

COUNTERPART
Women supporting women with cancer



20
YEARS

YEAR IN REVIEW 2022–2023
CONNECTING SUPPORTING INFORMING



Highlights

2022–2023

This year we:

- opened our service to support women with all types of cancer
- supported 674 women with cancer 1550 times
- added 10 new recorded webinars to our website
- ran 33 events for women with cancer
 - 22 online workshops
 - 5 webinars
 - 6 in person events, including 2 regional forums
- returned to visiting the Royal Melbourne, Royal Women's and Sunshine hospitals every week to support women through our Bridge of Support program
- celebrated 20 years of connecting, supporting and informing women with cancer to live well, at an event with the Hon Mary-Anne Thomas, MP Minister for Health, past and present staff and volunteers, people who have used our service, funders, health professionals and other supporters
- relocated our Resource Centre to a new space within the Queen Victoria Women's Centre
- presented 2 posters at the 6th National Cancer Survivorship Conference in Adelaide in March 2023
 - *Counterpart's service expansion – lessons for peer support in a small cancer support organisation?*
 - *Recruiting and selecting cancer Peer Support Volunteers – what does success look like?*
- released first video in the *You are not alone* series, sharing stories of women with lived experience of cancer.

Acknowledgement of Country

Women's Health Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we work on, the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge their continued Custodianship of these lands and waters.

As a statewide organisation, we also acknowledge and pay our respects to the past and present Elders of Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across Victoria.

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and that we are the beneficiaries of stolen land and dispossession, which began over 230 years ago and continues today.

Yakuna Gananggurr

Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Gamilaroi woman Madison Connors created an artwork for Women's Health Victoria. *Yakuna Gananggurr* translates to *Until Tomorrow* in the Yorta Yorta language, and elements from this work are used throughout this publication. The full artwork and more information about its creation can be found at whv.org.au/about/our-commitment-towards-reconciliation



CEO's message

Dianne Hill

CEO, Women's Health Victoria

I am pleased to present to you our *Counterpart Year in Review 2022–2023*. This year the Counterpart staff and volunteers continued to connect, support and inform women with cancer. We also expanded the service from just supporting women with breast and gynaecological cancer to all women with cancer. In addition, we celebrated Counterpart's 20-year birthday and looked forward to the next 5 years as part of our broader Women's Health Victoria 2023–2028 strategic planning.

It was an honour to MC Counterpart's 20-year birthday event in May and catch up in-person with so many volunteers, service users, supporters, funders and partners after the Covid restrictions. We were delighted to welcome the Hon Mary-Anne Thomas, MP Minister for Health, so she could learn more about the impact Counterpart was having on women living with cancer.

There have been many highlights over the past 20 years since a group of women living with breast cancer had a vision to establish a consumer-focused resource centre for other women with cancer that included face-to-face peer support. These have included the launch of the What's On program that offers health and wellbeing sessions; the Feel Good Gentle Exercise program that provided free, fortnightly exercise sessions for women following cancer treatment; and the Stepping into Wellness programs that helped women get back into exercise. It also includes the expansion to support women with a gynaecological cancer and to provide peer support in hospitals through Bridge of Support, along with the launch of our information Navigator website and app. There are many more highlights and achievements, and you can read about them in this Year in Review.

This year we published our first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Through the RAP process we are working towards creating a culturally safe workplace and promoting employment of Aboriginal staff; ensuring our services are culturally safe, accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities; building relationships with Aboriginal community-controlled services (ACCOs) to support their work, and to establish opportunities to collaborate on broader systemic issues; and promoting reconciliation within our sphere of influence.

We also published our commitment to gender diversity and inclusion. WHV has served trans women and gender diverse people in some ways. We are now intentionally transforming our organisational capability, workforce, engagement, service delivery and culture to build a more inclusive and safe environment for all service users and staff.

I would like to thank our volunteers and Counterpart Advisory Group members, who are key to the support provided by Counterpart. Thank you to the dedicated Counterpart staff, both past and present, who work with passion, commitment, and empathy every day. Together with the volunteers you bring hope and support to Victorian women.

