

We're in this together



Together,
we're bringing
the defeat of
cancer closer

For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call **Cancer Council 13 11 20**. This is a confidential service for the cost of a local call.

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Join our community



The year that was 2016-17

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One in two Australians will hear the words “you have cancer” in their lifetime, but together with our incredible volunteers and supporters, we are working tirelessly to change that.

As a cancer researcher for more than 45 years and Cancer Council Western Australia's proud President, every day I see the positive impact this organisation is having first-hand.

In the area of support, thousands of WA families rely on our services each year: from accommodation at our lodges for regional cancer patients needing somewhere to stay while they access treatment in Perth, to our free transport to treatment, counselling, complementary therapies and more. The support we're able to provide is much needed and the associated physical and mental benefits are immeasurable.

In education, our prevention programs are making real progress in empowering communities to lower their cancer risk and bringing up generations of young West Australians instilled with the knowledge necessary to protect them.

In cancer research, our fostering of a thriving local research community focused on finding more effective treatments and early detection methods that provide opportunities for West Australians to participate in potentially life-saving clinical trials is key to bringing us closer to the day when cancer is a treatable disease.

In June, we welcomed our new CEO, Ashley Reid. Ashley's experience in the not-for-profit sector, great passion and determination for our vision will continue to steer us along this promising path. The tenacity of our previous CEO of 15 years, Susan Rooney, was unwavering as she guided our organisation through many momentous milestones, leaving an incredible legacy in the cancer research, prevention, and support spheres of Western Australia. I know under Ashley's leadership we will continue to take significant and life-changing strides towards the cancer-free future we all seek.

Importantly, however, none of this vital work is possible without you. As a not-for-profit reliant on community donations, you are the reason we can do what we do.

Every week, thousands of West Australians like you join us in our crusade against cancer in a multitude of important ways; whether by working or volunteering with us, utilising our research grants, raising money, donating, quitting smoking, or simply wearing a hat.

Every minute we're getting closer to a time when cancer is no longer something to fear, and every day we're inspired by what you do to enable us to continue supporting those who need our help.

This book contains some of your incredible stories.

Professor George Yeoh
President



Professor George Yeoh with CEO Ashley Reid



Nat's inventive way of giving back

Natalie Willacy was just 32-years-old when she first noticed blood when she went to the toilet.

Given Nat's age and health, doctors initially believed her symptoms were caused by haemorrhoids.

"No one seemed overly concerned by my symptoms at first but I was referred for a colonoscopy as a precaution. Tests showed I had stage two bowel cancer...I couldn't believe it," she said.

Nat and her fiancé Mike put their wedding plans on hold while she immediately underwent surgery and chemotherapy to treat the cancer.

"At the end of my treatment I had my first round of follow up tests and the specialists suspected a secondary cancer. This was very hard news for Mike and I to take on so we contacted the Cancer Council WA cancer nurses via the 13 11 20 phone line to ask for support," she said.

"Mike was feeling a bit overwhelmed with how to deal with our new situation so they talked him through options and ways they could support him to support me, and put us in contact with a psychologist who was able to see us immediately. It was exactly the support we needed at the time and our counselling sessions were very helpful.

"The Cancer Council WA information brochures and booklets I received at the time of diagnosis and throughout my treatment enabled me to better understand the challenges I was facing and helped me make informed choices."

Five years on, Nat has the all clear and she and Mike are now married and enjoying family life with their two-year-old daughter, May.

"I was going to have my eggs collected before I started chemotherapy but my doctors thought it best not to delay my treatment, so we didn't do it in the end," she said.

"I was worried we didn't have a back-up plan if I had trouble falling pregnant, but it happened naturally and easily, so we feel very blessed.

"We just love time together as a family as May grows and discovers the world."

Juggling family life with her career and managing her popular Instagram page, hello.ello.perth, Nat is also a passionate fundraiser for us, determined to do her part to ensure others are able to access the same support she and her family found invaluable.

"I hosted my first Biggest Morning Tea not long after I was diagnosed. Experiencing cancer first-hand highlighted for me just how important research and support services are," she said.

"My first Biggest Morning Tea was at home but the following year a lot of people were busy with life, work, weddings, and babies, and didn't have the time to physically attend. I also have friends and family who live interstate or overseas.

"I thought a way to ensure more friends and family could attend would be to hold a virtual Morning Tea. That way, people could join in wherever they were in the world by sharing a photo using the hashtag #imorningtea - all of a sudden everyone is in one place, enjoying their tea or coffee while raising funds for Cancer Council WA."

This year, 71 people donated to Nat's iMorning Tea to raise \$2,885.

"One of the best reasons to fundraise for Cancer Council WA is the feel-good feeling you get from doing the right thing and raising money for a really great charity," Nat said.

"The difference Cancer Council WA can make in the lives of people going through cancer is huge, so as far as charities go, it's a really good one to make a difference."



Local support vital for Vanessa

In September 2016, 47-year-old Vanessa Eylward was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer.

What followed was surgery, six months of chemotherapy, and six weeks of daily radiation – an intense period of treatment which she said was made easier after being put in touch with our support services at our new Dot’s Place Cancer Support Centre in Mandurah.

The new centre was officially opened by our President, Professor George Yeoh, in April. It is the second of our two regional support centres in WA. The first, in Bunbury, opened in December 2012.

In 2016, our support teams in the Peel region, around Mandurah, delivered 870 different occasions of service, 332 complementary therapy sessions, and 233 trips to treatment.

