



BreaCan
GYNAECOLOGICAL
& BREAST CANCER SUPPORT

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HOURS OF OPERATION
Monday 10am-2pm
Wednesday 10am-2pm
Thursday 10am-2pm
(Closed Public Holidays)

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BreaCan is a service of
Women's Health Victoria;
A state-wide women's health promotion,
information and advocacy service.

BreaCan is funded by the Victorian
Department of Health

BreaCan

YEAR IN REVIEW 09/10

www.breacan.org.au



A bridge to a clearer way forward...

Julie’s Story

After finding out I had breast cancer, I thought I could cope with anything with the support of my family and friends. To my surprise, I reflect on my experience now and on the support I have received from people I didn’t even know at the time; people who have walked a similar path and who know first hand the physical and emotional feelings that you are going through.

Going through surgery and other treatments, I progressively ticked off each session, feeling I was getting closer to the light at the end of the tunnel. When I was faced with a decision about which breast reconstruction surgery would be the best for me, things got a little bit hazy. I had all the facts from my surgeon, but I felt confused.

A friend who I met at a chemo treatment told me about an information session on breast reconstruction that was coming up at BreaCan. She suggested it might help give me a different perspective on things. This was the first time I had heard of BreaCan. When I rang to book in for the information session, I chatted with a volunteer for quite some time. She asked me where I was at in my treatment and how I was going. She suggested that I could come down to the centre if I wanted to and make use of their resources including CDs of previous talks and books or just come for a cuppa and a chat. She also arranged for other volunteers who had been through different kinds of reconstructive surgery to ring me (they were fantastic).

I enjoyed the information session on breast reconstruction and the question time afterwards. I heard answers to questions I hadn’t thought of. Afterwards a couple of volunteers offered to share their experiences of different kinds of reconstruction and the results of their surgery. I found this so uplifting to see the results and to realise that down the track you can look and feel sexually attractive again. I felt I could express my feelings to these women and they understood.

I take my hat off to the staff and volunteers at BreaCan; they have made my path clearer. I felt like a person the minute I walked in their door, not a number or a statistic and wish I had heard of this centre earlier in my treatment.

...A positive thing about breast cancer is the lovely people you meet along the way.

COVER: The ‘balance bridge’ reflects the fragile balancing act that life can often be. BreaCan assists women affected by breast and gynaecological cancers to find balance and take steps towards improved wellbeing.

QUOTES: Please note that some names have been changed to protect people’s privacy



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BreaCan continues to be enriched and energised by women’s stories, the generosity of our volunteers and a skilled and committed staff team.
Di Missen



3 Manager’s Message

Di Missen
BREACAN MANAGER

Earlier this year we were searching for some creative inspiration to derive a name for our new pilot project with the Royal Melbourne Hospital. One of our volunteers said she thought that a bridge symbolised the aim of the project and indeed it also reflects the role of our service.

In many ways BreaCan provides a bridge for people affected by breast and gynaecological cancers. A bridge to...support, meaning, understanding, expression, normality, acceptance, well being....

The advent of our innovative **Bridge of Support** pilot project represents an extension of our service model to providing peer support at the point of treatment – within the hospital setting. It reflects our willingness to try new ways of reaching women. It also acknowledges that support can be provided at any point in a woman’s experience of cancer – an experience that will affect every facet of her life.

BreaCan continues to be enriched and energised by women’s stories, the generosity of our volunteers and a skilled and committed staff team. This capacity enables us to contribute in a very real way to the Victorian Cancer Action Plan (VCAP) 2008-2011 particularly with respect to one of its four action areas – *Supporting and empowering patients and carers throughout their cancer journey*. Key aspects of the VCAP are reflected in the way we work – multidisciplinary approaches, flexibility, innovation, collaboration and partnership. Each day when we talk to women we are reminded that policy, practice and service delivery must always be driven by people’s experiences and a passion to improve and make a difference, both now and in the future.

Seven years on, BreaCan has forged trusting and respected relationships with many health professionals and other cancer agencies.

We work together, complementing their role in clinical care while we focus on the psychosocial needs of women and provide peer support in a unique way. The valuable insights and expertise of the BreaCan Advisory Group build on the perspectives of consumers and service providers and shapes our work. Also, as a service of Women’s Health Victoria, BreaCan confidently positions its work within a holistic context – with women being at the heart of what we do and who we are.

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of Sue Lockwood who died in December 2009. Sue was instrumental in the establishment and direction of BreaCan in her role as Chair of the Breast Cancer Action Group. Along with others, she strongly lobbied Government for the allocation of funds for a three year pilot of a volunteer-based resource centre offering women peer support and information. Her vision and commitment to create ‘a place’ for women has contributed to BreaCan now being firmly established as a valued women focussed and sustainable service within the cancer sector.

