5.30pm to 8.30pm. For more details www.wellforlife.net.au or phone Sabina Rabold 0419 980 923.

June 24 (Thursday): BreaCan will present a free workshop ‘Focusing on the Long Term: Living Well in the Middle Years’, 12-1.30pm, Ground Floor, Queen Victoria Women’s Centre, 210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. For information or bookings, phone 1300 781 500.

July: BCNA will hold forums in southern Western Australia in Bunbury and Geraldton. The topic will be ‘Living Well after Breast Cancer’. There is no cost to attend but please visit our website closer to the time for more details www.bcna.org.au>Events>Forums or phone 1800 500 258 (freecall).

July 31: BCAQ Goondiwindi Seminar, 8:30am-3.00pm, Goondiwindi Wagamba Community Cultural Centre. Cost $10 includes lunch and refreshments. RSVP: 22nd July (for catering), Phone: Tracey (07) 3666 0614 or Selina Talwood (07) 4677 1126. Speakers include surgeon, oncologist, local GP, breast care nurse, prosthesis specialist, dietician, lymphoedema specialist. All are welcome.

September 10-12: The 2nd National Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer. Radisson Gold Coast Resort, Queensland. This will be an opportunity to learn, network, share awareness and further advance the needs and issues of young women in Australia. Standard registration is $95. All registration details can be found at www.ywcaustralia.org.au. See website for terms and conditions or phone Cancer Council Queensland (07) 3634 5100.

September 11 (Saturday): BreaCan and Cancer Council Victoria ‘Hope in the face of uncertainty’ – a one-day forum for women living with secondary cancer. Queen Victoria Women’s Centre, 210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. Registration essential. Bookings and information on 1300 781 500.

September 19 (Sunday): Blackmores Sydney Running Festival. BCNA has been chosen as one of the supporter charities for this festival. Register to be a participant in one of the four events: Blackmores Sydney Marathon, Blackmores Half Marathon, The Sunday Telegraph body+soul 9km Bridge Run and The Sunday Telegraph 4km Family Fun Run. To participate in the event and to fundraise for BCNA visit: www.sydneyrunningfestival.com.au

October: Mini-Fields of Women will be held around Australia. Visit our website www.bcna.org.au to find a Mini-Field near you or to register your own.


BCNA Herceptin survey

BCNA would like women with early breast cancer who have been treated with Herceptin to complete a short survey for us. We hope to learn about women’s experiences with Herceptin.

The survey will be conducted online and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The survey will be anonymous – we will email you a link to a website where you complete it via the internet.

If you have been, or are currently being, treated with Herceptin for early breast cancer and would like to participate in the survey, send your name, postcode and email address to policy@bcna.org.au by Friday 18 June. We’d love your help.

Seeking stories

The Summer 2010 issue of The Beacon will highlight issues associated with breast reconstruction.

Have you had a breast reconstruction? What did it mean to you? Did you encounter problems in getting a reconstruction or finding information? Are you satisfied with the outcome?

Maybe you preferred not to have a reconstruction? Tell us what that decision means to you. We would love to hear from you.

Please email your story of 200-300 words (about half a page) to beacon@bcna.org.au by the end of September 2010. Please include a high-resolution digital photo, or post your photo to us, and we will return it to you.