



# Breast Cancer Support Inc.

Newsletter

September 2010

## Report from the BCS Chair, Deirdre Parr



*It is with great pleasure that I am writing my first 'Report from the Chair' for BCS.* Those of you who were at the AGM in June will know that my first action as the newly-elected Chair was to move that Marie Goudge continue as Acting Chair, so Simon and I could go overseas to visit our new granddaughter in Canada. Hence, I began my term by immediately going on holiday for six weeks! I'd like to begin by thanking Marie for keeping my seat 'warm' for me, including chairing what should have been my first two committee meetings. I also want to acknowledge the huge contribution that Marie has made to BCS in her six years as Chair.

Her involvement with our organisation goes back to the 1980s, and in 1998 she set up the West Auckland Support Group. She was the group's co-ordinator for 12 years and is now one of a team of four who share that role. It was through a series of one-to-one conversations with Marie following my diagnosis in 2003 that I first came into contact with the then Breast Cancer Support Service, and subsequently became a member of the West Auckland Breast Friends. Marie's monthly phone call prior to each meeting became an important part of my recovery, and through it I came to appreciate her deep empathy and concern for each member of her group. This was all the more remarkable when I consider that she continued as group co-ordinator when she took up the reins as BCSS Chair in 2004, to guide it through its separation from the Auckland Cancer Society. She then oversaw the establishment of Breast Cancer Support Inc. as an independent entity with its own constitution and ethos. Through all this, she has nurtured the relationship between BCS and other cancer and breast cancer organisations, and she is highly respected both by medical professionals and in the wider cancer community.

Without Marie's leadership and input, I doubt BCS would be the organisation that it is today. In her years as Chair she has overseen the development of aims and objectives for the society, the writing and subsequent revision of the constitution to meet the requirements of the Charities Commission, and the development and implementation of our strategic plan. Other milestones have included the excellent handbook of procedures and guidelines for Breast Friends groups; regular training days for visitors and group co-ordinators; the development of the BCS website; the appointment of Jane Bissell as Support Services Co-ordinator; and the publication of our brochure – most recently, with funding from NZBCF. In all of this she has been ably supported by the committee and – crucially – by her husband, Stan. But I can vouch that her personal dedication to BCS and her drive to move the organisation forward has been unstoppable and, consequently, we owe her an enormous debt of gratitude. So, on behalf of us all, I say 'thank you, Marie'. I shall be the first to acknowledge that you are a hard act to follow, and also that it is an enormous privilege to do so.

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- To become a Member of BCS, or to make a donation to support our activities, please complete the form in this newsletter and post to us.
- For information about our support services, please contact us on 0800BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) or visit our website and complete the Contact Us online enquiry form.

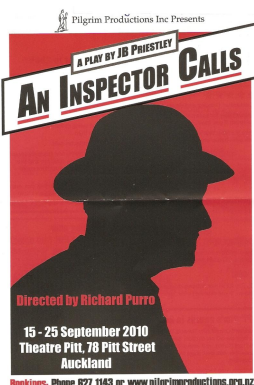
*"BCS is ... enormously appreciative of the community groups who generously fundraise on its behalf..."*



*The BCS Christmas Party will be held on Monday 6 December at the Auckland Cancer Society at 7.30pm. Join us for this annual occasion of fellowship and fun! Mark it in your diaries now ...*



*BCS Members and friends enjoyed a wonderful evening of theatre at a special performance of 'An Inspector Calls'. The donation of tickets by Pilgrim Productions raised \$500 for BCS.*



We are grateful to have received funding recently from the Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust towards our 2011 expenses, and from the NZ Breast Cancer Foundation for a reprint of our brochure – well done, thank you Jane!

BCS is also enormously appreciative of the community groups who generously fundraise on its behalf, often as a result of personal contact with a BCS member. In the past couple of months these have included Henderson Bowls Inc., which raised \$136 showing the DVD of *Jonna's Body* in August, and Pilgrim Productions, whose donation of tickets to its production of *An Inspector Calls* raised \$500 (and it was a great night out!). Grassroots fundraising of this sort is invaluable to BCS, so if you know of anyone looking for a worthy cause to raise money for, Jane or I should be very happy to speak to them about it.

We continue to explore ways in which our services for younger women can be improved. To this end, BCS and BCN each contributed towards Rosemary Geard's attendance at the recent 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer in Queensland, and you can read her summary of that inspiring event in this newsletter.

In addition to being Breast Cancer Action Month, October signals an increase in postage rates. If you would like to receive your newsletter by email, to help us keep our costs down, please send your email details to Jane Bissell at [admin@breastcancersupport.co.nz](mailto:admin@breastcancersupport.co.nz).

