

BreaCan

YEAR IN REVIEW 2015/16



Tailored support and information for people affected by a gynaecological or breast cancer

BreaCan is a unique community-based supportive care service that has been providing quality, tailored support and information to women in Victoria for over 13 years.

We offer women living with cancer a holistic, confidential service that complements their medical treatment and existing support systems. We are a statewide, not-for-profit service and people affected by a gynaecological or breast cancer can access all of our programs for free.

At the heart of our service is the peer support program, run by trained volunteers who have themselves experienced a gynaecological or breast cancer. These women are living well and, through their peer support, send a strong message of hope to all women with cancer and their families.

We also improve women's health and wellbeing after a cancer diagnosis through a range of other programs, including:

- Bridge of Support, an outreach program that brings peer support directly to women receiving treatment at a hospital
- exercise programs, informed by health professionals and led by a qualified instructor who has her own experience of cancer
- information sessions and webinars presented by health professionals who are experts in their fields
- creative and wellness workshops that give women the chance to learn, relax and connect with other women in a safe environment
- a library of cancer resources that can be posted anywhere in Victoria, free of charge
- digital information resources such as

webinar videos, podcasts and our Early breast cancer information Navigator app and website.

Our service principles:

Acknowledge difference – We recognise that every person's experience of breast or gynaecological cancer is different and must be seen in the broader context of their lives.

No advice – We will share experiences; we will not give advice.

Welcoming environment – We will provide a welcoming, accessible and safe environment.

Encourage participation – We will actively encourage people to participate in the development and operation of BreaCan.

Empower people – We are committed to enhancing people's skills and capacity to make their own informed choices.

Respect privacy – We respect the privacy of people using the Resource Centre.

Non-judgemental – We will provide information and support in a non-judgemental way.

High standards – We maintain high standards in all aspects of the Resource Centre and regularly evaluate the service's relevance to consumers, its sustainability, and effectiveness.



Women's Health Victoria

BreaCan is a service of Women's Health Victoria, a not-for-profit, statewide organisation that works with women, health professionals and policymakers to improve the health and wellbeing of all women in Victoria. The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants. By incorporating a gendered approach to health promotion that focuses on women, interventions to reduce inequality and improve health outcomes are more effective and equitable.

To find out more about Women's Health Victoria, please visit www.whv.org.au



Table of contents

- 3 Joanne's story
- 4 Manager's message
- 5 Highlights 2015-16
- 6 Supporting and empowering women
- 9 Soledad's story
- 10 Statistical snapshot
- 12 Shirley's story
- 13 Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital
- 14 Kat's story
- 15 Volunteer highlights
- 16 Our people
- 18 Message from the Advisory Group Chair

Joanne's story



In May last year, my GP and I sat in silence as she printed the results of my pathology tests. I think that, in my heart, I already knew what she was about to tell me. I watched as she took a deep breath and stiffened in her chair and said, 'You have been diagnosed with breast cancer'.

I waited until I had all the facts before breaking the news to my son. As a sole parent, I think this would have to rate as the toughest thing I have ever had to do. What an amazing young man I have raised. He did not falter and stoically asked me about the next steps in treatment, making it all the easier for me to talk to him about it.

The experience of being diagnosed with cancer is, without doubt, isolating and often confronting and I feel incredibly blessed to have such wonderful, caring, strong friends who supported me without question and have been willing to travel this road beside me; ready to catch me if I should stumble.

It's now been 15 months since I was diagnosed with Stage II early breast cancer and as I reflect upon my experience and the generosity of spirit of those who have helped me, I can't help but include the important role that BreaCan has played in my recovery.

As my treatment came to an end, I felt quite alone and had so many questions I needed

answered. My Survivorship Nurse (at Barwon Health's Andrew Love Cancer Centre) gave me a list of services that could help, among them BreaCan.

I live and work full-time in regional Victoria and it is difficult to find time during the day to attend information sessions, so BreaCan's regular webinars have helped me to understand what I am feeling; what to expect; and how I can help myself. The webinars on Cancer Fatigue, Anxiety and Cancer, and the Science of Exercise have been particularly helpful to me, as have the questions raised by participants.

For those times when I need a little reassurance, BreaCan have provided me with access to past podcasts (which I can listen to any time of day or night) and book loans from their well-stocked library.

Should there be times when I need to talk to another woman who has had a similar cancer experience, one of BreaCan's lovely volunteers is on the end of the phone and I don't feel quite so alone.

I am often reminded that cancer recovery is not a sprint but rather an endurance race and to know that BreaCan's supportive information services are accessible to those of us living in regional Victoria makes me feel a little less alone.



Manager's message

The year has seen Breacan demonstrate its maturity and strength as a service, able to maintain its focus on supporting women to live well during the upheaval and uncertainty of a temporary location. During this time, we undertook an evaluation of our service, our What's On program continued in our temporary space on the fifth floor of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre, we began a new Bridge of Support program with Western Health at Sunshine Hospital and we continued to train and orient new Peer Support Volunteers.