In reflecting on 2009/2010 I see BreaCan continuing to provide a valuable supportive care service to women and the people who care for them. I also see a range of ways in which we have expanded our capacity and extended our influence. I would like to say thank you to everyone who has been part of BreaCan’s achievements – there’s no doubt that the bridge, in its many guises, will lead us to another fulfilling year ahead.

Di Missen



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About Us

BreaCan is a unique information and support service for people throughout Victoria affected by breast and gynaecological cancers . A service of Women’s Health Victoria, BreaCan is committed to providing a women-focussed service that is shaped by what women say.

Our Strategic Goals

2009/2010 saw the implementation of the BreaCan Strategic Plan 2009-2012, with three strategic goals that guide our work and the development of our service:

1. Increasing the number of people using our service
2. Expanding our capacity
3. Extending our influence

“

I feel so much better speaking to a woman who has been there. This is the best thing that I could have done today.

Linda



BreaCan Bridge of Support volunteers. FRONT FROM LEFT: Pam, Pauline, Ellen, Helen Shepherd (BreaCan Services and Volunteer Co-ordinator). BACK FROM LEFT: Trish Minihan (RMH Volunteer Co-ordinator), Frederika, Heather, Mary, Janine

Highlights

Achieved the highest number of contacts recorded (2160) for BreaCan in a single financial year.

Implemented the innovative **Bridge of Support** pilot program, extending our peer support service to women who are undergoing treatment at The Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Commenced a valuable collaboration with Western Health to explore and respond to the needs of women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the Western suburbs.

Contributed to the field through presentation of a paper about the value of exercise in the management of lymphoedema to the Australasian Lymphology Association Conference.

Extended our reach through the development and trialing of the **Steps for Fun and Fitness** exercise program in Bulleen, Epping and Mitcham.

Successfully implemented the BreaCan website and completed the BreaCan promotional DVD – featured on the website.

Expanded our reach to women by successfully conducting free information forums in Craigieburn, Frankston and Ringwood and a Young Women’s Forum in Melbourne.

Collaborated with the Royal Women’s Hospital which provided a seven week program on menopause for women who have experienced early menopause due to their cancer treatment.

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A bridge to a new reality...

I came today to communicate with others with similar experiences and hoped to gain a more realistic view of life after cancer.

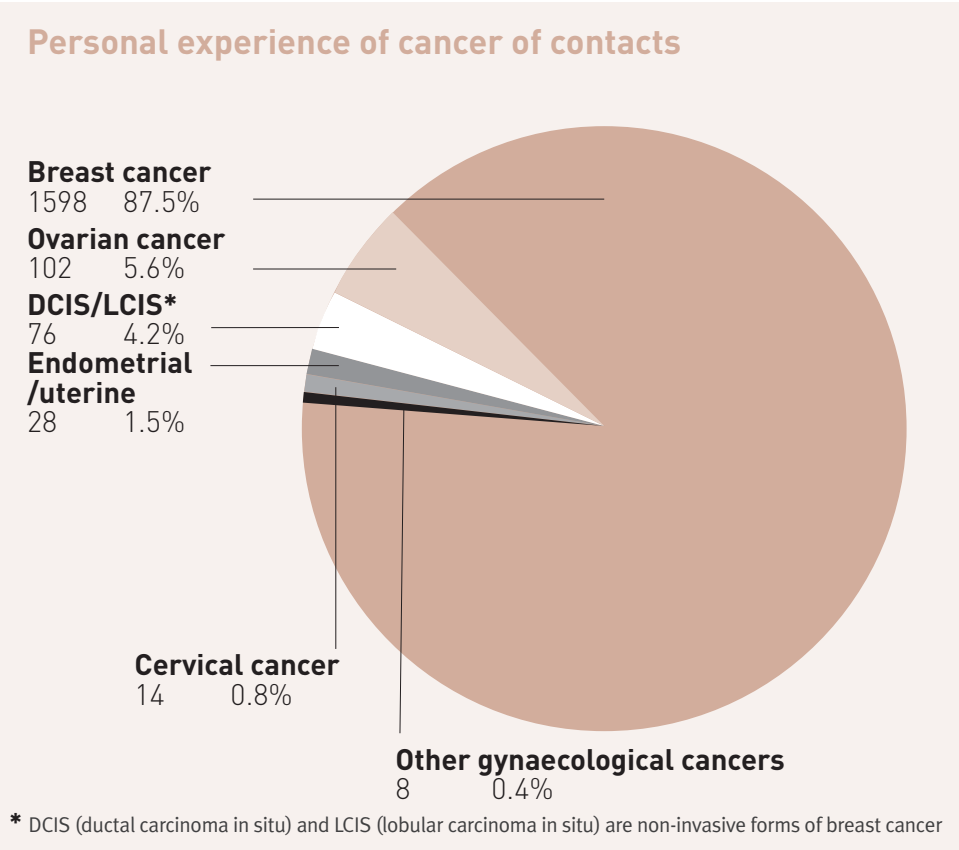
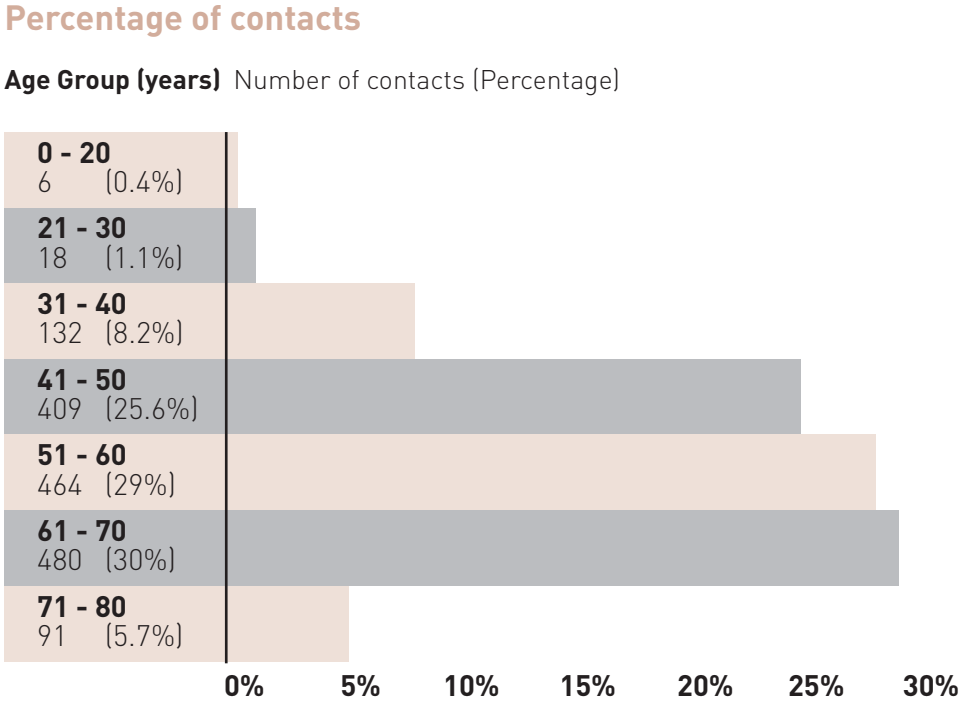
Michelle