Latest data from the WA Cancer Registry reveals 745 individuals were diagnosed with cancer in the Peel region in 2016 – a figure which is expected to significantly rise in the next 10 years.

Professor Yeoh said the centre enables our staff and volunteers to offer clients a more holistic service under one roof.

“I know our staff and volunteers have always worked hard in this region to provide excellent support for people affected by cancer, but this new centre allows us to offer even more,” Professor Yeoh said.

“This facility also reflects Cancer Council WA’s commitment to ensuring that cancer patients, including those from outside the metropolitan area, have access to the care and support they need during their cancer experience.”

At the centre, reliable evidence-based information for anyone affected by cancer as well as a range of practical support services including a peer-support program are available.

continued...

Vanessa Eylward

Local support vital for Vanessa continued...

Dot's Place Peel and Dot's Place Bunbury would not have been possible without the incredible generosity of Allan and Dorothy Smith who kindly purchased the houses for us to use to provide support to the people of Peel and the South West close to home.

"The scientific evidence shows patients who have good support around them have better outcomes, meaning they better cope with the physical and emotional fallout from cancer, than those who don't," Professor Yeoh said.

Vanessa says she is testament to that, having used the complementary therapies on offer including reflexology, massage and reiki, as well as the free transport to treatment service which she said relieved both physical and financial pressure.

Most importantly, she said the centre has given her a sense of belonging, and has helped her and her family navigate their fears and gather their strengths.

"To me this is about community, this is about friendship, support and knowledge. It's about feeling normal and connected, and to me the new centre is very much about the growth of a service and engaging more people," she said.

"Ultimately it's about being supported and supporting others."

"It's a place of understanding and comfort, empathy and warmth. I am thrilled to be part of it, supporting the growth of its services. It matters."



(From left to right) Allan and Dorothy Smith and Vanessa Eylward with our President Professor George Yeoh

In 2016-17...

8501



contacts were received by our cancer nurses via our **13 11 20 cancer information and support line**

\$89,943

was raised via our **In Memory program** by those donating to **honour a lost loved one**

2534



wigs, turbans, hats and scarves were provided at no cost by our Wig Service to **536 patients**



A **culturally-appropriate video on cancer** was produced for Aboriginal people in WA

882

hours were contributed by **15 volunteers** to our **arts and crafts program** for our lodge guests

6

6 funding agencies were brought together to support our new Collaborative Cancer Grant Scheme for early-to-mid career cancer researchers

13,592

people visited our **"Stick it to Number 2" website** as part of our new campaign to increase bowel cancer screening in WA

1242



1242 transport to treatment trips were provided to regional patients and their carers at no cost

264

health and wellbeing champions attended **Healthier Workplace WA Training** through our partnership with Heart Foundation

3451



people visited our **Dot's Place Cancer Support Centre** in Bunbury

1831

volunteers contributed **72,183 hours** across all areas of our work



Support for the Sheilds

By any measure, the Sheilds family from Geraldton have endured a tumultuous 18 months.

In less than a year, dad Claude was diagnosed with three different types of cancer; melanoma, Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL) and thyroid cancer. Doctors recommended he undergo a complicated program of surgery and treatment coordinated by a diverse team of medical specialists.

After initially travelling the 840km round trip to Perth for chemotherapy at regular intervals, Claude and his wife Renae decided to temporarily relocate to the city with their kids Sophie and Harry for the remainder of his treatment.

For seven months, our Crawford Lodge in Nedlands became their home.

In a cruel twist of fate, during Claude's treatment 10-year-old Harry broke his foot, was diagnosed with a painful knee condition and was involved in a freak accident that sliced through a tendon in his hand. During that same period, 12-year-old Sophie broke her ankle and has endured

ongoing medical complications after being hospitalised with influenza last year. On top of this, Renae was forced to go onto a disability pension due to a crippling back condition.

Understandably, the incredible challenges they've faced have tested their optimism and resilience. Through it all, they say booking into Crawford Lodge was the best thing they ever did.

"It really helped settle the kids. It's a supportive environment and it allowed us to focus on Claude's treatment rather than be worried about things at home," Renae said.

Claude likened their experience at Crawford Lodge to living in a cocoon and now that they are back home, they're facing a series of other challenges.

"Returning home meant confronting the reality of the consequences of cancer; losing our house, figuring out how to pay bills, all without the comfort of regular medical appointments to reassure you along the way. For me, that side of it has been worse than the cancer," he said.

Unable to return to work as a bricklayer since his diagnosis, Claude also faces a daily battle with fatigue; a side effect of his treatment. Consulting a financial planner through our pro bono program has helped relieve some of the stress associated with the management of their financial affairs.



The Sheilds family: Sophie, Renae, Claude and Harry

"We've been fortunate to have had amazing support along the way from everyone we've met including the Cancer Council WA staff in Geraldton who helped make arrangements for our temporary relocation to Perth last year," he said.

Renae recalls the time when Claude was first diagnosed with NHL as overwhelming.

"Our heads were spinning when we were first given the news but all of a sudden this person comes in (our Cancer Support Coordinator in Geraldton), listens and tells you it's normal to be feeling overwhelmed and it's hard to explain how comforting that reassurance was," she said.

"They can simplify it for you and give you options to help you progress along the treatment or surgery path with less stress."