I also extend my thanks to our major funder, the Victorian Government, as well as our generous donors; other services, organisations and groups; health professionals; wellness practitioners; and individuals who collaborate with us, share information, refer women to our services, and support our work.



Khim's STORY

'I wanted to speak to someone young who's gone through a similar experience. When I did, it was amazing.'

I was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was 27 years old. I really didn't think anything of it but went to the GP for a check-up. The GP said 'you know what, you're so young. I don't think there's anything, but we'll do a mammogram before New Year.' Shortly after, I received a call from Monash wanting to make an appointment with me as soon as possible, and that's when I got diagnosed with breast cancer. At 27, I had no friends at that age who had cancer, this was during a time where I thought cancer, the C word was equal to death.

My treatment involved a lumpectomy followed by chemotherapy. I initially didn't tell anybody at work, and I was working throughout the whole time. I had been told that the treatment would make my hair fall out, but I just didn't know what to do, so at first I didn't do anything. Then I thought I would try a wig, something as close to my natural hair as possible. I remember walking into work and a colleague looked at me, and the first thing she said was, 'it's not your

hair.' This was at an age where body image and how I presented myself to the world meant so much and I didn't know how to handle it, so I just walked out.

I wanted to speak to someone young who's gone through a similar experience. When I did, it was amazing. She could just normalise what I was feeling, saying, 'you know what, I felt the same way too'.

After this I went back to work and this time, I wore a scarf. And this time, I told my colleague. The response was so overwhelming and I wish I had told them earlier. Having that courage to be me outside and being different made a difference. I also found courage when thinking about what my parents went through in the war in Cambodia. If they could have gone through all that and yet stand strong now, surely, I could go through this. Having a great medical team that was there, that kind of increased my courage too.

Remember that you are not alone. Along the way, you will find courage.

See Khim's full story here: counterpart.org.au/khim



You are not alone: video series

With funding from the Victorian Government, we began a series of videos sharing women's experiences of cancer. In each video, women with lived experience of cancer tell their stories in their own way, so that other women in similar situations can help to normalise what they are experiencing, how they may be feeling, and hopefully be inspired to reach out for support if they need. These videos began filming at Studio F in June 2023.



Manager's message

Cindy Van Rooy
Manager, Counterpart

I had the privilege of joining the Counterpart team at the end of 2022. It has been a pleasure to get to know the Counterpart team, our amazing volunteers and supporters, and hear from some of the women who use our service. Everyone's experience of cancer is unique, and it is an honour that the women who use our service trust, and allow, us to be part of their experience.

This year was a significant year for us. We expanded our services to support women with all types of cancer, our amazing volunteers returned to the hospitals through Bridge of Support, our Resource Centre re-opened, and we celebrated 20 years of supporting women with cancer. You can read more about our 20 year event on pages 12 and 13.

We also worked with a range of other organisations and services to plan wellbeing days across regional Victoria. The feedback so far has been very positive, with women valuing the opportunity to connect with other women with cancer in their area. We look forward to running more (read more on page 11).

Our new series of videos, where women with a lived experience of cancer talk about their experiences, has been released, and we look forward to adding more next year. We are very grateful to all the women who have shared their experience with us. (See pages 4 and 6).

Soon we will have the opportunity to provide input into the Victorian cancer plan 2024-2028. We encourage you to also have your say to help shape the plan to ensure it meets the wide range of needs of Victorian women living with cancer.

Counterpart's services would not be possible without the partnerships, generous support, and dedication, of many people, funders and donors. This includes organisations, health professionals, wellness practitioners, and individuals who collaborated with us and referred women to Counterpart. I also want to thank our volunteers who are generous with their experience and time. This includes some of our long-term volunteers: Rhonda, who has volunteered with Counterpart for 20 years; Teresa for 15 years; and Khim, Nikki and Bridget for over 10 years.