I am aware that a quarter of the year has flashed by since the AGM, and I feel that I am only just settling into my new position. It is both very exciting, as BCS develops to meet the needs of women with breast cancer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and sometimes a little daunting. It is my intention to visit each of the Breast Friends groups at some point, to introduce myself to you in person. One opportunity to do so will be the BCS Christmas Party on Monday, 6 December, at Domain Lodge at 7.30 pm, and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

With best wishes to you all, Deirdre Parr

## BCS Members Enjoy a Night at the Theatre.

### *This review of 'An Inspector Calls' from Stan Goudge*

On Thursday 23 September, about forty BCS'ers and friends enjoyed a performance of J.B.

Priestley's play, *An Inspector Calls* presented by Pilgrim Productions Inc. at Auckland's Theatre Pitt.



It was a social occasion and a fund raiser for the society and generous donations raised \$500.00 for our funds. (Pictured at left: women from our Auckland South Breast Friends Group enjoy interval refreshments).

The well balanced cast of seven took us back to pre-WW1 England and the social issues and challenges of the day, reminding us that we are responsible for each other, and that our actions can have far reaching consequences for other people. It is a theme well known to the members of the Breast Friends Groups where care and support of each other can bring healing and wholeness to women with a breast cancer diagnosis.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Breast Cancer Support Inc.*



## Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer

### Rosemary Geard Attends Australian Conference for Young Women

***In New Zealand, around 150 women under the age of 40 are diagnosed with breast cancer each year.*** Breast Cancer Support and Breast Cancer Network NZ are working together to address the unique needs of young New Zealand women diagnosed with breast cancer. In the forthcoming months, you will hear more about what is being planned.

In September, I attended the Second National Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer Conference held on the Gold Coast, Australia. The conference was hosted by the Cancer Council Queensland and the conference partners were Queensland Health, Young Survival Coalition (United States), Breast Cancer Network Australia and the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

The conference was an opportunity to network, share experiences and learn from the experts and discuss the latest on the issues that impact on young women with breast cancer and advice on how to manage them.

Key sessions included talks on the latest treatments available, exercise, fertility issues, under-represented groups, risk reduction and environmental factors, breast reconstruction and dealing with depression. Other topics included sexual wellbeing, lymphoedema, chemo-brain, getting involved after breast cancer, online communities and advocacy.

While a breast cancer diagnosis at any age is life changing, young women face extra challenges in that their cancers tend to be more aggressive and are therefore treated more aggressively, and that relationships are generally newer or yet to happen whether that be with a life partner, children or career. Young women tend to have greater information needs and also experience greater psychological distress in the short term.

While only a few of us attended from New Zealand, I quickly learnt there were many Kiwis in attendance who now live in Australia! It was an affirming and empowering experience and for me reiterated the message "you are not alone." I would like to thank BCS and BCN for contributing towards conference expenses.

Rosemary Geard

## Supporting BCS ...

***BCS gratefully acknowledges the support of our members and donors.*** Would you like to become a member of Breast Cancer Support or make a donation? Please complete this form below and post back to us at: Breast Cancer Support, PO Box 10150, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446, or call us on 0800BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) . Thank you!

Name .....

Phone (0 ).....Email .....

Address .....

.....Postal Code.....

My membership/donation is enclosed:  Individual membership (\$20)  Group (\$30)

Unwaged (\$15)  Joint (\$30)  I enclose a donation of \$.....

I am a breast cancer survivor  I would like to volunteer - please contact me

Please contact us for further information on 0800 BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) or email us on [admin@breastcancersupport.co.nz](mailto:admin@breastcancersupport.co.nz)

Donations over \$5 are tax deductible.

*"The conference was an opportunity to network, share experiences, learn from the experts and discuss the latest on the issues that impact on young women with breast cancer and advice on how to manage them."*



*Would you like to become a Member of Breast Cancer Support, or make a donation to help us in our work? Please complete the form at left, or call us on 0800 273 222 for more information.*



*BCS gratefully acknowledges support from the following : Lotteries Commission, COGS, Lady Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust, The NZ Breast Cancer Foundation, Henderson Bowling Club, Pilgrim Productions and Pat Donovan.*

## Breast Friends - News from our Support Groups

### Central Auckland—Report from Christine Rule

In July the Central group celebrated mid-winter Christmas with the food prepared from Members' recipes. There was a magnificent selection of savoury and sweet food - a veritable feast! Shirley then entertained us with a talk about sky diving. On one occasion she landed 30ft up a gum tree in Australia (and had to be rescued by the fire department). "Every jump was magical," says Shirley.

In August we enjoyed a relaxing session of Laughter Yoga with Louise Stevens and in September, our Member Heather showed us photos of her wonderful 'Post BC Party' which raised over \$200 for breast cancer. We also welcomed speakers Elizabeth Francke and Rebecca Lee. Liz makes her own cosmetics and gave us some very useful tips on how to be beautiful on a budget. Rebecca is a counsellor with the Cancer Society. She gave us an overview of the Services which several Members have used and found helpful and worthwhile.