This achievement is a tribute to the dedicated staff and volunteers who have worked within the constraints of the space, developed workarounds and continue to get the job done. Focusing on the primary task of assisting women diagnosed with cancer to live well, the team has ensured service disruption has been kept to a minimum. My appreciation of the efforts of staff and volunteers this year is limitless.

During the year we also finalised our rural needs analysis project which was funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. Through focus groups and surveys with consumers and service providers, we identified gaps in support for women affected

by cancer in rural and regional Victoria. Roundtables were then held with consumers and service providers to determine priorities and propose solutions. Interestingly, women saw the greatest gaps in non-clinical issues such as financial matters, travel assistance and talking to someone who has been through it. Service providers also indicated they wanted to know more about these issues in order to better support their clients. It is clear that cancer survivorship approaches can be improved in rural and regional areas. A detailed report of the project is available on our website.

We have been successful in attracting funds to employ a rural program coordinator and we will continue to seek funding for a pilot to train rural peer support volunteers with our partners. The results of the analysis have been presented at a variety of conferences and will continue to be communicated to assist in improving care for women living with cancer in rural and regional areas.

As mentioned above, we have been able to establish a new Bridge of Support program at Western Health's Sunshine Hospital. Our generous sponsors LUCRF Community Partnership Trust celebrated the launch of

the program with us in May and impressed all in attendance with their contribution to important community projects. We will be working on the sustainability of this successful program with our partners at Western Health over the coming year.

As the service continues to work on relocation and rebranding with its stakeholders, we look forward also to another year of providing information and support for women with cancer to live well.

Lee Kennedy
Breacan Manager

Highlights 2015-16

* Breacan's Connecting and Supporting Rural and Regional Women with Cancer Project was completed. Breacan and project partners – the Integrated Cancer Services of Barwon South Western and Grampians – assessed the information and support needs of women living with all types of cancer in rural and regional Victoria. Results revealed a strong desire from women with cancer to have access to a range of peer support options. The project was funded by the Department of Health and Human Services.

* Researchers from Deakin University carried out an independent evaluation of Breacan. The final report includes a number of recommendations regarding reach, profile and data collection, many of which align to the current WHV Strategic Plan. Incorporating these recommendations to improve the delivery of services to women across Victoria will be a key focus over the next 12 months.

* Breacan held a successful end of year morning tea in December 2015. Over 100 attendees heard guest speaker Bronwyn Pike pay tribute to the principles that underpin Breacan's work and acknowledge the importance of our volunteers.

* Staff and volunteers packed and moved the Resource Centre to the fifth floor

of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre and staff to the second floor just before Christmas and were ready for business early in the New Year. We thank everyone for their patience while we make do with this arrangement and plan for the future. Breacan's accommodation needs will include careful consideration about how best to extend the reach of the service to more women with a gynaecological or breast cancer across Victoria.

* Breacan participated in a range of conferences, and presented at:

- the inaugural Controversies in Breast Cancer (CoBRA) conference in October 2015
- the Evolving Role of Primary Care in Cancer Conference in March 2016
- the Cancer Nurses Society of Australia Conference in May 2016

Staff also attended Psycho-Oncology, Clinical Oncological Society Australia and Volunteering Australia conferences.

* Breacan participates in the Victorian Cancer Survivorship Program Community of Practice to share evidence-based resources and findings, develop partnerships and enhance sustainable service designs.

* Breacan is represented on influential cancer survivorship bodies: The Victorian Cancer Survivorship Program Advisory Group and the organising committee for the national 2017 Survivorship Conference. These appointments provide an important opportunity to increase recognition of peer



Former Victorian Minister for Health, The Hon. Bronwyn Pike, addressing the Breacan End of Year Morning Tea, December 2015

support as a component of best practice in the delivery of cancer care.

* We acknowledged Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month in February by partnering with the Mercy Hospital for Women and Ovarian Cancer Australia to host an event for women living with gynaecological cancers.

* Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital was launched in May 2016.

* Bridge of Support at The Royal Melbourne Hospital reached a significant milestone. 500 women living with breast cancer have now received support through the program.

* We carried out extensive consultation with people affected by gynaecological and breast cancers, health professionals and other stakeholders in preparation for rebranding. A new name and brand that is inclusive of women with gynaecological cancers as well as breast cancer will be launched in the coming year.

* A new intake of eight Peer Support Volunteers completed their training in May 2016.

* Outreach has become a regular part of our What's On program with seven sessions held in community locations.

* Breacan organised a forum for women living with advanced cancer, their families and friends in June 2016. Sessions on support and wellness, palliative care and integrated medicine were well received, as was the opportunity to share and connect with others.