While cancer remains present in their lives, with doctors stating it's impossible to tell Claude he is in remission, they remain positive and are working hard towards achieving their goal of heading off on a family road trip around Australia.

"We don't know what the future holds and we just keep trying to reset and live day-to-day," Renae said.

"We've both learnt to ask for help, and the help we've been given has been unbelievable."

"We'd urge others to contact Cancer Council WA as they can take a massive weight off your shoulders and make you feel like you have some control over your life again."

In 2016-17...

4711



regional cancer patients and their carers **stayed at our Crawford and Milroy Lodges** to access treatment in Perth



Mel's life-changing lottery win

For Mel Sagers, buying a ticket in our first Ultimate Lifestyle Lottery wasn't an easy financial decision. She'd heard about our lottery a number of times and on the fateful day she finally remembered to purchase one, she had to transfer money from one account to another to gather the necessary funds.

But it's a decision that's certainly paid off. Mel's ticket was drawn for the Ultimate Prize and the \$1.4 million dollar win couldn't have come at a better time for her, her partner John, and nine-year-old daughter Matilda.

Mel's inspiration to purchase the ticket far surpassed the prospect of winning big. In 2015, John was diagnosed with cancer of the lymphatic system known as lymphoma.

"I bought the ticket for John. He was going through treatment at the time and the Lottery was a great way for me to provide \$100 of support towards cancer research," she said.

The win has given the family a sense of freedom and security they never imagined they'd have.

"You just don't think you deserve it," John said after their win.

"If you're a great surgeon or you're doing fantastic things you might deserve something like this, but we're just normal working-class people who've been slugging it out trying to make ends meet, like everyone else.

"Matilda's going to be alright now for the rest of her life, which to me is the most important thing. It's peace of mind. It's hard to explain peace of mind, but I think I've got it now!"

In the past year, the family have been able to pay off their home in Greenmount and purchase a much-needed new car. They've also been able to enrol Matilda in a private school and get married.

"When bills come in now I think, 'oh no, it's okay. I can actually pay this, I don't have to worry about this now'," Mel said.

"I still don't believe it in a way, our life has benefited so much from it; it's meant that John could resign from work and

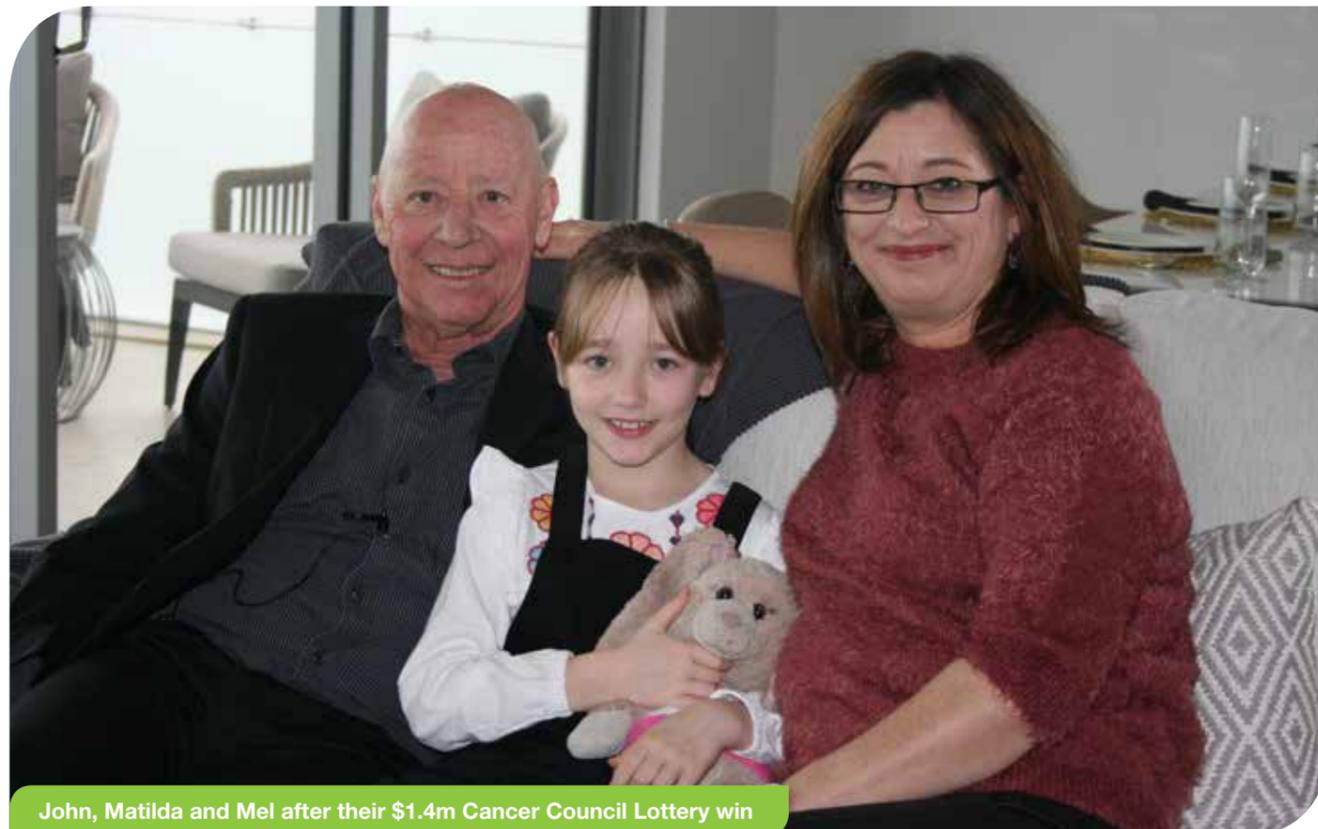
retire early, which was really important to us with his health concerns.