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At A Glance

Information is collected with the consent of service users and analysed to inform the evaluation and improvement of BreaCan services. In 2009/2010:

- BreaCan recorded 2160 contacts including 990 individual, 1099 group and 152 service provider contacts. This is the highest number of contacts recorded in a financial year since the doors of the service first opened in 2003 and is a 12% increase on last year’s contacts.
- An average of 15 people attended each of the 74 BreaCan group sessions.
- Of individual contacts with the service, 390 or 43% were first time users of the service, an increase of 9% on the previous year.
- The age profile of people accessing the service (n=1600) is broad with 84% of contacts from people in the 41 to 70 years age group (see graph).
- Of the women identified with cancer (n=1836) who attended the service:
 - 92% of women have experienced a form of breast cancer and 8% gynaecological cancers (see pie chart)
 - 285 reported their cancer as ‘advanced’





A bridge to understanding...

The plastic surgeon presenting the session had a wonderful rapport with his audience and his willingness to answer in plain terms all the questions asked was much appreciated. I learnt so much in that brief 1.5 hours.
Mary-Anne

6 Information & Support

Information and Support

For most people affected by cancer, providing clear information that is tailored to their needs and preferences and an opportunity to talk through their experience and concerns is a valuable way of alleviating anxiety and distress. BreaCan's core business is to provide supportive care for women with breast and gynaecological cancers and the people who care for them. This holistic women-centred service provides self-help, support, information and social support and is responsive to the needs expressed by women who use the service.

The Resource Centre

Located in the historic Queen Victoria Women's Centre, the resource centre provides a safe and welcoming environment for people to seek information and support either individually or through participating in one of the many group programs that are offered. The centre is staffed by trained volunteers, each with a personal experience of cancer who are able to discuss the range of psychological, emotional and practical issues associated with cancer – issues often difficult to broach with friends and family. The volunteers are able to listen and share experiences in a way that only someone who has walked a similar path can. The volunteers work alongside the BreaCan Information and Support Officers who are also there to assist people seeking information and support.