Counterpart Advisory Group Chair's message

Christine Evelyn
Chair, Counterpart Advisory Group



The voices of women, especially women who have an experience of cancer, are central to the work of Counterpart, and this is evident through the 20 years of the Counterpart Advisory Group's (CAG) work. Most CAG members are women who have an experience of cancer, along with several health professionals who value Counterpart's peer support model. All volunteer their time and meet quarterly, providing advice and support to assist Counterpart to continue offering high quality peer support and relevant programs to Victorian women. A sincere thank you to our current and past members for their time and expertise supporting Counterpart.

This year was a busy one for the Counterpart team and volunteers as the Resource Centre reopened, Bridge of Support restarted in hospitals, and face-to-face events were held again. It was also Counterpart's first year of expanding to support women with all cancers. This included developing relationships with other cancer support organisations, partnering to run events such as wellbeing days, and promoting the expansion to health professionals, through activities such as speaking at in-services. As a result, in this first year approximately 14 per cent of Counterpart's

interactions were with women with cancers other than breast and gynaecological cancers.

Counterpart also celebrated 20 years of support with an event in May. It was wonderful to have so many volunteers, service users, funders, supporters, collaborators, and current and past staff together. The Minister for Health, the Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP, also attended as we acknowledged Counterpart's achievements over the past 20 years and thanked our volunteers and supporters. Our dedicated volunteers are central to the success of Counterpart – thank you for being so generous with your time and expertise in supporting women with cancer.

I also wish to extend my thanks to Fiona McRae. Fiona's passion and dedication was evident in her 14 years at Counterpart, including her time as Manager where we worked closely as part of the CAG. We wish her well in her next venture.

We are looking forward to Counterpart continuing to connect, support and inform women living with cancer to live well long into the future.



Ashleen's STORY

'Speaking to Peer Support Volunteers at Counterpart who have been in the same situation was really reassuring.'

I was diagnosed in October of 2020, during Melbourne's second lockdown. I had chemotherapy for five months followed by surgery and then 30 days of radiation. When I finished treatment in October of 2021, I thought that was it, I was cured. About five months later I started getting headaches and my vision was blurry. I spoke to my oncologist who did some scans and they found that my cancer had spread, I now had a tumour on my brain.

They got all the tumour out but, unfortunately, I lost a little bit of vision from that surgery. Throughout 2022 they found additional tumours in my liver, my spine, my brain. Now I'm on a new chemo every three weeks and it seems to be going really well. It's really tolerable and the side effects are minimal, so I'm really grateful.

When I was diagnosed with stage four metastatic disease, I took some steps to prepare for the inevitable. I heard someone mention get it all done early, you can put it away and then you can just continue living your life. It's not a nice thing to think

about, but organising your wills, the power of attorney, your funeral – prepaying it – just takes a little bit of stress off. I also wrote letters to all my loved ones with little trinkets and photos, something I hope they can treasure.

You know that it becomes incurable and you have to live with it. Speaking to Peer Support Volunteers at Counterpart who have been in the same situation was really reassuring. They understood what I was going through. Most of the time I spoke to someone that's got metastatic disease and they understand about the ongoing treatment. You can speak to your family as much as you want, but when you hear from someone that's been there, that's done the treatment and they understand about dealing with the treatment team. It is really nice to speak to one of the Counterpart volunteers. They kind of offer advice and they speak a little bit about their own stories with cancer and their cancer experience.

You are not alone because there are people that you can reach out to that have been in the same situation, like the Counterpart Peer Support Volunteers.



Watch Ashleen's full story here: counterpart.org.au/ashleen

Want to share your story? counterpart.org.au/contact-us



Support for ALL WOMEN WITH CANCER

On 1 July 2022, Counterpart officially extended our services to all Victorian women with cancer. This means we can now support the 61% of women who are diagnosed with cancers other than breast or gynaecological cancers*. Many women benefit from talking to another woman who has had cancer, so we are so pleased that our model of peer support, events and information are now available to every Victorian woman with cancer, and their families and friends.

Overall, the percentage of people diagnosed with a non-breast or gynaecological cancer who have used our services since our expansion in 2022–2023 increased to 8.5 per cent. The most common of these cancers were those of the digestive organs, lung and respiratory, blood and lymphatic, and melanoma.