"It's also nice to be able to buy extravagant gifts around Christmas time, and I can go shopping now and not buy the cheapest butter, that sort of thing!"

At the time John said he didn't know how to react when Mel called with the news.

All proceeds from every ticket in our Ultimate Lifestyle Lotteries and Grand Getaway Lotteries fund life-saving research, prevention and education programs, and much-needed support for the thousands of West Australians affected by cancer each year.

"Your life can change in an instant; you can be that lucky person, too," Mel said.



John, Matilda and Mel after their \$1.4m Cancer Council Lottery win

In 2016-17...

715



health professionals increased their cancer knowledge via our Cancer Education Project

\$3.8m



of funding was committed to support WA's best and brightest researchers

2520



counselling sessions were provided at no cost to people affected by cancer

\$41,107



was raised via our In Celebration program by those donating in lieu of gifts

43%

of WA's primary schools are registered in the Crunch&Sip program that encourages a daily break in the classroom for kids to refuel with fresh veggies, fruit and water



Daniel makes smoking history

19-year-old Daniel Yao considered himself a 'social smoker' until he realised 24 hours without lighting up had become a near impossible task.

“It was pretty scary once I realised I couldn’t go a whole day without smoking,” he explained.

“Once you’re addicted, it becomes a routine and you don’t even notice you’re doing it. I have a lot of mates who smoke as well, so cigarettes are always there.

Daniel makes smoking history continued...

"I picked up my first cigarette when I was 14-years-old. I always knew it was a bad thing to do, but honestly, I started smoking because everybody else was doing it and I thought it was cool."

"Looking back, it was probably one of the worst decisions I've ever made."

Research commissioned by our Make Smoking History team in 2015 found that seeing other people smoke was a key trigger for smokers to light up, and having loved ones who smoke was the number one barrier to quitting for both males and females.

Determined to kick the habit for good, Daniel responded to our social media call out for smokers to take part in our next campaign to address these findings.

Daniel went on to feature in the "From Every Quitter" campaign alongside 11 other West Australians who'd recently quit or were attempting to quit, to voice a heart-felt plea for friends and family to refrain from smoking around them.

For Daniel, the importance behind the campaign's key line "if you can't quit with me, please don't smoke around me" rang true.

"I've been very lucky the past few months in finding and maintaining the right group of friends to surround myself with; they understand why quitting is so important to me," he said.

"The vast majority of friends, work mates and people I come across at university who've seen the campaign have been very supportive."

"Even my 7-year-old sister and 12-year-old brother have told me their school friends heard me saying picking up my first cigarette was one of the worst choices I've ever made; I really, really hope that what they've heard will leave a lasting impression on them."

With the help of his support network, Daniel's successfully quit smoking since his involvement in the campaign and is determined to make it stick.

"When you try and quit it's like you almost have to retrain your brain," he explained.

"I did have a couple of lapses, but when I started surrounding myself with more positive, smoke-free friends, I found it so much easier to quit smoking."

"I don't recall a time in my life since starting smoking where I've been smoke-free for this long. I'm very happy about that!"

Daniel says participating in the campaign has been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

"I am so happy that I have played a part in making a difference for the health of West Australians."

"It's also given me a chance to make new friendships with the eleven others in the campaign, and I'm so happy that I have a new support group that I can phone whenever I feel I'm about to slip up."

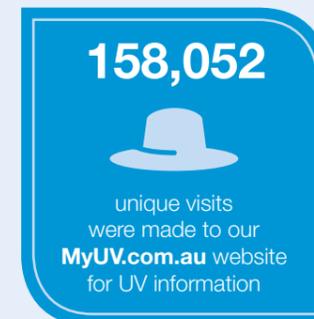
"The campaign is holding me accountable and each day I think about cigarettes less and less."

"Thank you so much, thank you for helping me quit smoking."



Daniel Yao with friend David Skirving

In 2016-17...



Palya Mayi Project putting healthy food on plates

A local project is making it easier for the people of the Kimberley community of Bidyadanga to make healthier food choices at the supermarket.

The Palya Mayi Project, which means 'good food' in the local language, uses a label system to help shoppers identify the foods that are nutritious for their family to eat.

The project is an important partnership between our Kimberley Regional Education Officer Liz Bakowski, Boab Health Services Paediatric Nutritionist Emma Robinson, and the community of Bidyadanga.

The label itself depicts the community's totem, the emu, and was designed by local artist Nuria Jadai.

"The dreaming of Bidyadanga is the emu, that's why I chose it. It also represents our football club. I and other Bidgy people wanted the label to represent our healthy food, the palya mayi," Nuria said.

"The project is helping people to make better food choices. I've changed my bread to the wholemeal one, not the white one. I now eat less bread and rice and I buy the no-added sugar juice, too."

In addition to the labelling system, Liz and Emma travel to Bidyadanga regularly to host cooking demonstrations using recipes developed specifically for the community.

All of the ingredients used in the classes are readily available for purchase in the store, giving the community the opportunity to try new and easy ways of preparing healthy tucker for their families that don't require fancy foods or complicated equipment.