Our information and support services include:

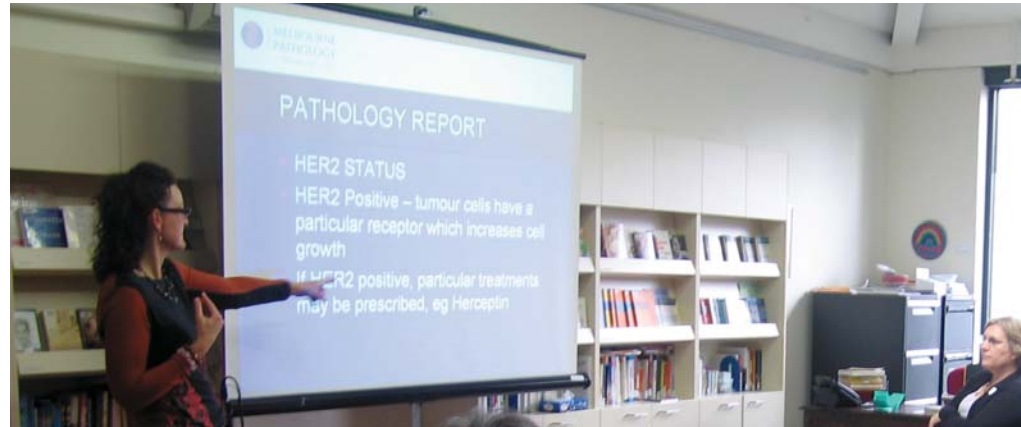
One-on-one contact with peer support volunteers in person at the resource centre or by phone or email.

Referral to other support services as required.

An extensive **information library** including books, journals, CDs and DVDs for people to browse or borrow and a display of breast forms, bras, wigs and accessories.

Reflexology provided by a trained nurse and reflexologist for women at the resource centre, an important form of relaxation and a prompt for many women to seek out other forms of relaxation or self care.

The **Feel Good Exercise Program** that has been offered on a fortnightly basis since 2003. The program, facilitated by a trained fitness instructor who has personally experienced breast cancer, offers gentle exercise to tone the body and improve lymphatic flow. It also helps rebuild women's trust in their bodies and regain control.



What's On Information Session: Making sense of the pathology results

What's On Information Sessions including talks by health professionals about various clinical issues as well as workshops focussed on creative therapies and wellness and opportunities for social connections with other women:

Information Sessions: Bras, boobs and breast forms; Breast reconstruction: what you need to know; Demystifying Chinese Medicine; *Dragon's Abreast – a discussion about dragon boating*; Fatigue – To rest or not to rest?; *Focussing on the long term*; *Laughter*; *Living well in the 'middle years'*; Lymphoedema; Making sense of the pathology results; Older, fitter, stronger; *Riding the rollercoaster – the emotional journey through cancer*; Sleeping soundly; So what is cancer anyway?; *Treatment options and opportunities for women with advanced cancer*; What exactly is Nia?

Creative therapies and wellness workshops: A picture paints; A stitch in time – Sashiko; Caring for you; Drumming your own beat – African drumming; Fabric origami; Meditation; Music for the mind, body and soul; Tai Chi; Yoga.

Social gatherings and connections: *Advanced cancer discussion group*; *Chatting over Chardonnay and Camembert*; End of Year Celebration morning tea; Ovarian cancer teal ribbon morning tea; *Stitch, knit and natter – monthly craft session*.

The topics highlighted in italics above were newly developed and offered in 2009/2010 in response to feedback from women.

What's On Information Session: Bras, boobs and breast forms



A bridge to acceptance...

The session confirmed for me that others feel the same emotional ride – the 'new normal' is true but learning to live with it and not let it dominate your life can be difficult. Jenny

A bridge to new experiences...

A lovely experience! Not being 'arty' I wasn't sure how I would feel. I lost myself in paper, glue and crayons.
Tracey



A bridge to an easier path...

I am so pleased to have come into contact with BreaCan so soon after diagnosis – it has really made my experience easier. Kellie

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Increasing Our Access
 Key Achievements



BreaCan staff and volunteers at the 'Recipes for Living' free information forum in Ringwood

Increasing the number of people using our service

We aim to build on successful strategies and explore new ways to increase the reach of our service such as the use of information and communication technologies. Key areas for focussed effort in the next three years will be to increase the number of women who use our service from the following groups:

- Women with gynaecological cancers
- Women who live in regional and rural areas
- Indigenous women
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Examples of progress towards this goal from 2009/2010 are described here.

Who does and who doesn't? The use of information and support services by women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

In partnership with Western Health, BreaCan secured funding from Cancer Australia in late 2009 to do some focused work on identifying and addressing the support needs of women from diverse backgrounds with breast or gynaecological cancers. This two year project will run through until November 2011. The project is exploring barriers these women face to accessing information and support and will develop and evaluate programs seeking to overcome those barriers.

The project will focus on the main groups of women who attend Western Health including those from Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, Turkish and Chinese communities. Women from emerging communities such as those from the Horn of Africa will also be included. We hope this work will increase support and connection for these women and inform inclusive and accessible service delivery mechanisms for BreaCan in the future.



A bridge to the 'new normal'...