Key to our success was our strong partnerships with other non-government organisations and services. We work with them to cross promote our services in a range of ways, including inclusion in newsletters, sharing promotional materials, and referring service users who are seeking further support or information.

We have also collaborated with our partner organisations by focusing on common areas of interest, sharing each other's knowledge, and inviting participation in our regional events and volunteer in-services.

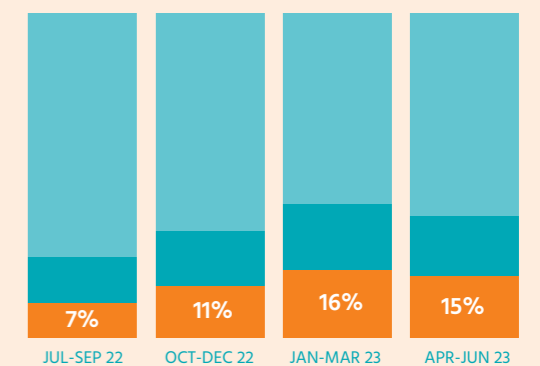
A full list of the organisations we have worked with can be found on page 15.

*Victorian Cancer Registry. *Cancer in Victoria 2021*, Cancer Council Victoria, 2022.



Volunteers at an in-service in the Resource Centre, May 2023.

Percentage of Counterpart service users with other cancers



Breast cancer
Gynaecological cancers
Other cancers



Peer SUPPORT

Our Peer Support Volunteers all have lived experience of cancer, and the one-on-one support they give other women is the foundation of our service.

Our Resource Centre relocated to a more inviting space late in 2022, joining our offices on the 2nd floor of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre. We are continuing a hybrid model, with some of our volunteers choosing to keep providing peer support from home. We have been pleased to welcome others back to our Resource Centre.

Over the last year, there have been ample opportunities for women with cancer to come into our warm and welcoming space, which has hosted morning teas, a National Volunteer Week celebration, and Peer Support Volunteer training.

One of the highlights of the past 12 months, has been the reinvigoration of our Bridge of Support program at the Royal Melbourne, Royal Women's and Sunshine hospitals. The Covid pandemic meant that our staff and volunteers could no longer visit the hospital to provide peer support to women there for appointments and treatment. Once these restrictions lifted, we were able to resume weekly visits.

We now have 10 Peer Support Volunteers who are inducted and qualified to volunteer in the hospital setting.

SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TOPICS TALKED ABOUT WITH PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS.

	TREATMENT		SIDE EFFECTS
	GENERAL SUPPORT		INFORMATION
	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT		ADVANCED CANCER ISSUES
	FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS		AFTER SURGERY

Our volunteers

We are incredibly grateful to all the wonderful women who volunteered for Counterpart this year. Their kindness and time providing support has been a gift to women with cancer as they are faced with the challenges that a cancer diagnosis brings.

Our volunteers gave over 1,000 hours of their time. Most of this was spent providing peer support to women with cancer, and preparing and debriefing with staff.

However, volunteers were involved in a range of other activities too. These included:

- assisting at events in regional Victoria and in our Resource Centre
- helping to recruit and train new volunteers
- assisting with checking links on our website
- reviewing information as women with cancer.

We welcomed two new Peer Support Volunteers, Robyn and Larissa, who completed their training at the end of 2022.

We have also been working on a new training program, incorporating self-directed learning. This will begin early in 2024.



Robyn, Branka and Barbara at a National Volunteer Week morning tea in our Resource Centre, May 23.

Trish's STORY

I first arrived at Counterpart, then BreaCan, in 2014, 5 days after having a partial mastectomy (dressing and stitches in place) and 5 days before my first oncology appointments. I was angry. I was scared. I didn't have time for this. I was spending a great amount of energy being brave for others.

I came looking for information to assist me in making treatment decisions. However, I left with much more.

The first thing that struck me when I entered the room was the calm. For the first time I met someone who was objective, who listened, who cared. A woman who had a shared experience and didn't question or judge.