*Heather (Central Group) celebrated at her "Post-BC" party!*

### East Auckland—Report from Jennifer Woodroffe

The Pakuranga group met at the Howick RSA in July for their annual Mid-Winter dinner. 'Santa' gave everyone a small 'gift' and a great evening was enjoyed by all!

Beryl joined our August meeting to tell us about her quilting. She grew up in a remote part of the far north. There wasn't always much to do so Beryl took up embroidery and quilting. One of her first quilts depicted her rural lifestyle, with the old country school, the house she grew up in, the farm, her calf club days, the birds and animals. She also worked for months on a Queen-sized New Zealand quilt, depicting EVERYTHING New Zealand: flowers, birds, trees, people – a real work of art.

Our September guest speaker was a local JP who told us about her work and the services JPs offer in the community. One of our Members from South Africa told us about breast cancer support groups in South Africa and how the Relay for Life is done in Capetown. The organisers nominate 'themes' for certain laps e.g. 'funniest hat lap' or 'all dressed in pink lap'. Sounds a good idea!

### Hibiscus Coast—Report from Barbara McLean and Dianne Murray

We welcomed former Group Coordinator Jane Bissell to our August meeting. We began with a Birthday Roll Call, then Jane gave us clear explanations about the medical procedures one of our Members is having. A general discussion of breast cancer treatments followed—the way they work and common side effects—and a magazine item on trials examining the beneficial effects oestrogen positive women can obtain by having a bisphosphonate infusion was discussed. Here again Jane's knowledge of drug therapies and medical procedures was invaluable. An item entitled "15 Golden Rules - Diet and Cancer" was read out, prompting more discussion and much 'food for thought.' Breast Care Nurse Denise Flett joined us in August to give a fascinating talk on Lymphoedema. There were many questions and we all learned something new about a topic that is of huge importance to us all.

*Would you like to join a Support Group? Phone us on 0800 273 222 for information about a group in your area, nationwide.*



### Auckland South—Report from Jill Mellow

At the August meeting we had a "guess the baby photo" competition and a "swap recipe evening". Looking at the photos of when we were young compared to what we look like now was very interesting. This was followed by stories of when we were young. We had a number of scrumptious recipes.

### North Shore— Report from Jenny Short

Eight hardy members ventured out in the wet and cold for our July meeting at the Senior Citizens' Club-rooms in Takapuna. The room was warm and cosy and so was the feeling of the meeting. We had no speaker so related our own anecdotes about the most embarrassing moment each of us had whilst going through breast cancer treatment. One member reported she gave her cleaning lady nightmares for three weeks because (despite being a very private person) she decided she wanted to show off her post



## Breast Friends - News From Our Support Groups

mastectomy wounds. Another member related the embarrassing appearance of a young doctor who turned out to be an ex-student. Our August meeting was hosted by Coordinator Geraldine, in her home. We all enjoyed “naughty” treats with our coffees and teas. Our social meetings offer a chance for Members to mix, mingle, network and get to know one another. We had a slightly controversial meeting in September because we invited a speaker to talk to us about thermography. One or two members had requested this and we believed it was OK for women to hear all sides of the story and make up their own minds.

### West Auckland—Report from Marie Goudge

Group Member Misha Crosbie spoke at the July meeting choosing “A Journey of Hope” as the title for her talk (Misha’s story is featured in this newsletter). Misha spent 18 years working with teenagers who had been in serious trouble with the law and learned that hope is crucial for a satisfying life. “My hope,” says Misha, “is not to survive breast cancer, but to THRIVE!” In August our two guest speakers were Group Members Mary Forbes and Rosemary Geard who gave an overview of the Breast Cancer Forum they had attended in Auckland on the 10<sup>th</sup> August. Lynn, Robin and Lorraine from the “Pink Dragons” Dragon Boat Team visited in September. It was almost impossible to resist their infectious enthusiasm for their sport. They told of the camaraderie formed within the team and the emotional healing that came from meeting with other women who had experienced a breast cancer diagnosis. But breast cancer did not dominate the thoughts of the “Pink Dragons.” The paddling takes over and the challenge of working as a team becomes the goal. The “Pink Dragons” are a dynamic team of survivors, from all walks of life and ages.



*The Pink Dragons visited West in September. To find out more about joining a Dragon Boat Team, call Robin from the Pink Dragons (09) 630 6423 or Deb from Busting with Life on (09) 521 0129.*

## If you have taken Herceptin ... or are about to... read this!

### A note from the Breast Cancer Aotearoa Coalition (BCAC)

**Research is currently underway examining the information and support women receive when they take Herceptin.** The Breast Cancer Aotearoa Coalition (BCAC) fully supports this research and its aim to make information and support more accessible and easy-to-understand for women taking this medication. We believe it’s important for women to have a comprehensive understanding of the medication they are taking, its purpose, its potential side-effects and its success rate.