Supporting and empowering women

BreaCan Resource Centre

Our Resource Centre is at the heart of BreaCan. It is a safe and welcoming space where women living with a gynaecological or breast cancer receive the support and information they seek. Women can visit to browse resources, get support or attend a What's On or Making Connections session.

Peer Support Volunteers connect with women by phone as well as in person. Volunteers respond to electronic requests for information, support each other and debrief with staff at the end of each day.

Information sessions

Our popular What's On program continues to deliver a diverse range of sessions tailored to meet the varied information and support needs of women living with a gynaecological or breast cancer.

We continued to extend the reach of this program by increasing the number of outreach sessions organised in partnership with other services. Outreach sessions are held in different community locations around Melbourne to allow service users who cannot come into the city to participate. In 2015-16 we held seven outreach sessions – five more than in the previous year – and these were attended by 121 people. These sessions were:

- Living Well After Gynaecological Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment at the Mercy Hospital for Women

- Singing and Sharing in the West at Altona
- Healthy Eating After Cancer at Springvale
- Sex and Sensuality at Richmond
- Your Immune System and Cancer at the Olivia Newton John Cancer and Wellness Centre
- Exercise During and After Cancer Treatment at the Northern Hospital and at Warringal Private Hospital.

Each year we endeavour to include new topics, often suggested by our service users. New topics this year included: Targeted Therapies; Risk Factors for Endometrial Cancer; Celebrations and Tributes; When Cancer Challenges Your Budget; and Living with Uncertainty and Fear of Recurrence (a session for women living with gynaecological cancers)

More sessions have been presented as webinars, allowing people across Victoria to participate from home, in hospital or together with a group of friends or other women experiencing a gynaecological or breast cancer. Webinars are recorded and can be watched later on our website.

As always, we are thankful to the presenters who have contributed such a high calibre of information, discussion and insight to our What's On program. We also depend on the wonderful support and commitment of those health professionals who promote our information sessions to relevant women.



Harmony Day morning tea in the new BreaCan Resource Centre on Level 5, QVWC, March 2016

Reflexology

In the spirit of promoting wellness, BreaCan continues to offer women the opportunity to try a free reflexology session at the Resource Centre. These appointments are generally offered to women who are new to the service or have had a recent re-diagnosis. Our reflexologist Bernadette provides a gentle nurturing experience that is welcome to women who have recently felt the realities of cancer treatment.



What's On information session on Naturopathy, presented by Sandra Villella, August 2015

Library and online resources

BreaCan's library has a unique collection of evidence-based information and personal stories. This year we have put extra effort into ensuring women who are unable to visit our Resource Centre in Melbourne have equitable access to these resources. Increased promotion on social media, our website and in newsletters have highlighted what is available. Women can search the online catalogue and phone or email to request resources be sent out by mail, free of charge within Victoria.

Our library is regularly updated and expanded to provide current resources and respond to the information needs of women living with a gynaecological or breast cancer. We added around 90 resources to the library this year. New resource topics included information for parents, gynaecological cancer, inflammatory breast cancer, nutrition and personal stories.

Our online information collection was boosted with the addition of 10 webinar recordings. These have proven very popular as women can access them at a time and place of their choosing.

The BreaCan Navigator app complements the work of busy health professionals by directing women with breast cancer to quality information resources. This year, we surveyed the users of the app to ask their opinions. Results suggest the app has been very helpful, and we have gained some insights into how we can make it even better.

We have also continued to develop our large collection of free pamphlets from reputable service providers. Our experienced Peer Support Volunteers select resources tailored to the individual needs of each service user.



Volunteer instructor Judy with Feel Good Gentle Exercise participants

Exercise

Exercise is increasingly recognised as an important component of cancer survivorship. We know that exercise is one of the ways to help with recovery following cancer treatment. Studies, particularly in breast cancer, have shown that physical activity can reduce the risk of cancer recurring.

Our Feel Good Gentle Exercise program continues to improve the health and wellbeing of women living with a gynaecological or breast cancer. Feel Good is a free program run every fortnight in a city location, providing a safe and fun environment for women to exercise during or after cancer treatment. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers, Judy, Meril and Lois, who ran 23 sessions this year.

It is with great pleasure that we acknowledge the tremendous support of the charity Pink Affair in continuing to support our Stepping into Wellness program this year. The six-week program is run at various community gyms in Melbourne. Women who participated report improved freedom and range of movement, increased upper body and general flexibility as well as increased muscle strength at the end of the program. They especially valued being with a group of women who have had similar experiences, the variety of exercises covered and learning how to do them properly. The leadership and vast knowledge that exercise leader Judy and her assistant Michelle offer to the women is much appreciated. We also thank BreaCan volunteers Maureen, Yvonne and Trish who assisted with the programs.

Bridge of Support at RMH

This year the 500th woman received support through the Bridge of Support program at The Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) and The Women's Combined Breast Service. Now in its seventh year, Bridge of Support continues to assist women with breast cancer who are newly diagnosed and undergoing treatment.