"We set-up the demonstration on a table at the front of the store, so it's pretty much whatever you can cook in an electric frying pan!" Liz explained.

"No two days are the same - people drop in when they can to check out what we're doing and help with the cooking. It's great to see everyone getting involved in the process and enjoying trying something new – especially the kids."

"We also bring with us a number of LiveLighter recipe books that I have on display during the demonstrations. They're free and full of great meals ideas that are easy to make; most people end up taking them home, which is great."

According to Bidyadanga resident Noraini Haji-Noor, the Palya Mayi Project has prompted the community to rethink their food choices.

"I've seen a lot of difference at the shop with the label. People are choosing the healthy choice more and more every day," Noraini said.

Nuria's mother, Madelaine Jadai, has also seen the positive impact the project has made.

"The cooking classes are really good. People get to try new things that they haven't had before. It's good stuff, this Palya Mayi. People need this," she said.

As part of the project, special workshops have also been run with local ranger and women's groups.

Thanks to a Health Promotions Grant from Healthway, the Palya Mayi Project will be extended further in the coming year with plans to implement the label into the local school and swimming pool canteens as well.



Cancer Council WA Regional Education Officer Liz Bakowski during a cooking demonstration with Celeste Frank and Sharna Bumba



Members of the Bidgy community using the new label system to make healthier choices in the local store



The Palya Mayi label depicts the community's totem, the emu, and was designed by local artist Nuria Jadai (right)

Bowel cancer survivor Donna Porteous



Donna's personal plea to over-50s

When Donna Porteous received her bowel cancer screening kit in the mail just after she turned 50, she didn't think twice about what she needed to do.

"Don't ask me why, but I just had a feeling that I needed to complete the test. I sent the test off and didn't give it much more thought as we were heading off on a wonderful European holiday. We had the time of our lives and loved every minute of it," Donna said.

"Upon arrival home I had a letter from the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program telling me that I had a positive test and needed to see my GP."

Donna had no symptoms and didn't consider herself a likely candidate for bowel cancer so the positive test was a shock. A diagnosis of stage two cancer followed and doctors were forced to remove half her bowel.

"There is no question about it, the test saved my life and I was very lucky that they caught it when they did. The cancer was so close to breaking through the bowel wall."

Despite it being a free test delivered in the mail to all Australians when they turn 50, and that it can prevent up to 90 per cent of bowel cancers when found early, the WA participation rate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program remains low at just 41 per cent.

For many, the sticking point remains a fear of poo.

In an innovative new approach to tackle this, we invoked the help of scary 'poo villains' in a new digital campaign coined 'Stick it to Number 2'. The campaign focused on the fact bowel cancer is Australia's number two cancer killer and in comparison, there's nothing scary about using the simple home screening test.

"We know it's largely embarrassment and anxiety that result in people throwing away their kits without using them, but we also know those who've completed the screening kit find it easy and convenient," our Cancer Smart Manager, Melissa Ledger said.

"People over 50 might recognise some of the 'poo villains' used in the campaign from movies such as The Exorcist, Dracula, and Silence of the Lambs.



"Our hope is that using scary poo in a humorous way will remove poo phobia and get people to 'Stick it to Number 2', which is far easier than people think!"

Donna said she can't stress strongly enough how important the screening is.

"For some reason people seem to find poo a taboo subject – even though it's a natural part of everyone's life. It isn't difficult or messy to complete the screening. It's actually a very simple, clean process that takes very little time or effort," she said.

"It's amazing how many people I've discussed poo with since my diagnosis! I've spoken with so many people who've had some signs that could potentially indicate something of concern in their body but have still not completed the test.

"I've urged them to take the test and see their doctor; I've made it my aim in life to educate and warn as many people as possible about the importance of the testing and not ignoring warning signs."



Ride organiser, Carolyn Pobjoy
Photographer - 3abroad photography



Members of the Perth Harley-Davidson Group and Swan River Chapter of the Harley-Davidson Owners Group prepare for the 2017 fundraising ride

Harleys with heart

When you think of motorbikes, you don't normally think pink.

But that's not the case for Perth Harley-Davidson and the Swan River Chapter of the Harley Owners Group who don their finest pink outfits in October each year for their annual Pink Ribbon Ride fundraiser for Cancer Council WA.

The ride has been taking place since 2012 and is particularly significant for Ladies of Harley Officer, Carolyn Pobjoy, who has been organising the event for the past four years.

continued...



Harleys with heart continued...

In 2013, Carolyn's mother was suddenly diagnosed with stage four Glioblastoma Multiforme, the most common brain cancer to occur among adults. 100 new cases are diagnosed in Western Australia each year.

Sadly, within just seven short months of her diagnosis, Carolyn's mother passed away.

It was a desire to honour her mother's memory that inspired Carolyn to help others going through their own cancer journey via the fundraiser. With the help of good friend and fellow Ladies of Harley Officer, Gerda Dunkel, they began planning the first ride.

“The year I started organising the ride was the same year my mother passed away, she's my inspiration. We have all been touched by cancer in some way and for me, this is my contribution.”

The Pink Ribbon Ride starts at Perth Harley-Davidson headquarters in the Perth Hills suburb of Beckenham and riders continue on through to the Perth CBD and Fremantle café strip, finally finishing up at the Roleystone Country Club.

With the aim of raising money and awareness for women's cancers, it's hard to miss the group as they thunder through the streets of Perth dressed head to toe in bright pink. The ride has brought together people from all walks of life with a common goal of making a real difference.