It has been 12 months since I was told I had breast cancer and today is probably the most normal day I've had. Fiona commenting on her experience at the Young Women's Forum



African Drumming workshop at the Young Women's Forum

Trial of extended hours of operation of the resource centre

Over the years, we have received multiple requests to extend the hours that the resource centre is open to meet the needs of people who cannot access the service during the day. We opened the resource centre once a month on a Thursday evening between 5:00 and 7:30pm over a seven month trial period including three group sessions: Advanced Cancer Discussion Group; Chat over Chardonnay and Camembert; and Meditation. Due to low numbers of women who accessed the service on an individual basis during the trial, it was decided that instead of opening monthly, six evening openings per year will be offered that will include an information session and thus an opportunity for group and individual contact with the service.

Young Women's Forum

BreaCan, in partnership with Young Action on Breast Cancer hosted a one day forum for women with breast or gynaecological cancers aged up to 45 years. Thirty one women participated in the day that included connections and conversations with other young women experiencing cancer; an Information Session – Finding your 'new normal' after a cancer diagnosis; and an opportunity to participate in one of three creative wellness sessions: art therapy; African drumming or belly dancing. The forum was a great success as it allowed women at a similar stage in life to discuss issues, meet, and in some cases, form friendships.





A bridge to wellbeing...

I have had the most positive experience today since I have been diagnosed and it is reassuring that this warm and humane service exists. I look forward to more contact with BreaCan. Sophie



BreaCan volunteer Heather and the Minister for Health, The Hon. Daniel Andrews at the Bridge of Support Launch

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Extending Our Capacity

Key Achievements

Extending Our Capacity

BreaCan’s success and capacity is critically linked to having a sustainable and highly effective volunteer workforce and staff. This needs a continual focus on recruitment, training, coordinating, supporting and valuing their important work. Building our capacity through a secure funding base is also an important part of ensuring a strong and stable future for BreaCan.

Examples of progress towards this goal from 2009/2010 are described here.

The Bridge of Support

This innovative pilot program is expanding our capacity through providing a supportive care service within the hospital setting. An exciting collaboration with The Royal Melbourne Hospital, the pilot commenced in April 2010 and will run until September 2011. BreaCan volunteers and staff provide support for women with breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy, surgery or attending outpatients’ clinics. This service complements the clinical and supportive care provided by health professionals.

The Bridge of Support is providing a new and valued outreach role for seven of BreaCan’s most experienced peer support volunteers who have undergone specific training to be part of this program. To the end of June 2010, 41 people had made contact with BreaCan at the hospital and the feedback received so far has been very positive. Launched by the Minister for Health, The Hon. Daniel Andrews, in June 2010, the work of the BreaCan volunteers was described as an immeasurable ‘gift of hope’.

Bridge of support...

When in hospital for treatment of breast cancer, the only other people you meet are medical staff or other patients...I know because I have been there. I would have embraced the opportunity to meet someone who had already completed the journey I was embarking on.

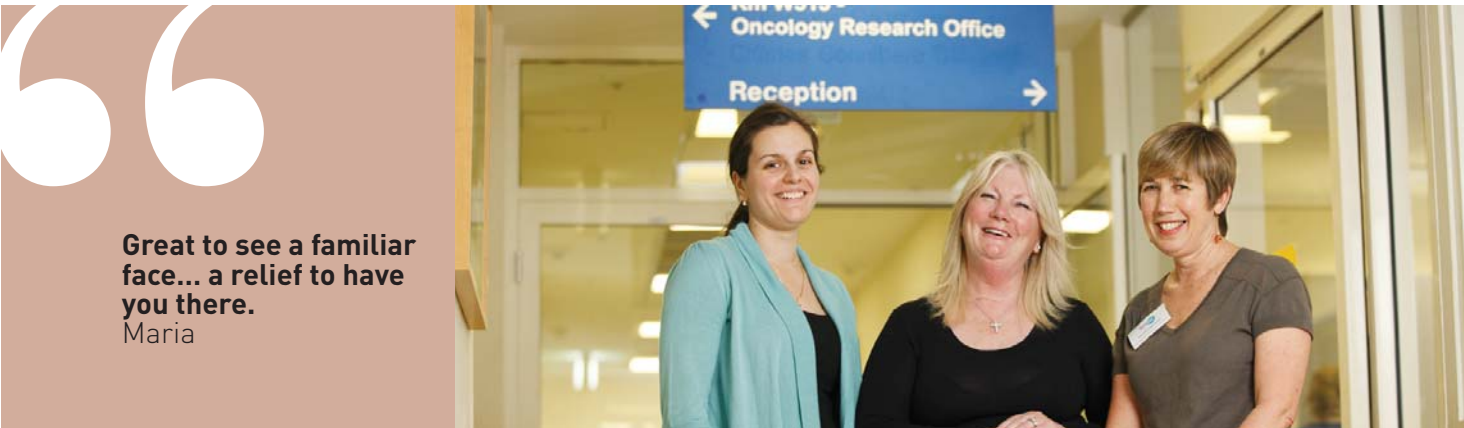
Mary, BreaCan Volunteer

The program is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of women undergoing treatment through the provision of peer support and link women to community based support services. Depending on the outcomes of this pilot, BreaCan hopes to extend the service to women with gynaecological cancers and, potentially to other cancer services over time.