During my treatment, I received several calls from Peer Support Volunteers. Occasionally I couldn't take the call or didn't feel much like talking. This was fine. I was always given the space and the opportunity to respond according to how I was coping. At other times the calls were very welcome, often coming at just the right moment, and giving me an opportunity to speak to someone outside my day-to-day environment. I could be myself and talk about how I was feeling. The Volunteers understood and helped me make sense of it all. Without our shared experience these conversations would not have been anywhere near as valuable. Over time, I became more confident, empowered – I was gaining back some control. I understood decisions were mine to make, not to be made for me.

Eventually life for me went back to its new normal, and I no longer needed peer support. I was on the mailing list though, so I was still connected. I had a line of support when I needed it. This place where I had found strength and support was still in my world.

In 2018, I received an email containing information about volunteering. I had been thinking about this for some time, and the time seemed right to apply.



The recruitment process is robust. Prospective volunteers must be in the right place physically and emotionally to undertake the role. Applicants can ask questions to make sure that being a Peer Support Volunteer is right for them.

The training was intense, but there was a lot of information sharing and professional support. Of course, the wonderful Counterpart staff are with you every step of the way. Prior to making any contact with others, we have several opportunities to shadow, to listen to, experienced volunteers as they provide support to women.

At times providing support can be difficult. Sometimes listening to others share their experience can be a trigger that takes you back to when things were challenging for you. We are well supported though, there is always a debrief after our shifts and we know we can say no to anything that causes discomfort. Counterpart is my 'safe place'.

This is an excerpt from Trish's address at Counterpart's 20th anniversary celebration. Read her full address at counterpart.org.au/celebrating-20-years-of-peer-support/



Interested in volunteering at Counterpart?

Find out more at counterpart.org.au/volunteer



EVENTS IN 2022–2023

What's On

Clinical and information

Care plans

Nicole Kinnane, Project Manager, The Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre, and Nurse Consultant, Gynae Oncology, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Community Palliative Care

Ian Millard, Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Specialist, Melbourne City Mission

Fear of recurrence

Ella Sexton, Psychologist, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Lymphoedema

Helen Eason, Physiotherapist and Accredited Lymphoedema Practitioner

Palliative Care – Jenni's story

Jenni, Consumer

Sexuality and intimacy after cancer

A/Prof Wendy Vanselow, Head, Sexual Counselling Clinic, The Royal Women's Hospital

Stomas 101: for people anticipating or new to having a stoma

Cheryl Prendergast, Stomal Therapy Nurse, Northern Health

Creative activities

Art therapy – what values are important to you?

Jackie Burden, Art Therapist, Melbourne Art Therapy Studio

Dance flow

Sally Low, Feldenkrais Practitioner and Physiotherapist, Salamander Centre

Music therapy (2 sessions)

Kate McMahon, Registered Music Therapist and PhD candidate

Photography in the Botanic Gardens*

Marion Vincent, Photographer

Sashiko*

Leanne O'Sullivan, Kimono House

Wellbeing activities

Chair yoga

Sarasvati Dawson, Yoga and Meditation Practitioner

Dru yoga (4 sessions)

Susan Parsons, Yoga and Meditation Practitioner

Feldenkrais*

Thalia Castles, Feldenkrais Practitioner

Meditation (2 sessions)

Matthew Young, Meditation Practitioner, Melbourne Meditation Centre

Mindful self-compassion

Jo Gniel, Counsellor and Educator, landscape of life

Qi gong

Dorota Swiderski, Qi gong Practitioner, Quiescence: Acupuncture and Apothecary

Online Cancer Wellbeing Day

Bollywood dance

Anjali Sengupta, Dance Instructor, Embracing Spirit

Dru yoga and meditation

Susan Parsons, Yoga and Meditation Practitioner

Feldenkrais

Sally Low, Feldenkrais Practitioner and Physiotherapist, Salamander Centre

Healthy boundaries

Kathy Jerin, Meditation Practitioner, Body, Mind and You

Mindfulness

Suzanne Peyton, Mindfulness Practitioner, The Mindful Well

Making Connections

Bone metastases

Dr Ruwani Mendis, Medical Oncologist, Western Health and Banksia Palliative Care

GPs and metastatic cancer – how can they help?