Speaking with a Peer Support Volunteer who has experienced cancer and is living well can provide hope and encouragement during a stressful and frightening time. BreaCan staff and volunteers meet women in a range of locations: they may be attending clinic, having chemotherapy in the Day Oncology Ward, or be inpatients. We also support friends and family of women diagnosed. We have time to listen and respond with tailored support and information. Many women also have follow-up conversations with volunteers in the BreaCan Resource Centre. This can be because they feel more comfortable discussing sensitive matters outside of the hospital environment or because they wish to receive support between hospital visits.

Bridge of Support at RMH was funded this year through the generous support of Treasure Chest Inc., a charity for women with breast cancer. The support of hospital staff is integral to the ongoing success of this program. In particular, we thank Professor Bruce Mann; the wonderful breast care nurses, Kerry, Sue, and Monique; and the kind and dedicated staff in the Day Oncology Ward. Bridge of Support could not run without the commitment and dedication of the Peer Support Volunteers.

We are eagerly looking forward to extending this program to women at the new Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre in the coming year.

Advanced cancer support

Women living with advanced cancer have particular support and information needs that are different and sometimes more complex than those with early-stage cancers. BreaCan staff and volunteers respond to these needs individually with sensitivity and care, in our Resource Centre and through Bridge of Support programs.

We also provide the Making Connections program of information and wellbeing sessions that are tailored to the specific needs of women living with advanced cancer. Sessions held this year included: Clinical Trials for Advanced Breast Cancer; Caring for Your Personal Energy; Breast Cancer and Bone Metastases; and Coffee, Cupcakes and Reflexology. We also organised a forum that was open to all women living with advanced cancer of any primary tumour type.



Taking Control, Getting Support and Sharing the Load – forum for women with advanced cancer.

You could hear the buzz and feel the warmth of conversation and connection in the Resource Centre despite the chilly June afternoon. BreaCan was pleased to be able to bring together over 25 people who had advanced cancer or who were supporting their loved ones, as well as expert speakers, volunteers and staff.

A diverse group of speakers offered valuable information. Counsellor Tara McKinty encouraged women to build their support team. It can be an art to let others help! Lively and meaningful discussion flowed from the integrative medicine and palliative care sessions facilitated by speakers Dr Trisha Boetto and Dr Juli Moran.

The opportunity to meet others, hear their stories and share experiences was at the heart of the forum. The women came together easily, relishing the chance to speak with each other over afternoon tea. Several men attended the forum to support their partners. Watching them informally share experiences over a cuppa and exchange contact details was a highlight of the day.

Soledad's story

My name is Soledad. On 14 September 2014 I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer stage IV while on holidays in Chile. I became very ill within a week. Later on, I developed complications and was placed in an Intensive Care Unit. I started my first cycle of chemotherapy in October. I was grateful to be surrounded by my family and friends. I continued responding well to the treatment and was able to leave intensive care, commencing a slow recovery and becoming well enough to leave the hospital a month later. I finished chemotherapy in February 2015. My emotional stability was very up and down. I commenced my journey, my new life – a 'miracle' as I call it – and returned to Melbourne at the end of May 2015.

In July of that year I had a surgery. I continued with medical consultations at the Royal Women's Hospital. It is here when I was introduced to BreaCan, through the Bridge of Support program.

BreaCan has a Resource Centre. I remember that the women at the Centre were very welcoming. Staff and volunteers showed interest in my journey. I sat down and told my story. I could see it made a big impression on them. I felt I was really heard.

I have been visiting the centre often, borrowing books, meditation CDs and participating in their programs. I really have enjoyed the drumming sessions, reflexology, gentle exercise and the talks from different health professionals. I was living each experience and taking it all in. I keep learning that everything is interrelated - Mind, Body and Spirit – and how well I look after my body will impact on my quality of life.

I have heard so many times that women with gynaecological cancers have had relapses. I am on that journey now since March 2016. I commenced treatment at the Royal Melbourne Hospital,

nowadays transferred over to the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre.

While going through this treatment I am still able to visit BreaCan Resource Centre and keep walking along through this path to enrich me with more knowledge. Most importantly, to feel the kindness and understanding of women who have been through similar experiences.

I am very grateful to the staff and volunteers at BreaCan because every time I visit I feel so welcome. They make time to share experiences and knowledge. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your ongoing support.



At a glance 2015-16

How do people use our service?