This research project will form the basis of a tool kit of facts and advice to be developed for women about to take Herceptin. We think this is vitally important, so if you can help please do. The researchers want to know about:

- your perceptions of the support and information you received about Herceptin
- challenges you faced when taking Herceptin
- things you think would help women during Herceptin treatment.

The information will be gathered through an informal discussion and those that participate will be paid for their time. You will be eligible to take part if you live in Auckland and you:

- are about to start taking Herceptin
- are currently taking Herceptin
- have stopped treatment before 12 months or have opted for the 9-week course

The research is being conducted by Atlantis Healthcare, a company that develops patient support programmes, and is funded by Roche Pharmaceuticals. Your participation will help other women who experience breast cancer in future.

**For more information, please contact Kate Perry, Principal Investigator at Atlantis Healthcare ASAP on (09) 373 4907, or [kate.perry@atlantishealthcare.com](mailto:kate.perry@atlantishealthcare.com).**

*Need someone to talk to? Please call us—0800 273 222.*



## “Celebrate Life and Live Fully!” Misha Crosbie shares her story



*“Back in 2002 when I was happily 55 and enjoying life, everything changed with the words, ‘You have cancer’.”*  
Misha Crosbie

***Back in 2002 when I was happily 55 and enjoying life, everything changed with the words “You have cancer.”*** In my eyes then, my experience of cancer with my Mum and two close friends meant “terminal” and so my mind went wild with fear. And I would have to say that was really my first journey – coming to terms with fear and getting back to living fully.

I had a partial mastectomy and that was the easy bit. Follow instructions and get on with life. Everyone kept telling me that I would be fine now that the cancer had been removed and I was “cured”. Friends and family were well meaning and keen to have me over and through this “hiccup” in my active life. And so I responded accordingly and presented a mask to my world, a mask of “all is well and I am back to normal - whatever that really is”.

What my friends didn’t really know is that the words “terminal” and “cancer” sat on the end of my nose bang smack in my field of vision for at least 12 months. It took about 18 months for those words to slip to peripheral vision and then to fade away completely. In fact I would catch myself having a whole day when cancer didn’t even enter my mind. I celebrated my first year of clearance with my partner and two very close friends in Fiji and vowed that I would put all this cancer stuff behind me. And so I did... until I noticed a flyer for the Busting with Life Dragon Boat Team at the surgeon’s rooms.

And so began my life as an athlete! Overweight, 56 and out of condition. My prior experience of being on the water stretched to catching the ferry boat to Devonport from time to time. I was received and welcomed to this wonderful team of women and went on to train and compete with them culminating in us competing in Vancouver in 2005. Wow, now an International athlete, still overweight but very fit. Cancer had now become the unifying bond rather than the fearful monster. 1400 women with Breast Cancer met and competed in Vancouver which went pink for the occasion. So three years on I was proud of being in the Breast Cancer world. At that point in time I moved to the States and promptly joined the Machestic Dragons and had fun training and competing in the States and Canada.

I was very focused on enjoying my life one day at a time, and with my partner had got back into setting 5 and 10 year goals. We had moved to the States to be with grandchildren and I thoroughly enjoyed Nanahood. I continued to return to NZ for my checkups. December 2007 became a redefining time for me again when I went for my mammogram. Uh oh! We need to take some more pictures and then we need to do an ultra sound. We all know what that means! So, on with the second stage of my journey. It was interesting for me to note that fear wasn’t part of this journey. I moved into a space of “Well, you survived the first time – you can do it again—and again – and again – if necessary.” This time I had a bilateral mastectomy and am happily getting on with my life. It took me longer to recover than the first time and adjusting to being still overweight and now flat chested. Did it really matter? In the grand scheme of things I have to say not really. My then 11 year old grandson put the whole thing into perspective for me. When he was told what surgery I needed to have his immediate reply was “Way cool”. When questioned as to what that meant he said so matter of factly, “Nana will only have to wear shorts when she goes swimming!”

Yes there have been some up and down days as I look ahead and think of the milestones I would like to experience with my grandkids. And I take inspiration from the title of a book by Dawna Markova “I will not die an un-lived life. Reclaiming Purpose and Passion.” I am now more than ever living in the present and working my way through my “bucket list”. Why wait? There is only today. And so I give grateful thanks to all my Breast Cancer sisters who have walked before me and inspired me, and all those with whom I currently walk. Life is good and I pray fervently that I will live to see Dr Susan Love’s research goal achieved, of finding a way to prevent Breast Cancer from even happening. May my grand daughters and their daughters’ daughters be able to live without the threat of Breast Cancer in their lives.