At a broader level, the pilot has the potential to inform development of an effective and low cost model of supportive care that may be transferrable to other cancer types and hospitals.

Bridge of support...

It’s about bringing the service to the women.
Bronwyn Flanagan,
Breast Care Nurse



Great to see a familiar face... a relief to have you there.
Maria

Linda Repic, (Nurse Unit Manager Day Oncology, RMH), Claudia Ginn (BreaCan Advisory Group Consumer Representative) and Helen Shepherd (BreaCan Services and Volunteer Co-ordinator) at The Royal Melbourne Hospital.
PHOTO COURTESY: MARK MUNRO AND MELBOURNE HEALTH

Reaching out to women with gynaecological cancers: Innovations in supportive care

This two year collaboration with the North Eastern Metropolitan Integrated Cancer Service (NEMICS) sought to engage with women with gynaecological cancers to identify their needs and develop appropriate support strategies to increase participation in their care and improve their adjustment to cancer.

Through a survey of women who have experienced gynaecological cancers, feelings of loneliness, isolation and fear were identified, as was the need for support down the track once treatment had finished. This was identified as a time when support was needed to assist in readjusting to life, coping with living with cancer and remaining well. Other general needs were for information, advice and support and opportunities to meet other women, ideally close to home.

In the past year, the strategies implemented in response to these needs were:

‘Recipes for Living’ forums run in Craigieburn, Frankston and Ringwood attended by 98 women who have experienced breast or gynaecological cancers and two carers. The forums included a presentation by a psychologist on living with cancer, a session about local services available and a wellness session such as art therapy, dance, tai chi or meditation.

Information Sessions about BreaCan to health professionals at Box Hill and Maroondah Hospitals.

A targeted 4 or 5 week exercise program: **Steps for Fun and Fitness** run in Epping, Mitcham and Bulleen attended by 36 women with breast or gynaecological cancers.

Involvement of BreaCan in the **NEMICS Gynaecological Tumour Stream Group**.

Whilst the focus of this project was intended to be purely on gynaecological cancers, the small numbers and difficulty in identifying and recruiting women to be involved meant that the Recipes for Living forums and Steps for Fun and Fitness Programs were opened up to women with breast cancer as well.

This successful project has generated a range of support, information and wellbeing benefits for women and has increased the profile of BreaCan amongst cancer service providers in the north east. This has flowed through to increased referrals, a significant number of new women accessing the service and strengthened links with NEMICS that have paved the way for continuing collaboration over time.



A bridge to wellbeing...

I’ve gained more confidence in my ability to use weights and resistance bands in a controlled situation, without any adverse effects on my body. Bev



BreaCan volunteer Jules with Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) Ambassador Raelene Boyle at BCNA's Geelong Forum: *Living Well Beyond Breast Cancer*.

“

One of the most difficult things to deal with (after a cancer diagnosis) is what to do next? Where do I go from here to help myself stay well?
Rhonda



I2
Extending Our
Influence
Key Achievements

Extending Our Influence

BreaCan has an important contribution to make to the provision of supportive care for people affected by cancer in Victoria. This contribution is made by:

Extending the capacity of cancer services through providing a point of referral for women with information and support needs.

Our holistic person-centred approach and focus on ‘living well’ that links with the emerging survivorship agenda. We aim to contribute to improved wellbeing and quality of life and to the acceptance of and adjustment to a ‘new normal’ for people affected by cancer.

Bringing the significant expertise we have developed over the past seven years to a ‘seat at the table’ – informing emerging wellness and supportive care initiatives in the cancer field.

Linking women who are volunteers and users of our services with consumer participation opportunities.

Productive collaborations, effective partnerships, innovative responses to need and through continuing the approach we have taken since the service’s inception to ‘start small and do it well’.

Over time, we have experienced an increase in requests to share our knowledge and experience as the profile of BreaCan grows and in recognition of our innovative service. The holistic approach we take to supportive care, our robust volunteer model and our approach to cancer survivorship – ‘supporting women to live well’, have become trademarks of the service.

BreaCan staff and volunteers at Cabrini Hospital’s Breast Cancer Awareness Day



“

A bridge to reflection...

It is always so validating to hear other women talk about their experiences – they provide strength, insight and an opportunity to reflect. Penny

In 2009/2010 progress towards extending our influence is reflected through:

Conversations to inform new and emerging supportive care initiatives: the planning for wellness/resource centres at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, Austin Health and St. Vincent’s Hospital.

Representation of BreaCan on key committees such as the Victorian and Tasmanian Gynaecological Cancer Workforce Project and the Victorian Cancer Survivorship Program.

Specific project collaborations and ongoing contact and work with the **Victorian Integrated Cancer Services**.