Through our Resource Centre

1,058

times we provided information and support to people affected by cancer



661 Phone



183 in person



180 Online



34 Post

Through group sessions

707

group session attendances

33 What's On sessions



7 in community locations around Melbourne



10 also run as webinars

6 events for women living with advanced cancer



5 Making Connections sessions (1 run as a webinar)



1 forum



29 gentle exercise sessions (Feel Good + Stepping into Wellness)

Through Bridge of Support programs

234

at Royal Melbourne and The Women's

86

at Sunshine Hospital (program started Jan 16)

Online information

9,503

unique website visitors



32% increase in Twitter followers



20% increase in Facebook likes



60.7k impressions on Facebook



521 webinar videos watched



990 podcasts downloaded or played

Cancer types



Breast 83%
DCIS/LCIS 3%
Gynaecological 13%

20% contacts with women living with advanced cancer

Who uses our service?

Diversity

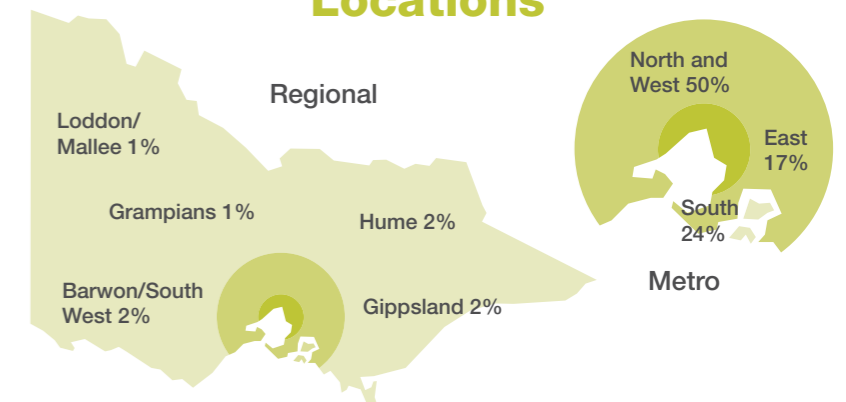
36%

contact with service users born in a non-main English speaking country (compared to 19.6% in the general Victorian population)



20 languages spoken at home by our service users

Locations



Health professional perspective: Dr Shirley Wong, Consultant Medical Oncologist

Some things about me and BreaCan . . .

I was first introduced to the service through the BreaCan Manager, Lee Kennedy. I was invited to give a talk about peripheral neuropathy as a complication of chemotherapy, which is a challenging but important topic. That was the first time I came to BreaCan in the beautiful old Queen Victoria Hospital building and the first presentation I gave there.

I admire the work, dedication and compassion of the staff at BreaCan. Their determination to support women with cancer is clearly visible. In the cancer journey, uncertainty and unpredictability causes tremendous anxiety. Knowledge is power, and the information sessions about cancer and treatments provide reassurance and control. I am so pleased to see the faces of women become confident and contented after hearing my presentations. I convince myself these little steps are the beginning of a smoother path ahead.

I also have had opportunities to work with the volunteers from BreaCan. The volunteers are cancer survivors. Some of them are still dealing with advanced cancer, however, they put their own worries behind and come to help others selflessly. Their smiling faces, their valuable experiences and the hope they gave to the women make the future look brighter, the battle easier and the victory closer.

I learn a lot from my interactions with the staff and the volunteers from BreaCan. I am impressed by their professionalism, dedication and compassion. Meeting the volunteers always brings back the memories of all the women I've seen, some of whom are living well and some who have died. I have been very privileged to be there with them in every step. These wonderful memories keep me going as an oncologist even in my darkest days.



Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital

Women from Melbourne's economically and culturally diverse western suburbs can now benefit from talking to a trained BreaCan Peer Support Volunteer while being treated for breast cancer at Sunshine Hospital. Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital was launched in May 2016. This two-year project is funded by LUCRF Community Partnership Trust and is a partnership between Women's Health Victoria and Western Health.

Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital is modelled on the successful program at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Every week trained Peer Support Volunteers are at the hospital to listen to women, provide emotional support and to assist in accessing reliable information. Having been through a cancer diagnosis themselves, our Peer Support Volunteers are uniquely placed to help women adjust after diagnosis and to normalise how they may be feeling. Peer Support Volunteers provide a sensitive listening ear to women in the hectic hospital environment.

A BreaCan staff member is also present when the Bridge of Support program is running. Their role is to support the volunteers and to promote the program to staff at the hospital. BreaCan has a terrific working relationship with the breast care nurses and doctors at

Western Health, and this has been strengthened through the project. We are embedded in the clinic area and staff are easily able to refer women to volunteers. The day oncology team have also been very supportive making it easy for volunteers to visit women undergoing treatment there. As the project continues, we are making connections in other areas of the hospital to increase women's access to the volunteers.

The program has been adapted to meet the needs of women living in the west. The new Peer Link Volunteer role has been developed and we hope this role will encourage a more diverse range of women to volunteer with BreaCan. The Peer Link Volunteers have experienced breast cancer and they promote the services of BreaCan and link women to our Peer Support Volunteers. The new Peer Link Volunteers have displayed patience and flexibility as their role is fine-tuned to adapt to the needs of women at the hospital.