To date, the event has raised over \$50,000 to help us fund cancer research, education and support services.

In 2015, the tight-knit Harley Davidson family were dealt a devastating blow when Gerda suddenly passed away. Known fondly as 'Mumsy' to her friends, the Pink Ribbon Ride for 2016 was renamed Gerda's Ride in memory of her dedication and contribution to the group.

The group are already planning for the biggest Gerda's Ride yet in October 2017 but none of it would be possible without the incredible generosity of the riders.

“When you ask for \$10 from a rider you'll get \$50 instead. The support is just overwhelming,” Carolyn said.

“When you see the members of the Swan River Chapter, Perth Harley-Davidson and all of the other people who support the event with pink hair, pink beards, pink tutus, pink butterfly wings and so many other outfits, it's just incredible.

“We have members who've been diagnosed with cancer and no one would have known, as they choose to go through it on a personal journey.

“Personally, I've had friends and family who've been diagnosed. Some have survived and some haven't. Some of them are still fighting the biggest battle and the support we can give to Cancer Council WA can assist in finding the cure.

“I couldn't save my mum and I can't save everyone, but by raising funds for cancer research, I can certainly try.”

In 2016-17...

\$899,042



was raised by
927 community fundraisers

1895

hours were contributed by **26 volunteers** to provide cancer patients with **free complementary therapies**

1987

new cancer patients and carers received support from our regional Cancer Support Coordinators

3354



people attended or listened online to one of our **five free cancer update lectures**

14

UV meter were sold across Australia and NZ, which display the local UV rating in real time



culturally-appropriate healthy lifestyle information was produced for Aboriginal people in WA

374

cancer patients or their carers applied for assistance from our **practical support services**

\$1.4m



was raised by over **1811 Australia's Biggest Morning Tea** hosts

59%

of WA survey respondents **were aware of our LiveLighter campaign** addressing healthy eating, physical activity and body weight

\$47,000

was raised during our **Daffodil Day street appeal**, with the support of **136 volunteers** at over **120 locations** across the metro area

5000

people took part in **12 Relay For Life** events held across the state, raising just under **\$2 million**



Collaborating for cancer breakthroughs

In 2016-17...



Cancer Council WA-funded cancer researcher Dr Elin Gray
Photographer: Martin Keneally – Community Newspaper Group



A new grant in our research funding program that's bringing together the brightest minds of WA's cancer research community is already making an enormous difference.

Dr Elin Gray, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Edith Cowan University, is leading a project team investigating cancer cells in the blood of melanoma patients, thanks to funding from our Collaborative Cancer Grant Scheme.

The team, which includes Dr Katie Meehan from The University of WA, Dr Jason Waithman from Telethon Kids Institute and Dr Tarek Meniawy at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, believes the cells and the way they communicate with each other could contain vital information to guide treatment and prevent the need for more intrusive tests.

Dr Gray said the grant has helped to solidify the relationship between the four researchers and has ensured they're continually discussing strategies to advance their project.

"We've been aware of each other's work over the years but up until now, we've never had the opportunity to work together on a project," Dr Gray said.

"Our ongoing discussions are so beneficial because we're combining our expertise and bringing different perspectives to the project."

Our President and eminent liver cancer researcher Professor George Yeoh said these new grants are an innovative and important initiative for the future of cancer research, empowering researchers in the early stages of their cancer research career with the necessary experience to take their findings further.

"These grants are preparing researchers for the 'bigger game', because it allows them to generate preliminary data that will underpin project grant applications for larger Cancer

Council WA grants and even National Health and Medical Research Council grants," Professor Yeoh explained.

"The value of sharing equipment, ideas and expertise from across organisations should not be underestimated."

Dr Gray said the team wanted to maximise the success rate of melanoma treatment by understanding the biology of how cancer cells and the immune system communicate.

"Together we're combining our expertise to test for the exosomes - small vesicles derived from a tumour that can be found in the blood - which can tell a lot about what's going on with a tumour and what level of disease a patient may have," Dr Gray said.

"If we can find more information in the blood of patients it could be useful in diagnosing the disease or guiding treatment for melanoma patients."

The study aims to investigate whether the cancer cells can transfer resistance to treatment from one cell to another. Another aspect will analyse if these exosomes influence the way a patient's immune system responds to a tumour.

"We know the immune response is critical for controlling the tumour growth, so it therefore provides a guide for treatment and can enhance the response to immunotherapy. We're also keen to investigate if we can use exosomes to enhance the way a patient will respond to treatment," she said.

"We're hoping to be able to generate preliminary data from this pilot study which we can then use to apply for funding for a larger study and eventually a clinical trial," said Dr Gray.

The Collaborative Cancer Grant Scheme is funded in partnership by Cancer Council WA, Government of Western Australia, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, The University of Western Australia, Telethon Kids Institute and the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research.

Connection the key to Steve's recovery



Steve Toon

A conversation with a stranger at Fiona Stanley Hospital two years ago marked a turning point in Steve Toon's cancer treatment.

That stranger, for whom Steve says he is forever grateful, was a Cancer Council WA volunteer.

"I started chatting with a Cancer Council WA volunteer while waiting for one of my last radiotherapy treatments," Steve said.

"For me that conversation really opened so many doors in terms of making me aware of Cancer Council WA support services and it really brightened my life at a tough time."