Dr Jane Crowe, General Practitioner

Living well with metastatic cancer

Tracey Moroney, Cancer Support Nurse and Counsellor, Ringwood Private Hospital

Meditative drawing and painting

Jackie Burden, Art Therapist, Melbourne Art Therapy Studio

Morning tea for women with metastatic/advanced cancer*

Victor Sun, Melbourne Origami Group

Scanxiety for women living with metastatic cancer

Ella Sexton, Psychologist, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

*events held in-person. All others were online workshops or webinars.

What's on at Counterpart

Browse upcoming events at counterpart.org.au/events



Regional Wellbeing Days

This year, we were thrilled to get out to the regions. We started by participating in a wellbeing day at Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre. On the day, two of our Peer Support Volunteers and a staff member chatted to people about our service, and we organised a qi gong session for women with cancer, with Howard Evans, Qi gong Practitioner.

In June, we headed to Bendigo, where over 30 people joined us at our Wellbeing Day. The feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive, with many appreciating the chance to catch up with other women with cancer. We were very pleased to have staff from Bendigo Health and Amy Larsen from Pancare Foundation provide additional information about available support.

Bendigo wellbeing day for women with cancer* (organised in partnership with Bendigo Health)

Is cancer causing trouble with your sexuality?

Dr Sabine Rothmaier, Medical Oncologist, Bendigo Health

Music for Flourishing Astrid Notarangelo,

Music Therapist and Pastoral Care Coordinator

Qi gong Cairo James,

Qi gong Practitioner, WELBY Holistic Healing

Ballarat wellbeing day* (organised in partnership with Ballarat Health)

Qi gong Howard Evans

Qi gong Practitioner



Peer Support Volunteers Evelyn and Helen at BRICC, March 23.



Bendigo Wellbeing Day participants do qi gong, June 23.

Information

Webinars

Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, we published 10 webinar recordings. For the first time, we trialled three webinars as recordings only, without a live audience. This allowed us more flexibility in engaging presenters, while creating information resources on important topics that can be accessed from our website at any time.

- Fear of recurrence
- GPs and advanced/metastatic cancer – how can they help?
- Sexuality and intimacy after cancer
- Bone metastases
- Healthy boundaries
- Care plans
- Lymphoedema
- Community palliative care
- Palliative care – Jenni's story
- Stomas 101: for people anticipating or new to having a stoma.

Website

Following our expansion to supporting women with all types of cancer in July 2023, we expanded the information section of our website to provide information on a wide range of cancers.

This included links to:

- specific organisations and information relating to 33 cancer types, as well as a link to Rare Cancers Australia for those not listed
- general cancer organisations
- clinical trials information
- sources of practical support
- advanced/metastatic cancer information

Navigator

The Counterpart Navigator app continues to provide information to women with gynaecological cancers and early breast cancer. This year, we had more users and sessions with popular topics including uterine cancer, fertility preservation, and sex and intimacy.

We are currently assessing how the Navigator might be adapted to support all our service users in future.

celebrating 20 years

2004

- We start our Making Connections program of events to meet the unique needs of women living with advanced cancer.

2010

- Bridge of Support is launched at the Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's hospitals combined breast service, bringing peer support to women during their cancer treatment.

2014

- We start incorporating webinars into our events program, to increase access for women with cancer.

2016

- Bridge of Support expands to Western Health at Sunshine Hospital.

2018

- The new Counterpart Navigator app is launched, expanded to include gynaecological cancers.

2020

- Due to Covid, all events move online, and our Resource Centre operates remotely, with Peer Support Volunteers making phone calls from home

2022

- On 1 July, we expand to support all women with cancer.