So far, the Peer Support Volunteers have had over 80 separate contacts with women at Sunshine Hospital. Once engaged with the Bridge of Support program many women not only receive peer support, they also have further contact, either through volunteers at



BreaCan volunteers and staff with Member for St Albans Natalie Suleyman MLA (second from left), Women's Health Victoria Board Chair Meredith Carter and LUCRF Super CEO Charlie Donnelly (centre back), at the launch of Bridge of Support at Sunshine Hospital, May 2016

the hospital or through the BreaCan Resource Centre. Many of the women are from diverse backgrounds with twelve different countries of birth being represented. In the next phase of the project, we will be asking women with breast cancer, staff at the hospital and the volunteers for feedback about how to improve the service.

The generosity of LUCRF Community Partnership Trust in funding the pilot project at Sunshine Hospital has been an invaluable opportunity to improve the wellbeing of women living in the west and diagnosed with breast cancer. With the ongoing commitment of our dedicated volunteers and the support of Western Health, we hope to see Bridge of Support continue at Sunshine Hospital.



BreaCan volunteers at an orientation session at Sunshine Hospital, March 2016

— Kat's story

A few months after celebrating my thirtieth birthday, I unknowingly stumbled upon a lump in my breast that would prove to change my life forever. In March 2016, with no prior history of cancer in my family, my husband and I sat down to hear the words we will never forget, 'You have cancer'. The weeks to follow didn't prove any easier. It was a stage of my life I had never prepared for and this is where I found Breacan. My Mum flew in from my home-town, Toronto, Canada and we visited Breacan, hoping to find a support group for women my age. What we got from the visit was so much more.

Linda and Greta greeted us with warm, friendly smiles, which instantly put us at ease knowing we weren't alone in this fight. While I nervously shared the details of my diagnosis, the ladies listened attentively while noting different resources they felt would be helpful. Greta and I discussed reconstruction options and she even showed me the results from her surgery. Nipple tattoos! I didn't even know that was an option. Greta offered her support listening to my Mum express her feelings, fear and hope surrounding my diagnosis while



Linda and I gathered books and pamphlets to help answer all the unanswered questions in my head. We left Breacan feeling empowered for the next few steps of the long pink road ahead.

Three weeks later, I underwent surgery for a double mastectomy followed by 16 rounds of chemotherapy. I often visit the Breacan website to keep up to date with what's on and to take advantage of their webinar and podcast series. Every once in a while I get a supportive call from one of the ladies at Breacan checking in on how I am doing. We discuss surgery, effects of chemo, how hard it's been losing my hair despite cold capping. Shortly after and without asking, an email pops up with a list of wig services around Melbourne.

It's been five months since diagnosis and I am somewhere between emotional wreck and cancer warrior. I have far more good days than bad and on those bad days I turn to exercise to help me cope with the side effects of treatment – one of the many things I learned from Breacan.

— Volunteer highlights

This year has seen an increase in the number of volunteers and the opportunities for volunteers to gain diverse experiences and undertake a variety of roles. We expanded with the recruitment of new Peer Support Volunteers (our eighth intake) and our first team of Peer Link Volunteers. We are delighted to welcome all of our new volunteers.

The Bridge of Support project funded by LUCRF Community Partnership Trust influenced the creation of the new Peer Link Volunteer role. Six new volunteers now work at Sunshine Hospital to promote Breacan and link women to peer support. All completed one day of training, attended an information session and saw peer support in action in the Centre before they began working at Sunshine Hospital.

Volunteer training

Eight new volunteers completed their six weeks of training at the end of May. The qualified trainer employed to coordinate and facilitate this training was also an experienced Peer Support Volunteer. Many volunteers, both past and present, provided valuable support with both recruitment and training.

Our new Peer Support Volunteers, who bring a range of experiences to Breacan, are currently in the observation phase of their training where they are being mentored by experienced volunteers. They, along with our experienced Peer Support Volunteers, are providing practical and emotional support tailored to meet the specific needs of women who access our service.



National Volunteer Week Celebration, May 2016

Celebration of 10 years of volunteer service

During National Volunteer Week in May we celebrated and thanked our wonderful team of volunteers with a morning tea. The event was made even more special with the celebration of five volunteers reaching the amazing milestone of 10 years of volunteering at Breacan. Congratulations to Lois S, Teresa, Frederika, Pam and Joy.

Program support volunteers

Our library volunteers work hard to maintain our library collection and ensure our resources are well presented and accessible. This work is particularly important since most of our library is currently located away from the Resource Centre.

A small core of committed volunteers support Breacan with our mail-out three times a year. Mail-outs have also been supported by volunteers from the National Australia Bank. The help provided by mail-out volunteers provides valuable assistance on these busy but fun days.