Steve was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2013 but had to wait two years for treatment, which he said was heartbreaking at the time. He was then forced into early retirement in order to complete radiotherapy.

"Even though I was continually told 'you've got a good cancer' I struggled through the treatment, particularly with feelings of isolation," he said.

"From my experience, you can't underestimate the emotional impact of cancer and this is where the Cancer Council WA services are so beneficial."

Steve said talking to people who understand, like our cancer nurses via our Cancer Council 13 11 20 phone line, can make a big difference in a person's experience of cancer.

"I found it incredibly helpful to talk honestly and openly with Cancer Council WA staff who were outside my network of family and friends and understanding of what I was going through."

After connecting with us, Steve enrolled in our free 12-week Life Now exercise program.

He said the exercise group became a good support network as all of the participants were dealing with similar issues, despite being affected by different cancers.

Now, two years after completing the program he continues to meet with other members of the group each month for lunch.

"Initially we'd catch up for a coffee together after our class, but when the classes ended we realised we were a good support network for each other," he said.

Steve's also completed our Healthy Living after Cancer course which he said was a wonderful program based around healthy lifestyle advice.

"I found it so easy to talk to my Cancer Council WA nurse and coach during our regular phone calls," he said.

"She was a great listener and gave me guidelines that helped me to create healthier new habits I could put into action after completing my cancer treatment."

Since completing the course, Steve has joined a health club and aims to continue exercising regularly. He is also planning to complete our yoga course, something he never would have previously considered.

"Up until I connected with Cancer Council WA I felt very much on my own and also felt like I was bombarded by people saying 'you'll be alright'," he explained.

"I'm glowing with pride with what you guys do.

"I feel healthier than ever after finishing treatment and I feel like I'm connected to a good support network because the reality for me is, I still have cancer.

"On reflection, Cancer Council WA was the best thing that's happened to me since sliced bread. I just wished I had found it sooner!"



Steve Toon and Cancer Council WA volunteer Mercy Ruka at the Cancer Council cancer information hub at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Perth

Taking action for reconciliation



Cancer death rates are 30 per cent higher for Aboriginal people than other Australians. In some remote areas, that rate is as high as 65 per cent. We desperately need to close this gap.

A key element of our strategic plan involves focussing our efforts on vulnerable members of the community, and an essential part of this is working to improve the incidence and impact of cancer among Aboriginal people in WA.

In July 2015, we formed a staff committee to develop our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and after 12 months of consultation with staff, our external Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Reconciliation Australia, it was launched in November 2016.

“Reconciliation Action Plans are about organisations turning good intentions into real actions and rising to the challenge of reconciling Australia, using a holistic approach to create meaningful relationships, enhance respect and promote sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians,” our Education and Research Services Manager, Cassandra Clayforth explained.

“Our RAP outlines our commitment to continue to lead a community effort to improve the quality of life and cancer outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and extend our commitment to address other areas of inequality, such as employment, cultural awareness and procurement.”

For most years since 2008, we’ve run an education course for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals (pictured above) aimed at providing culturally relevant training on cancer, treatments, prevention, early detection and screening strategies, and resources and services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We’ve also taken steps to ensure our programs are culturally relevant by representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in many of our campaign materials, fostering partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations, engaging equal-opportunity providers, including an Acknowledgment of Country at events, and increasing access, delivery and awareness of our support and education programs in the regions.

Deanne Lewis, a proud Nyoongar woman and member of our Aboriginal Advisory Committee, says the flow-on effect this knowledge can have within a community is immeasurable.

“My mother was in the second group of Aboriginal health workers to ever be trained at the Aboriginal Medical Service back in 1984. After Mum did her training and got stuck into Aboriginal health, she actually stopped drinking and smoking. The impact that had on me and my family, as kids, was huge: domestic violence and everything else that came with my parents’ alcoholism stopped because of that training. It was only natural, in that sense, that I followed her lead into health work. It’s become my life-long passion,” Deanne said.

A mother of two and grandmother to five, Deanne will attend Deakin University later this year to complete her Master’s degree in public health. She plans to continue her work in epidemiology - a branch of medicine that deals with the incidence, distribution, and control of diseases such as cancer.

“First and foremost, reconciliation’s about reconciling for yourself. Acknowledging the need for reconciliation and the need to know the truth about Australian history helps to heal.”

“The opportunity to contribute and participate in reconciliation in providing guidance and support to non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal culture and issues that affect Aboriginal people is the reason I joined Cancer Council WA’s Advisory Committee,” Deanne explained.