2003

- BreaCan is launched by Health Minister, the Hon Bronwyn Pike on 11 April 2003.
- Trained Peer Support Volunteers begin supporting women in our new Resource Centre.
- We offer regular information and wellbeing sessions through our What's On program.
- Our fortnightly Feel Good gentle exercise program starts, led by a volunteer instructor who has had breast cancer herself.

2007

- Our service expands to provide support and information to women who have experienced a gynaecological cancer.

2013

- We celebrate 10 years of BreaCan with the launch of our BreaCan Navigator app for women with early breast cancer.

2015

- Pink Affair funds Stepping into Wellness programs, beginning a partnership that assists women getting back into exercise after cancer in suburban Melbourne.

2017

- BreaCan is rebranded as Counterpart.

2019

- Bridge of Support expands to see women with gynaecological cancers at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

2021

- Our Resource Centre runs in a hybrid model, with volunteers having a choice of working from home or on site, as Covid restrictions allow.

20 years OF SUPPORTING WOMEN WITH CANCER

Our history

Here are some of the highlights from our 20-year history of connecting, supporting and informing Victorian women with cancer to live well.

Read more at counterpart.org.au/history

On Thursday 25 May we were very excited to hold an event to celebrate 20 years of Counterpart supporting women with cancer.

Over 80 people joined us at Wayi Djerring at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre to catch up with old friends, reminisce and celebrate our achievements and recent expansion to support Victorian women with all types of cancers.

Dianne Hill, CEO of Women's Health Victoria, was our MC for the night. After a moving Welcome to Country by Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Ringo Terrick, we were delighted to hear from the Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP, Minister for Health.

Minister Thomas also helped us present awards to some of our long-term volunteers – Khim, Nikki and Bridget who have volunteered with us for 10 years, Teresa for 15 years, and Rhonda for 20 years.

We then heard from Judy Hacker, Chair of the WHV Board, who gave a brief overview of the history of Counterpart – from the vision a group of women had in 2002 and the establishment of BreaCan, through to our name change to Counterpart, and our recent expansion to support all types of cancers.

Cindy Van Rooy, Counterpart Manager, talked about some of Counterpart's programs and activities. We finished the formalities by hearing from Trish and her experience of cancer and using our services, and then how she became a Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer. You can read some of Trish's story on page 9.

It was a great evening surrounded by our volunteers; staff; stakeholders and partners, including our key funders the Victorian government; and the women who have used Counterpart services, both past and present. Thank you to everyone who could join us, and those who were not able to come and sent their congratulations.

2003–2023 in numbers

-  almost 41,000 interactions with women with cancer
-  168 volunteers
-  29,000+ hours of peer support and volunteering
-  over 1,275 events, activities, and webinars
-  96,000 visits to our website
-  9,000+ webinar views



(L-R) Trish, Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer; Dianne Hill, CEO, Women's Health Victoria; The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas, Minister for Health; Judy Hacker, Chair, Women's Health Victoria Board; and Cindy Van Rooy, Counterpart Manager.



(L-R) Counterpart Peer Support Volunteers Nikki and Khim (celebrating 10 years of volunteering) and Rhonda (celebrating 20 years of volunteering) cut the cake.



Many of Counterpart's friends and supporters gathered for the celebration.

Our PEOPLE

Our volunteers

Without our volunteers, Counterpart couldn't exist. A huge thank you to everyone who volunteered in 2022–23.

Peer Support Volunteers

Ailsa	Khim	Rachel
Barbara	Larissa	Rhonda
Branka	Lisa	Robyn
Bridget	Lyn	Teresa
Danni	Marcia	Trish F
Emma	Margaret	Trish M
Evelyn	May	Wilma
Glenda	Meri	
Helen	Nikki	
Jo	Penny	

Information Volunteers

Diana
Susan

We remember Peer Support Volunteers Pam, who died in November 2022, and Janice, who died in May 2023.

Pam volunteered with us for 18 years, both in the Resource Centre and at hospitals through Bridge of Support and was a volunteer representative on the Counterpart Advisory Group. She was a great champion and supporter of women with cancer, especially those living with metastatic cancer.