— Our people



Staff

Lee Kennedy
Manager

Fiona McRae
Team Leader Breacan Programs

Kellie Holland
Volunteer Coordinator

Wendy Pullan
Programs Coordinator

Linda Rehill
Program and Resources Coordinator

Katherine Bradstreet
Administration Officer (until October 2015)
Communications Coordinator (from October 2015)

Brooke Underwood
Administration Officer (from October 2015)

Robin Curwen-Walker
Bridge of Support Western Project Manager
(from September 2015)

Tammy Boatman
Casual Programs Team Member (from February 2016)

Farewells

Catherine Watts
Communications Coordinator (until August 2015)

Helen Mertin
Project Officer (January - April 2016)

Frederika Laurie
Volunteer Trainer (March - May 2016)

Breacan Advisory Group

Tania Angelini (Chair, from December 2015)

Lyn Allison

Monique Baldacchino

Kate Broun (from January 2016)

Danielle Carpenter (from May 2016)

Helen Coleman

Christine Evely

Frederika Laurie

Alison Murphy

Penny Sanderson

Beth Wilson

Rita Butera (WHV Executive Director)

Lee Kennedy (Breacan Manager)

Advisory Group members who left during 2015 - 2016

Sally Fawkes (Chair, 2011 - 2015)

Katy Weare (2009 - 2016)

Breacan Consumer Reference Group

We thank this group of women for their insightful contributions to the planning and development of our service.

Carmel Blight

Ilka Carapina

Tracey Carpenter

Bernadette Hayman

Pham Ho

Carmel McCarthy



2016 Peer Support Volunteer intake

— Our volunteers

Our diverse volunteer team, most of whom have experienced a gynaecological or breast cancer, is Breacan's richest asset and truly reflects the essence of Breacan. We are truly grateful for the time our volunteers take out of their busy lives to support women with cancer across Victoria.

Peer Support Volunteers

Aaltje
Annette
Bridget
Chris S
Cindy
Coralie
Elizabeth
Frederika
Grace
Greta
Heather
Helen
Irene
Janice
Janine
Jannet
Jenny
Joan
Joy
Jewels

Kerry
Lianne
Lois
Maureen
May
Nadia
Naideen
Nikki
Pam
Pauline
Rita
Sandra
Sue G
Sue S
Teresa
Trish
Vivien
Wendy
Yvonne

A big welcome to the eight new Peer Support Volunteers:

Denise
Chris G
Victoria
Jessie
Janet
Danni
Margaret
Jo

Peer Link Volunteers

Chris
Diana
Elizabeth
Kene
Lyn
Paula

Mail-out Volunteers

Ann
Bev
Danni
Elaine
Elizabeth
Janet
Jaya
Jennifer
Lois S
Maryse
Patricia
Vivien

Exercise Support Volunteers

Judy
Meril
Lois S

Library Volunteers

Gwen
Janet
Jewels
Jules
Vivien

BreaCan Advisory Group

Message from the Chair

In my first year as the Chair of the BreaCan Advisory Group, I have been privileged to work alongside a range of inspiring and dedicated women, interested in understanding the work of BreaCan and committed to improving the services available to Victorian women with a gynaecological or breast cancer. I thank you all for your efforts.

With Cancer and Women as a key strategic activity of the Women's Health Victoria Strategic Directions 2015 – 2018, the goal to sustain and grow BreaCan is a key focus of the organisation. The Strategic Directions provides a clear roadmap for BreaCan and as one of the WHV Board members on the BreaCan Advisory Group, I am able to assist with the implementation of this key priority area.

The independent evaluation undertaken in the latter part of 2015 by a team from Deakin University has provided recommendations which point the way for BreaCan to grow and develop, with the ultimate aim of offering the services of BreaCan to more women, where and when they need them. The evaluation reinforced the value of BreaCan services to the women who use them but also pointed to some of the changes needed in the delivery of supportive care in Victoria and ideas for BreaCan to continue to be relevant and accessible to as many women as possible.

Meanwhile, the activities of BreaCan continue. As mentioned elsewhere, a new Bridge of Support program was implemented at Western Health. Our existing Bridge of Support program at the Breast Service of the Royal Melbourne and Women's Hospitals continues to flourish. Treasure Chest Inc., a charity for women with breast cancer, has very generously given funding to provide this program over the last year.

This coming year will bring new opportunities for Bridge of Support with the opening of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre and we look forward to again extending the program to more women as they are diagnosed and undergo



treatment for breast or a gynaecological cancer. Six-week exercise programs delivered in community locations funded by Pink Affair are growing in popularity and excellent feedback is received from the women who participate. Our webinars and What's On sessions in community locations are providing greater access to BreaCan support and information. Participation in conferences and statewide groups increases BreaCan's knowledge about the issues facing women with cancer as well as giving others in the cancer sector greater knowledge about BreaCan.