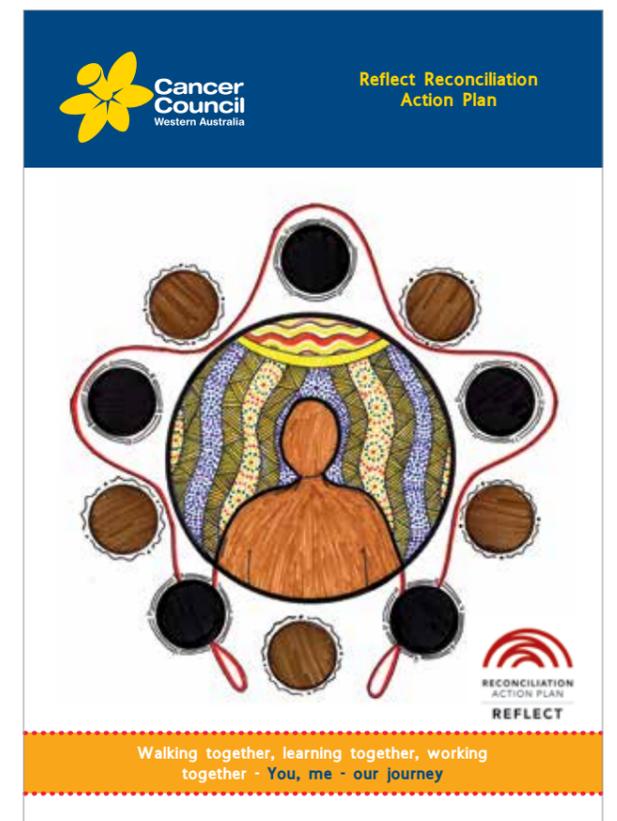
“There are a lot of Aboriginal people who’ve been diagnosed with cancer, and many who have passed away; it’s a lot more prevalent and discussed in Aboriginal communities these days. The support services around are really amazing and I think Cancer Council WA are doing a marvellous job in actioning their RAP. I always encourage people to make contact with Cancer Council WA because I know their information is not only culturally appropriate but also accurate.

“As an Aboriginal person, if you feel sincerity or commitment from whoever it is you’re working with, you’re more open to it, and I get that feeling from Cancer Council staff.”

Our Reflect RAP is the first step in our reconciliation journey and an Innovate RAP will follow.



Cancer Council WA Aboriginal Advisory Committee member Deanne Lewis with Cancer Council WA Education and Research Services Manager Cassandra Clayforth





Cancer Council WA Run for a Reason ambassador, Peter Symonds

Peter's race against cancer

Peter Symonds lives by the motto “every day is a good day” and describes himself as one of the lucky ones.

The 59-year-old has had more than his fair share of challenges. Soon after being diagnosed with throat cancer, scans showed he had a second unrelated type of cancer called a neuroendocrine tumour in his pancreas.

From the very beginning, Peter was determined not to wallow in self-pity.

“There are two paths you can take; after diagnosis I could have sat at home and just faded away with my kids there every night watching me,” he said.

“But I didn’t want them to one day be saying ‘Remember Dad? He just sat in that chair, he was so sick, poor Dad’.

“Right at the start I said I’m giving this a crack, I’m not sitting around.”

Peter underwent 33 doses of radiation, chemotherapy, and three major surgeries, but the cancer continued to spread and found its way to his chest, liver and bone.

True to his word, he was determined not to let it break him. In early 2017 he signed up for the 12km HBF Run for a Reason and proudly stepped up as our community ambassador with the aim of raising \$10,000.

“I did the 4km Run for a Reason in 2016 and it was a big deal for me because I had lost so much muscle,” he said.

“I remember when I first started exercising I was struggling to curl a 1kg dumb bell – I had nothing. It was only 4km but at the end of it I had a bit of a cry because I couldn’t believe I’d made it.”

On the day of this year’s run, Peter was joined by 325 other participants who were also running for us, with similar stories and motivations, fundraising to help us support families just like theirs.

Their determination and generosity resulted in a combined fundraising total of more than \$149,000; \$11,400 of which was raised by Peter.

“It was a big deal for us as a family that I was able to do this because we all know what it means for me to even be alive,” he said.

“I was pretty knackered during the run with all the training interruptions - chemo, radioactive injections and knee soreness, etcetera - and I wasn’t as fit as I would’ve liked to have been, but I didn’t give up and I made it.

“I had trouble holding back the tears as I crossed the finish line because everything I’ve been through came flooding back – it was very emotional.”

Even though his battle isn’t yet over and he’s unsure of his future, for Peter, giving back is an important focus.

“Cancer Council WA is such a fantastic organisation. I’m so grateful I could represent them as ambassador for the Run; I feel very lucky and proud,” he said.

“People say I’m unlucky but I consider myself one of the lucky ones - I’ve got great family, great friends and great support.

“And as my father used to say, ‘I woke up this morning; that was a good start’.”

How you can help

As a not-for-profit, non-government organisation we rely on the generosity of the community to fund our programs. By supporting us, you become part of a movement with a common goal - a cancer-free future. It's easy to get involved.

Volunteer

Our many volunteers help us in so many ways by donating their skills and time across the state – from administration, patient support, fundraising events, expert committees, and strategic direction and governance.

Do your own thing

Sign up for one of our events like Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Daffodil Day, or Relay For Life. Or get creative and do your own thing by organising a fun event to raise funds for us.

Become a Corporate Partner

There are many ways your business can support and benefit from a partnership with us. These include cause-related marketing initiatives, workplace giving, matched giving, staff engagement, and cash and in-kind sponsorship.

Make a donation or become a regular giver

Your donation or monthly gift gives us the stability to support long-term projects in cancer research and patient support. In return, we'll keep in touch to let you know how your donation is making a difference, with progress reports on our activities and programs.

Donate in memory of a loved one, or in celebration of an occasion

Making a donation in lieu of a gift or flowers can be a beautiful way to honour an occasion, a loved one, or an event.

Leave a gift in your Will

A gift in your Will has the power to touch countless lives. We have information and resources available to help you plan your gift so you can leave a legacy of hope for generations to come.

Every dollar makes a difference.
Contact our Supporter Hotline for more information 1300 65 65 85.

Thank you to our amazing supporters who have made our work in 2016-2017 possible!



Joanne Suckling
at our abseiling fundraiser