Janice joined our volunteer team in 2013 and also took on many roles. She provided peer support in our Resource Centre and at hospitals through Bridge of Support, was a volunteer representative on the Counterpart Advisory Group and assisted with technical support in the early days of our webinars.

We are incredibly grateful for their contributions and remember them with great fondness.



Current and former volunteers at our 20 years of Counterpart celebration, May 23

Our staff

Cindy Van Rooy
Manager

Kellie Holland
Team Leader Operations and
Volunteer Coordinator

Ada Castle
Casual Resource
Centre Coordinator

Ellen Panjari
Casual Resource
Centre Coordinator

Jan Savage
Service Expansion
Project Coordinator

Katherine Bradstreet
Communications Coordinator

Farewells
Fiona McRae
Manager (until Dec 2022)

Julia Cernaz
Casual Programs Coordinator
(Oct 22 – Mar 23)

Lieve De Clercq
Resource Centre Coordinator
(from Sep 22), Casual Programs
Coordinator (until Sep 22)

Linda Rehill
Information and Resources
Coordinator

Mary Macheras-Magias
Bridge of Support Coordinator/
Volunteer Training Coordinator

Rebecca Harraghy
Administration Coordinator

Wendy Pullan
Programs Coordinator

Counterpart Advisory Group

Christine Evely (Chair)
Michelle Ainsworth
Monique Baldacchino
Helen Blennerhassett
Danielle Carpenter
Trish Ferrier
Carmel McCarthy

Alison Murphy
Simone Noelker
Kylie Stephens
Cindy Van Rooy
(Manager, Counterpart)
Dianne Hill
(CEO, WHV)

Farewells
Elizabeth Dax
(until Jan 2023)

Our SUPPORTERS

Our heartfelt thanks to the following people and organisations for their support in 2022–2023.

Your support helps us to connect, support and inform women with cancer to live well.



Some of our current and past Counterpart staff.



Donors

Leo Connelly
Georgia Dodds
Kate Gibson
Linda Ishchenko
Nina Macgeorge
Bradley Medcroft
Roberta Munro
Shu Yi Soong
St Michael's Parish
School Ashburton
TWOBS

There were also donors who wished to remain anonymous.

In-kind donations

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Jenni
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Ian Millard
My Jazzy Blooms
Susan Parsons
Suzanne Peyton
Dr Sabine Rothmaier
Ella Sexton
Dorota Swiderski
A/Prof Wendy Vanselow

Friends of Counterpart

5Nth staff at The Royal Women's Hospital
Attractor Solutions
Breast Services team at Western Health
Community Data Solutions
Niamh Condren
IT Strategic
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Bec Keen
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Pink Affair
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Studio F
Jennifer Ung
Amy Walsh
Bethany Young

Bridge of Support partners

The Royal Melbourne Hospital
The Royal Women's Hospital
Western Health
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre *We hope to resume BOS at the PMCC in 2024.*

Partner organisations

Australia and New Zealand
Sarcoma Association (ANZSA)
Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre
Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre
Bass Coast Health
Bendigo Health
Bladder Cancer Australia Charity
Foundation
Bowel Cancer Australia

Cancer Council Victoria
Gobbe Wellness Centre
Head and Neck Cancer Australia
Leukaemia Foundation
Lung Foundation
Lymphoma Australia
Melanoma Patients Australia
NeuroEndocrine Cancers Australia

Pancare Foundation
Primary Health Networks
Rare Cancers Australia
Thursday Girls
VCCC (Victorian Comprehensive
Cancer Centre) Alliance
Victorian Integrated Cancer Services



Major funding
Victorian Government



Project funding
Australian Communities Foundation

YEAR IN REVIEW 2022–2023

Get in touch

- 📞 1300 781 500
- 🌐 counterpart.org.au
- ✉ info@counterpart.org.au

Hours of operation

Monday 10am–5pm
Wednesday 10am–5pm
Thursday 10am–5pm

Peer support offered from
10am–2pm on these days.
Closed public holidays.

- 📍 Counterpart Resource Centre
Level 2, Queen Victoria Women's Centre
210 Lonsdale Street Melbourne 3000



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