Women continue to benefit from the skills and support of the BreaCan volunteers – a very sincere thank you to them. The hard working BreaCan staff team continues to focus on developing new ways to extend the services of BreaCan in the desire to meet the wellbeing needs of women diagnosed with breast and gynaecological cancer – thank you.

BreaCan, with its core values of active consumer participation, provision of independent and high quality information and support and recognition of the holistic and diverse needs of women with cancer continues to play an important and complementary role to the clinical care and treatment provided within the cancer sector.

We look forward to the next twelve months as we work on improving the ways in which BreaCan supports more women with a gynaecological or breast cancer to live well.

Tania Angelini
Chair, BreaCan Advisory Group

— Our supporters

We would like to thank the following people, companies and organisations that supported us in a variety of ways this year. We are extremely grateful.

DONORS

Donations were received in memory of Janet Clark

Lorraine Bourillon
Michelle Bourillon
Georgina Kanizaj Clark
Steph Dahlsen
Suzanne Duong
Wendy Efstratiadis
Sara Elkas
Estate of Beverley Brown
Michael Fraser
Grill'd Health Burgers – 'Local Matters' Program
Lynette Hunter
Nancy Libby
Elizabeth Manovski
Janet McMenamin
Nelson Alexander Charitable Fund
Peggie Payne
Trisha Persini
Jennifer Pietsch
Shield Sisters & Friends
Yoshinobu Uematsu
Marion Vincent

There were also donors who wished to remain anonymous.

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Belinda Astl
Roger Blachut
Wendy Dawson
Mary Dwyer
Brett Ellenport
Genesis Fitness, Lonsdale Street
Natalie Goroncy
Michael Green
Naideen Hillier
Input Fitness Health Club, Frankston
Isabella Lees-Trinca
Mary Neofitou
Michael Quinn
Leanne Storer
Sandra Villella
Michelle White
Shirley Wong
Volunteers from the National Australia Bank
Students from Xavier College

PROJECT FUNDING

Project funding was received from:
Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
LUCRF Community Partnership Trust
Pink Affair
Treasure Chest Inc.

FRIENDS OF BREACAN

Arena Printing
Bell Creative
Digicap
il Vicolo
IT Strategic
Kathy Wilson Consulting
Kimono House
Landscape of Life
Man With a Van
Judy Sammut
Squisito
Bernadette Voss
Frederika Laurie

SERVICE EVALUATION

We would like to acknowledge the work of Kerry Haines and Anna Ulgade from Deakin University who undertook the evaluation. Thank you to all the service users and health professionals who contributed to this process, in particular, the Evaluation Reference Group:
Lyn Allison (chair)
Bianca Bell
Wendy Dawson
Catherine Enter
Sue Goldman
Michelle Gonzales
Greta Hawke
Paula Howell
Amanda Piper
Bridget Roberts
Elaine Sargent
Liz Simkiss
Shirley Wong

GROUP SESSION PRESENTERS

Belinda Astl
Trish Boetto
Margie Brett
Maree Brinkman
Sara Bunnett
Charni
Thalia Castles
Jonathan Cebon
Jacquie Chirgwin
Liz Crocker
Mary Dwyer
Helen Eason
Lynda Evans
Jo Gniel
Natalie Goroncy
Michael Green
Mario Guerreri
Siegfried Gutbrod
Emily Irwin
Ruth Kennedy
Isabella Lees-Trinca
Tara McKinty
Juli Moran
Natalie Ngan
Elizabeth Pearson
Suzanne Peyton
Jo Power
Jeremy Prentice
Michael Quinn
Adrian Schembri
Josie Scott
Sandra Villella
Sabina Vitacca
Matt Young



Phone 1300 781 500
Email breacan@breacan.org.au
Website breacan.org.au
Podcasts breacan.org.au/podcasts/
Webinars breacan.org.au/webinars/
Navigators breacan.org.au/navigators/

Like us on Facebook /BreaCanSupport
Follow us on Twitter @BreaCan
Watch us on Vimeo /BreaCan
Subscribe to our mailing list at breacan.org.au

BreaCan Resource Centre

Level 5
Queen Victoria Women's Centre
210 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Hours of operation

Monday 10am – 5pm
Wednesday 10am – 5pm
Thursday 10am – 5pm
Peer support is offered from 10am – 2pm
on these days
(Closed public holidays)

Postal Address

GPO Box 1066
Melbourne VIC 3001

Bridge of Support

The Royal Melbourne Hospital:
alternate Tuesdays (11am – 3pm) and
Thursdays (10am – 2pm)
Sunshine Hospital: alternate Mondays
and Thursdays (12pm – 4pm)

October 2016
DESIGN: skysdesign - social enterprise
TEXT: BreaCan staff
PRINT: Whirlwind Print
STOCK: Maine Recycle (Silk)



BreaCan is a service of Women's Health Victoria, a statewide women's health promotion information and advocacy service.



BreaCan acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.