A **collaboration with the Royal Women’s Hospital** on the delivery of a menopause program tailored specifically for women with breast and gynaecological cancers who have experienced early menopause as a result of their cancer treatment.

A **presentation to the 8th Australasian Lymphology Association Conference** about ‘Stepping into Exercise: The experiences of women living with cancer’.

Presentations to cancer services, agencies and support groups about BreaCan and our understanding of women’s needs gained through providing the service over the past seven years.

Contributing to a number of research activities by identifying women as potential participants in surveys and consultations. Examples include collaborations with The Centre for Women’s Health, Gender and Society and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

Julia Gillard, Field of Women LIVE Ambassador, with Geraldine and BreaCan volunteers Pauline and Leola at BCNA’s Field of Women LIVE 2010



One of the challenges is looking young, fit and healthy so everyone assumes I am okay.
Tania

”



I4 Our People

BreaCan is the culmination of the vision, expertise and dedication of a varied group of people. In a respectful partnership, staff and volunteers work side by side acknowledging the unique and valuable contribution each makes to the service.

Staff

- Di Missen**
Manager
- Helen Shepherd**
Services and Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Nicole Wilton**
Information and Support Officer
- Wendy Pullan**
Information and Support Officer
- Fiona McRae**
Project Officer
- Justine Dalla Riva**
Project Officer
- Katherine Bradstreet**
Administration Officer

We would like to thank Emma Harris for her work on the launch of the “Bridge of Support” pilot project.

SITTING FROM LEFT:
Nicole Wilton, Helen Shepherd, Justine Dalla Riva.
STANDING FROM LEFT:
Di Missen, Wendy Pullan, Fiona McRae,
Katherine Bradstreet.

I5 The BreaCan Advisory Group

The BreaCan Advisory Group guides and supports the development and continual improvement of BreaCan and the services provided to people affected by breast and gynaecological cancers. While members are individuals they come from a range of health settings. Two members of the Advisory Group provide insights into their role in BreaCan.



Christine Evelyn
(Consumer and Co-convenor of the Cervical Cancer Support Group)

I was invited to join the Advisory Group when it was first established. I bring to the table my personal experience of cancer of the cervix, the stories of many other women I have encountered through co-convening a cervical cancer support group and my professional background in education.

It is an absolute joy to be a part of the Advisory Group. It has been an incredibly positive experience and one of the best committees I’ve been on in all my consumer and professional career. The Group and how it runs reflects the ethos of the whole service. It is very well organised and supported. All members are equal regardless of their background or the ideas they put forward. All contributions are accepted, and discussions are thoughtful, caring and considered.

We have a pretty broad focus on the development of goals and strategic objectives for the service and on making sure that BreaCan is on track to achieve them. It involves the review of evaluation data, reflection, thinking and talking things through and a focus on continually improving the service to meet the needs of women.

I find it hard to describe BreaCan as it is so many things to so many people. First and foremost it is there for women with breast and gynaecological cancers and for the people caring for them – providing one-on-one support and information. It is an information service, offering activities and events that connect, inform and support. BreaCan works with other organisations and individuals in the cancer field in an open and collaborative way for mutual benefit. Because BreaCan is doing such an outstanding job, they have become a model around the state and are influencing policy decisions.

The major highlight for 2009/2010 for me has been the continuing work to extend the service to women with gynaecological cancers. This has been a significant shift from a focus on breast cancer to developing the service to respond to the quite diverse experiences and needs of people affected by gynaecological cancers. This has been managed very well and a fairly seamless integration has been achieved whilst maintaining and improving the quality of the service.



Bronwyn Flanagan
(Breast Care Nurse, Royal Melbourne Hospital)

My involvement with BreaCan began when the service first opened. As a breast care nurse at The Royal Melbourne Hospital, I have relied on the service as a point of referral for the women we care for. Having used the service and for the past three years, seeing the inner workings as a member of the Advisory Group, I have a much greater appreciation of what makes this service tick.

BreaCan is an important resource, a place for women to drop in to that has all sorts of information available. Most importantly it is a place where women can speak to someone who's actually experienced breast or gynaecological cancers.

The highlight of 2009/2010 for me has been the Bridge of Support program. This is a wonderful example of BreaCan extending its service through providing peer support to women while they are undergoing treatment in hospital. The women supported by this service include those who have not yet had surgery to women who are further down the track, including those with advanced disease. Its value is in its accessibility during times when going into town to visit a service falls to the bottom of the list. This program also provides a great example of how skilled the BreaCan team are at planning, consulting with all key parties, ensuring all ethical issues have been considered and addressed and in the thorough training and preparation provided for the volunteers. Whilst carefully planned, the implementation of the program has demonstrated the team's capacity to respond to issues as they arise and be flexible and adapt the program as needed to make it work.

BreaCan looks for reasons to make things work rather than focussing on why things won't work. They look for positives and work within their defined framework. They think outside the square to identify ways in which the service's objectives can be met and have a particular commitment to working in partnership with other organisations and avoiding duplication. They do everything thoroughly and with a high degree of professionalism and it has been a very positive experience for me to be involved with this wonderful service.

The BreaCan Advisory Group

Annabel Pollard Chair
(Women's Health Victoria (WHV) Council Member, Clinical Psychologist, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre)
Lyn Allison (WHV Council Member)
Heather Beanland (Consumer)
Christine Evely (Consumer)
Bronwyn Flanagan (Breast Care Nurse, Royal Melbourne Hospital)
Jane Fletcher (Consumer)
Claudia Ginn (Consumer)
Jane McNeilage (Gynae-oncologist, Monash Medical Centre)
Penny Sanderson
(Manager, Mercy Lymphoedema Clinic)
Katy Weare
(Cancer Services & Complex Care Manager, The Royal Women's Hospital)
Marilyn Beaumont
(WHV Executive Director)
Di Missen (BreaCan Manager)

Thank you also to **Angela Hill** and **Jenny Macindoe** for their contribution to the Advisory Group from its inception to November 2009.



BreaCan 2009 Volunteer end of year celebration held at the BreaCan resource centre.

17 Our Volunteers

The BreaCan volunteers are:
Aaltje, Ang, Annette, Betty, Carolyn, Chris, Cindy, Dianne, Ellen, Florence, Frederika, Heather, Janine, Joy, Jules, Kirsten, Lea, Leola, Mary, Meril, Pam, Paula, Pauline, Rhonda, Rita, Sandra and Teresa.

Pat bakes shortbreads for the service
Judy facilitates the Feel Good Gentle Exercise Program
Thank you to Ojdana who resigned during the year.

Four BreaCan peer support volunteers died in the past year. We acknowledge the contributions of:

Julie (2004 – 2010)
Jenni (2006 – 2009)
Chris (2006 – 2010)
Heather (2008 – 2010)

Each of these volunteers in their own way enriched our service, through generously sharing their time, perspectives and experiences. They are sadly missed and fondly remembered.



A bridge to caring...
I would not have been able to do this without BreaCan and everybody at BreaCan was so unconditionally kind and respectful. Finola

I8

Looking Forward

Looking Forward

Looking ahead, there are many opportunities to increase the number of people using our service, expand our capacity and extend our influence.

The targets of the Victorian Cancer Action Plan guide responses to addressing supportive care needs for people around the time of a cancer diagnosis. This is a clear opportunity for BreaCan to engage with health professionals, promote the service and increase awareness and referrals.

We will continue to extend and to integrate women with gynaecological cancers into our service as volunteers and service users and to improve access for women in hard to reach groups.

We look forward to the outcomes from the Bridge of Support program and the opportunities it brings to expand services we provide at the coal face and inform models of supportive care.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with a range of agencies and service providers to identify opportunities to form new partnerships. These will extend our capacity to influence and improve the lives of women with breast and gynaecological cancers in Victoria.

Thank You

BreaCan would like to say thank you to all the people and organisations who have donated their time or resources to BreaCan during the past year. This includes some presenters of BreaCan’s Information Sessions, Opera Australia and the National Australia Bank employees through their volunteering program.

We would also like to thank the management at Strategic Lifestyle Gymnasium for providing the venue, free of charge, for the Feel Good Gentle Exercise Program.

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Donations

Over the past year many individuals, companies and organisations made generous financial contributions to help BreaCan deliver the best service possible to Victorian women. We are extremely grateful.

Donors have included;

John and Margaret Barnett
June Brien
Jacquelyn & Geoffrey Brien
Alfred Hospital, Ward 3B Staff
Catholic Regional College – Bradman Cluster
Mr & Mrs J Chudacek
Graham Clothier
Linus D’Crus
Hiller Deniz
Judy Dickenson
Risto Dukovski
Michael and Mandy Flett
Jacquie Pratt and Aileen Hindle
Lyn Hunter
Chris Umile and Joe Camilleri
Phil Knell
Kerryn Lierich
Lin and Marie Lovel
Rita Marigliani

One of the most difficult things to deal with is the uncertainty of ‘what next?’
Louise

Pru Menzies
Nadine Mortimer
Colleen O’Donnell
Linda Papworth
Wendy Parkin
Susan Pearse
Carol and Ron Radtke
Glenys and Robert Reaby
Hanna and John Richardson
Carolyn and John Russell, and Family
Maree Sayers
Cathy Schnitzerling
Robyn Sinclair
Sue Spivey
Christina Tolstrup
Eileen Trimble
Shane Tynan
3AW Radio Station & Colonial First State

There were also donors who wished to remain anonymous

Minister for Health, The Hon. Daniel Andrews with some of the BreaCan ‘Bridge of Support’ volunteers at the launch of the project in June 2010

